

Spring 5-4-2017

# America's Best Idea? Identity Politics and Opposition to National Monuments

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**AMERICA'S BEST IDEA? IDENTITY POLITICS AND OPPOSITION TO NATIONAL  
MONUMENTS**

An honors paper submitted to the Department of Political Science and International Affairs  
of the University of Mary Washington  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Christine E MacKrell

May 2017

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Christine MacKrell  
(digital signature)

05/04/17

America's Best Idea? Identity Politics and Opposition to National Monuments

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PSCI 491H: Political Science Honors Thesis  
April 24, 2017

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The National Park Service (NPS) is often referred to as America's best idea, and in 2015, more than 305 million people visited a national park (NPS 2016). However, when new national parks or monuments are proposed, they consistently face opposition from the local communities surrounding the proposed park. Scholars and local opponents often attribute this community pushback to economic fears related to change in land use, loss of industry, as well as threats to traditional practices like hunting, snowmobiling, and fishing. There is little evidence suggesting that these economic concerns are feasible in most cases, as national parks almost always stimulate the local economy and emphasize the employment of local residents (Center for Western Priorities 2016). The community fear of loss of cultural practices as a result of park land designation could indicate that opposition to new national monuments and parks stems from something deeper than just economic concerns. A local culture's identity can be tied to, and even reliant on, a specific landscape (Hutchins & Stormer 2013, 1). A community's identity is rooted in their traditional practices and lifestyles, and a change in land use or restrictions on activities could be perceived as threats to a culture's identity. Where economic concerns cannot explain all aspects of community opposition to a national park, this is where the role of identity can step in and fill that gap. The power of identity to shape opposition to national parks is often overlooked by scholars studying the politics of park creation. Rather than understanding this opposition as purely backlash due to economic fears, an argument for identity politics as a source of community pushback could explain aspects of local resistance that other arguments miss. This research seeks to understand the role that identity politics plays in community outcry against the establishment of a national

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monument, and ascertain how it covers the existing gap in research of monument and park resistance that relies heavily on economic reasons for opposition.

This research first compares the creation process between national monuments and national parks and explores the history of national monuments, specifically monuments that faced opposition and the outcomes of those conflicts. Following a brief discussion of economic sources of opposition to monuments, identity politics as an argument for resistance to monument designation will be considered in the cases of two specific monuments. These case studies, focused on the newly designated Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument and the newly expanded Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, exemplify monuments that faced immense opposition from their specific local communities for a variety of reasons that have for the most part been attributed to economic fears within the community. The theory of identity as a source of opposition will be applied to both monuments in order to assess its validity and scope in regard to the case studies.

### **Opposition to the Antiquities Act and National Monuments**

The creation of a national park or monument may seem like an innocuous decision. Aside from the obvious recreational benefits of living near a national monument, history shows that designating new park land typically leads to the creation of new jobs, an increase in tourism, and a general economic boost for the region (Vincent 2016, 12). When President Theodore Roosevelt designated the Olympic Peninsula as a national monument in 1909, for instance, there was intense backlash from the logging industry, citing potential economic losses as a result of new timber restrictions the park would bring with it (Center for Western Priorities 2016). The area became Olympic National Park in 1938, and today it attracts 3.2

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million visitors, supports 3,592 local jobs, and adds \$366 million to the economy every year (Center for Western Priorities 2016). Grand Canyon National Park is one of America's most treasured landscapes, yet it too faced immense opposition. The mining industry, cattle farmers, railroad companies, and other extractive industries all came together and vehemently opposed protecting the Grand Canyon fearing loss of industry (Center for Western Priorities 2016). Because of this intense backlash, the Grand Canyon went through many different protection statuses before it finally became a national park, starting out as a forest reserve, transitioning to a game preserve and then to a national monument, until it finally became a national park in 1919 (Center for Western Priorities 2016). Today, Grand Canyon National Park attracts about 4.8 million visitors annually, sustains around 7,846 local jobs, and contributes \$711 million to the local economy each year (Center for Western Priorities 2016).

However, despite the proven benefits of designating land as a national monument, there continues to be near constant opposition, in part due to the unilateral nature of the monument creation process. One of the key differences between designating a national park and designating a national monument is that setting aside land as a national monument is entirely unilateral; a monument's creation does not require local or congressional approval (Rusnak 2003, 672). National parks in the United States are designated by an act of Congress and are created in order to preserve an area for its scenery or contribution to America's character (Iraola 2004, 167). The NPS frequently forwards suitable candidates for designation to Congress and members of Congress then choose which areas on the list should move to the study stage (NPS Planning). The NPS carries out these studies, which focus on the significance of the area's natural resources as well as potential park boundaries (NPS

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Planning). The studies also require that at least one public forum in the general area of the proposed park be held (NPS Planning). After the study is conducted, Congress holds a vote to decide whether or not the area will become a national park (NPS Planning). The path to national park status is a lengthy and complicated one, with many different actors involved at every step of the way.

National monuments, on the other hand, only need one actor's approval: The President of the United States. The Antiquities Act of 1906 gives the president the power to designate national monuments on federal lands (Lin 2002, 711). According to the Antiquities Act, the president should use the power granted by the Act to designate the smallest possible area while still properly managing the objects they are seeking to protect (Lee 2000, 240 - 241). The Antiquities Act was put in place to quickly protect federal lands (Vincent 2016, 2). During the time period in which the law was created, important historic and archaeological artifacts were frequently stolen or looted by collectors (Sanders 2016). While the Antiquities Act's initial intention was to protect areas of archeological importance, the Department of Interior felt that this was too narrow in scope and pushed for the legislation to include areas of scientific or historic interest (Sanders 2016). Although Congress disagreed with this broader definition, they failed to pass a piece of legislation that made the Antiquities Act more limited in breadth, and the final version included language related to protecting sites of archaeological importance, as well as scientific or historical importance (Halden 2011, 716). While lawmakers intended to keep the scope narrow, President Roosevelt immediately set a precedent of broadly interpreting the law when he created the United States' first national monument. He designated Devil's Tower National Monument months after the Antiquities

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Act was signed into law, which is arguably not a site of archaeological importance (Rusnak 2003, 677). Under the Antiquities Act, the president sets aside land by way of a proclamation, similar to an executive order (Iraola 2004, 166). The president can also direct land usage within the monument, so long as they provide appropriate management of the resources being protected (Iraola 2004, 168 -169). These protected lands also cannot have their monument status removed by a later president (Iraola 2004, 179).

Others view the creation of a national monument as a way of preserving land that was unable to pass as a national park, with the intention of revisiting that proposal later on, as it is sometimes easier to convert an already existing monument to a national park rather than land that is not federally owned (Righter 1989). Many National Parks that exist today started out as national monuments, including Zion National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, and Grand Teton National Park (Righter 1989). Three national monuments have been converted to national parks in the past 14 years, including Pinnacles National Park, Great Sand Dunes National Park, and Congaree National Park (Gray 2016). Out of the 59 current United States National Parks, 32 either originated as national monuments or absorbed land that once was a national monument (Fishell 2016). This transition from monument to national park on average takes 32 years, but a handful have transformed very quickly, including Acadia National Park, which existed as a national monument for only three years before it was made into a national park (Fishell 2016).

Members of Congress take issue with the Antiquities Act's lack of consistency with other laws related to land protection (Vincent 2016, 3). It does not require the strong environmental reviews and public participation requirements that other national land



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protection policies do (Vincent 2016). Other critics take issue with the new land use restrictions that come along with national monument status, which are often prohibitive to extractive and some recreational uses (Vincent 2016). Similarly, there is disagreement regarding how much land should be able to be designated a monument. Congress has considered bills that sought to limit the president's unilateral authority in this area in many ways, including changing land use restrictions within national monuments, imposing restrictions on the size of national monuments, requiring public participation in the creation process, requiring congressional approval of monuments, and ensuring the creation process is in accordance with other land management and environmental laws (Sanders 2016). Since 2014, Republican members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate have introduced 12 pieces of legislation seeking to limit or change the scope of the president's power as authorized by the Antiquities Act (Sanders 2016).

One of the most well known cases of opposition to a national monument is that surrounding Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, which was granted monument status by President Clinton amid great backlash (Cannon 2005, 64). The Utah Association of Counties and the Mountain States Legal Foundation sued President Clinton under the assertion that he had gone beyond the authority allowed to him by the Antiquities Act (Cannon 2005, 65-67). The court ruled in favor of President Clinton (Cannon 2005, 65). President Clinton was also challenged by the Mountain States Legal Foundation regarding his designation of Hanford Reach National Monument, who again argued that he had operated outside of the limited authority granted by the Antiquities Act (Wilkinson 2004, 167). Once again, the courts ruled in Clinton's favor (Wilkinson 2004, 168). In fact, although the

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Antiquities Act has been challenged numerous times, the courts have continuously upheld the authority that it grants to the president (Wilkinson 2004, 172). Those fighting against a particular national monument often argue that the president's motives were political rather than environmental or scientific. However, the court ruled in *Wyoming v. Franke*, a case related to the Antiquities Act, that the president does not need a valid motivation to designate a national monument (Rusnak 2003, 681). The Antiquities Act is not focused on the intent or interests of the president but rather presidential discretion (Rusnak 2003, 681).

### **Economic and Political Opposition to Monuments**

It is not only lawmakers who consistently oppose new federal parkland. Local residents have a tendency to oppose them as well. The most common statements amongst locals who oppose new monuments are economic in nature. When plans for a new monument are introduced, there are typically complaints of the economic losses that the local area will suffer. Often national monuments protect land that holds a natural resource, which can no longer be tapped for economic gains following the areas designation as a national monument. When Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was created, there was great pushback from the local and state governments who feared loss of employment because the new monument would prevent coal development on the Kaiparowits Plateau (Lin 2002, 723). The monument also prevented tapping of around 100,000 acres of oil and gas fields that existed within the monument (Crow 1997, 42). However, in most cases where employment and monetary losses are expected with the prevention of extraction or other resource industries, they are likely to be offset by economic gains related to tourism (Lin 2002, 723). National parks such as Arches and Canyonlands both faced opposition from their local communities

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due to economic fears, but since designation, those communities have experienced great economic gains and have become fairly dependent on park lands as a source of income (Lin 2002, 723). Many of the nation's most well known national parks spurred major opposition when they were created, including Grand Canyon National Park, Yellowstone National Park, and Redwood National Park; today, these protected areas are considered symbols of American culture (Center for Western Priorities 2016). There is a pattern of opposition that comes along with most plans for a new national park land often based on economic reasons. However, history shows that these protected areas often boost the local economy. Despite evidence, the trend of opposition continues, and there needs to be a new way of studying this pushback as the economic standpoint, while certainly valid to an extent, simply cannot serve as the complete explanation of this pattern of opposition. This leaves open a space to explore local identity and culture as the main source of opposition to national monuments.

This research seeks to fill a gap in political science literature, not only by exploring identity politics as a source of opposition to park land, but by simply exploring opposition to park land as a whole. The voice of political scientists for the most part is missing from literature that analyzes park opposition. The conflicts surrounding these monuments and parks are certainly political, and political scientists could add a valuable point of view to the literature surrounding the subject.

### **Identity Politics and Social Opposition**

Identity is often defined as an individual's or community's bond with the space that they occupy (Oxford Reference). This space could be as large as a country or as small as a room in a building. Studies of landscape reveal how one's identity can be tied to the place

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they live. Landscape geographer Denis Cosgrove argues that cultures write their traditions and practices into the landscapes they occupy, producing symbolic landscapes (1989, 125). Cosgrove further argues that culture and power are closely connected (1989, 124), and that both dominant and alternative groups produce landscapes that carry symbolic meaning to those communities (1989, 125). Cosgrove also asserts that symbolic landscapes lose meaning if they are not continuously reproduced by their associated culture (1989, 131). These communities and cultures can value a landscape for reasons other than their beauty or breathtaking views. Oftentimes a landscape as simple as a pasture or a building can be tied to local identity (Hutchins & Stormer 2013, 1). These symbolic landscapes are created through a community's continuous use of the land. Symbolic landscapes often dictate the ways in which the associated community views itself (Hutchins & Stormer 2013, 29). The deep, personal ties that a community develops with their space can produce conflict regarding changes to that landscape. Changes in land use can threaten and potentially amend a community's symbolic landscape and, in turn, their own identities (Hutchins & Stormer 2013, 25). In some cases, even after a local economy fails, the community will still identify with the traditional land use and lifestyle associated with it (Brugger 2009, 5). In the case of protected federal lands, forced land use change can effectively force a community to change their way of life (Petrzelka & Pyatt 2013, 290).

Landscape scholar Richard Schein argues that one of the principles of the American cultural landscape is the right of citizens to own land and do whatever they want with that land (1997, 663). This principle of cultural identity comes into play with the designation of national monuments. Viewing property rights through a possessory framework means that

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these rights are thought of as secure (Norton 2006, 80). They are thought to be provided by the government and, once provided, cannot be taken away without the approval of the owner (Norton 2006). Similarly, property rights are thought of as socially recognized and come with the power to control the practices and conditions within that space (Norton 2006, 34). Those who oppose national monuments often take the viewpoint that the federal government is unfairly meddling with property rights. These opposition groups will paint themselves as self-reliant, local communities that are defending their historical way of life and their culture against environmentalists who think they know better and want to take this away from them (Andrews 2014, 201). Discourse related to property rights also deals with the exclusivity of public land. Conservation efforts have the intention of preserving natural resources for all Americans: however, this assumes that all Americans view and experience public land the same way. Those who oppose federal ownership of land argue that national monuments and other sorts of public land promote a certain kind of land use, one that is exclusive and privileged (Andrews 2014, 212). These public lands often prohibit more traditional, local land uses such as hunting, snowmobiling, logging, and fishing (Andrews 2014, 213). Supporters of federal land management assume that the outdoors represent the same ideals and values for all Americans, such as hiking and camping. This viewpoint is often privileged over others during the designation of federal land (Andrews 2014, 212). There is a sense amongst those who oppose national monuments and other federally protected lands that it is undemocratic to designate parks for a small part of the American populace to use (Hampton 1981, 40). Part of this issue stems from differing views as to what democracy means to those on either side of the issue. Those who support public lands view democracy's role as

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promoting the common good where the federal government protects natural resources and the interests of all citizens (Andrews 2014, 214). Those who push back against public lands tend to argue that democracy means protecting individual rights from others and the government (Andrews 2014, 215).

Identity politics is a term that is typically used to describe movements and mobilization based on identity and culture (Bernstein 2005, 47). Identity politics can be used to discuss a group with a collective identity, which they then use as a political strategy (Bernstein 2005, 59). This is how identity and culture can be the driving force to opposition of national monuments. A community's traditions and way of life play a key role in opposition to national monuments and land management (Trainor 2008, 348). This has been demonstrated in the past monument designations as discussed earlier, yet identity politics are not always considered the most serious contributing factor to monument opposition. Analyzing two case studies regarding opposition to the creation of national monuments, this research explores the role that community identity and culture play in these movements against federal land management.

### **History of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument**

The history of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument is lengthy and complex. Katahdin Woods and Waters, located in the North Woods of Maine, was designated as a national monument on August 24, 2016 by executive order of President Barack Obama, signaling the end of an almost decade-long debate between local opponents and national supporters regarding the designation of the area as federal land (Levitz 2016). The monument encompasses over 87,500 acres of land and was donated to the NPS by

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Roxanne Quimby, founder of Burt's Bees (Perez-Pena 2016). However, it was not her original intention for the land to become a national monument. Quimby had been purchasing land in northern Maine quite rapidly following her sale of the company in 2007, and about 15 years ago, Quimby established a foundation named Elliotsville Plantation, Inc. (EPI) in order to manage the land she was accumulating (Andrews 2014, 8). When she closed off the land to activities common to the area such as hunting and snowmobiling, she ignited conflict with local residents (Andrews 2014, 22). This anger came to a head when Quimby came forward with her intention to turn the land she had amassed into a national park. In April 2011, she announced her plan to donate around 74,000 acres of land to the NPS to designate Maine Woods National Park (Andrews 2014,10). This strategy is a typical path to public land status in the eastern United States. In the eastern portion of the United States, most existing public lands were created through purchases by the Federal government or by philanthropists who then donated it to the government (Wuerthner 2016, 56). Acadia National Park in Maine, New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest, Cape Code National Seashore, as well as many others all achieved park status this way (Wuerthner 2016). In the western United States, however, most national parks are created out of existing federally owned land (Docherty 2000, 538).

Quimby was not the first advocate for a Maine Woods National Park. A group called "RESTORE: The North Maine Woods" first proposed a national park in the North Woods as they maintained that only by creating a national park can the ecologically significant area be protected from logging and development (Harrison 2006, 401). RESTORE's proposed park would have encompassed 3.2 million acres of land, stretching from land past Baxter State

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Park in the east, all the way to the US-Canadian Border in the west (Docherty 2000, 539). Within its border would be Moosehead Lake, 100 miles of the Appalachian Trail, as well as the headways of Maine's major rivers (Docherty 2000). All in all, the proposed Maine Woods National Park would have been bigger than Connecticut (Docherty 2000). In an attempt to appease local residents, the parks designation would also include a national preserve, which would have allowed for the recreational activities traditional to northern Maine (Docherty 2000). Quimby joined forces with RESTORE in the late 1990s as a member of their board of directors, right as she began amassing large swaths of land in the region (Harrison 2006, 404). The board did not convene with local residents to receive their feedback, perpetuating an image that the group was not interested in community input (Andrews 2014, 72). Quimby realized that this approach was not helping her cause, and eventually began distancing herself from RESTORE (Andrews 2014, 73). Quimby formally resigned from RESTORE's board of directors in 2003, (Harrison 2006, 414) and started seeking input from local groups such as the Maine Snowmobile Association and the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine (Andrews 2014, 73).

Quimby's own plan for Maine Woods National Park that was announced in 2011 was much smaller than RESTORE's original proposal. The NPS was intrigued by her proposal as the park would reach a population that was not as exposed to parks as others in the United States (Andrews 2014, 10). The northeastern United States is so densely populated yet has so few federally owned parks compared to other regions in the United States (Andrews 2014, 10). The only national park in the region is Acadia National Park, which attracts over two million recreational visitors a year (NPS 2016). Also, the North Woods of Maine are



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undeniably a special area, constituting the largest stretch of undeveloped land in the United States outside of Alaska (Wuerthner 2016, 56). Henry David Thoreau wrote about the region's beauty in his book *The Maine Woods* and was actually an early advocate for the creation of a preserve in the area (Docherty 2000, 537).

While she found supporters nationally and within Maine, Quimby's plan was also met with vehement opposition, particularly from communities within the North Maine Woods (Harrison 2006, 397). In the early twentieth century, timber companies owned most of the region, using the woods for pulp as well as logging purposes (Harrison 2006, 401). However, Maine's timber and paper industries today are failing. In the early 2000s, about 13,000 Maine residents were employed in the paper industry. By the year 2015, only about 6,150 Mainers were working at paper mills (Whittle 2016). Despite these industries dying out, the cultures associated with them are still deeply engrained in these communities, as generation after generation worked the land in that fashion (Harrison 2006, 401). A potential Maine Woods National Park would have prohibited timber production within its designated area (Harrison 2006, 401 - 402). Opponents interpreted this as a restriction that puts local economies and livelihoods at serious risk. Opposition was widespread and took many different forms, from letters to the editors and op-eds in local newspapers, to grassroots organizing efforts. In an email interview between the principal investigator of this research and Anne Mitchell, who served from 2004 to 2016 as the President of the Maine Woods Coalition, an organization formed to oppose the national park, she discussed much of the opposition efforts that took place:

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We worked with the Maine Forest Products Council and the Maine Snowmobile Association to organize our campaign against this federal intrusion by calling for votes in the local towns on a park/monument and planning a press conference revealing our map showing how much land Quimby did not own that she was proposing for her park or monument (the monument was always her “plan b” if a park didn’t happen first). We launched a huge sign campaign with “National Park No” signs lining the roads in the local area, from Lincoln, Maine to Patten and Shin Pond to the north.

Past research indicates that residents living within newly designated park land are more likely to have a negative attitude toward it, while those who live in the same region as the park but not in it are likely to have positive attitudes toward it (Lamborn 2014, 14). This holds true in the case of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. In the midst of debate over the creation of the park, polls discovered that a majority of Maine residents actually supported a national monument (Andrews 2014, 11). This is contrasted with residents local to the area who vehemently opposed it. Opposition groups consisted largely of local recreational clubs, including snowmobiling, hunting, and fishing clubs, as well as Mitchell’s group, the Maine Woods Coalition, which was created with the direct goal of stopping the creation of a national park in the North Maine Woods (Harrison 2006, 403). Opponents were eventually backed by the Governor of Maine as well as the state legislature, which passed a resolution in 2011 stating their opposition to the creation of a park in the North Maine Woods (Andrews 2014, 11). Soon after this resolution, Quimby stepped down as the head of EPI, and her son took over as the president (Andrews 2014). The Quimby family retracted their proposal for a

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national park in December of 2012, taking time to shift their strategy and assess how to increase local support (Andrews 2014, 22).

Quimby's son, Lucas St. Clair, had a markedly different approach of selling the park than his mother did. St. Clair focused on public outreach, using the services of both a lobbying firm and a public relations group (Dennis 2016). He also opened portions of his mother's land back up to recreational activities like snowmobiling and hunting and even promised to keep those same areas open to those activities even after it became a national park (Dennis 2016) He built up the area surrounding the proposed park, constructing a loop road around its boundaries, hiking trails, and camping areas (Dennis 2016). All of this was done with a focus on public outreach. He met with many local residents and even eventually won the endorsements of local organizations like the *Bangor Daily News* and the Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce (Dennis 2016).

### **Economic Situation of the North Woods**

One of the biggest topics of debate amongst those on both sides of the issue was the economic effect that the proposed park would have on the region. Supporters of the park argued that it could simultaneously spur economic development and promote conservation. Economies in the North Woods have been failing for a while as young people leave their hometowns for better opportunities, and paper mills keep shutting their doors (Levitz 2011). In a phone interview between the principal investigator of this research and Eliza Donoghue, the Outreach Coordinator for the Natural Resources Council of Maine, an organization that worked side by side with Lucas St. Clair to designate park land in the North Maine Woods, Donoghue discussed this changing economic landscape:

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Many of the communities that are in or near to Maine's North Woods are communities that are in transition. A lot of these communities were built up originally based on natural resources industries, and specifically the paper making industry. In recent years, the paper making industry has seen pretty significant declines.

In 2011, East Millinocket's paper mill closed, which was seriously detrimental to the local economy because in 2010, 60 percent of town tax revenue came from that very mill (Levitz 2011). Nearby town Millinocket's paper mill shut down in 2008. Both closed as a result of increasing competition from China as well as a loss in demand for paper as it becomes more and more obsolete (Levitz 2011). Between the years 2007 and 2011, Millinocket lost around 9,000 jobs as a result of the increasing scarcity of manufacturing jobs (Levitz 2011). Based on nearby Acadia National Park's annual visitation number, it can be assumed that the proposed Maine Woods National Park would attract large numbers of visitors as well.

Supporters argued that the local economy would shift, as it would thrive off of visitors paying to simply enjoy the scenery rather than companies profiting off the destruction of the North Maine Woods (Harrison 2006, 407). Also, nearby towns would experience economic boosts as park visitors participated in local economies in the form of lodging, dining, shopping, and other services (Harrison 2006). A study commissioned by a supporting group found that the proposed park could add about \$109 million to \$435 million in sales to Maine's economy and also create anywhere from 5,000 to 20,000 jobs (Ridgley 2005, 23-24). Additionally, communities near national parks have experienced income growth in recent decades twice that of the United States average (Ridgley 2005, 24). However, opponents of the park argue

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that the monument will protect trees that could be used in timber production to bring back jobs to the region (Levitz 2011).

Opponents of the park also argued that a tourist economy is not enough to sustain an entire region's economy. Anne Mitchell maintained that a national park would leave these northern communities in even worse shape and draw on seasonal workers rather than provide locals with stable occupations:

A tourism economy is not a community building economy. Tourist towns in Maine are empty in winter with the imported workers leaving for work down south or back to their own country in Eastern Europe.

Opponents feared that a national park would close the door completely on the timber industry that has sustained them for centuries. Mitchell asserted that locals viewed the monument as a threat to the success of the state:

The forest industry generates \$8.5 billion dollars for our state's economy and is the backbone of our rural economy. This federal presence and the inevitable increase in federal holdings here will only erode the forest industry... the people of northern Maine realize how important the forest industry is to our state and their jobs are important to the people. They also are aware of what federal regulations can do to our way of life here.

Even as the timber industry failed, those in northern Maine struggled to imagine their life without it, as these communities have relied on logging to survive for so long. In a phone interview between the principal investigator of this research and Lucas St. Clair, son of Roxanne Quimby and head of the campaign to designate a park in the North Maine Woods, he

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argued that the opposition was not actually rooted in economic fears, but rather a fear of the lifestyle and culture of northern Maine changing:

I think most of it was, it was really... a change that was coming that people were not totally in control of, from an economic standpoint. The mills had all closed down and people really wanted to go back to a way of life that they just couldn't get to.

St. Clair further discussed this fear of the unknown amongst opponents. "I feel like, you know, people just didn't know what to expect... There was so much change, unknown, it was just met with sort of hostility and fear." St. Clair argued that the uncertainty that a park would create drove the opposition, potentially jeopardizing their lifestyle and identity.

### **Identity Politics in Maine's North Woods**

There is clear evidence that the source of local opposition to North Woods National Park, and eventually Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, cannot be solely based in economics, as the industries that opponents claim the park threatens are fading away with or without a park. Those who oppose the monument certainly cite economic reasons, but when analyzed with an identity politics framework, it seems that the purposes stated by opponents for standing against a park are rooted in their cultural identity, even when they seem related to economics on the surface. In the midst of the conflict surrounding Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, there are two Maine identities fighting against each other (Docherty 2000, 545). On one side, there are Maine residents who live in the northern portion of the state. This community and their ancestors have used the land to sustain themselves for decades (Docherty 2000, 545). While they have historically relied on the timber industry as the crux of their economy, loss of industry has led to increased

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unemployment in the region, and many younger residents are migrating to southern Maine in search of better opportunities (Docherty 2000). Those from northern Maine tend to identify themselves as “true” Mainers (Harrison 2006, 410). The other Maine identity surrounds southern Maine, where local economies are, for the most part, growing as high-tech industries migrate to the region (Docherty 2000, 545). Residents of southern Maine tend to be much wealthier than those in northern Maine (Docherty 2000). Those in northern Maine are aware that they are considered “other”, and this contributes to their sense that they and their needs have largely been ignored by the government of Maine (Docherty 2000). The divide between north and south Maine manifested itself in the rhetoric of the debate over the national park (Docherty 2000, 546). Both opponents and proponents wrote letters to the editors of local newspapers, placing an emphasis on the differences between north and south Maine throughout the letters (Docherty 2000). One resident of northern Maine wrote a letter to the *Bangor Daily News*, opposing the monument and calling on another columnist who supported the park to move to northern Maine or excuse himself from the debate:

The "saviors of the earth," those who wish to protect everything everywhere, hold a unique position in our society: they have theirs, and now want what others have. It is easy to advocate government land when you are in an area of Maine that is doing well economically. I encourage Cobb [the other writer] to leave his job, move to the north woods and try to make a living here. Then, and only then, will his suggestion have merit (Docherty 2000, 547).

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This sort of language is exemplary of the arguments of park opponents, drawing on economics as well as geography, asserting that those in southern Maine have a different vision of nature and are eager to protect a landscape that is not theirs to give away.

The opponents of the park shared a general suspicion of the federal government. This stems from the identity of the Maine Woods and contributed to the rhetoric of the campaign against the national park and monument. Lucas St. Clair noted this suspicion toward the federal government, arguing that, “I think a lot of people were... worried that the federal government would overreach and take some of their independence away.” Even promises from the Quimbys to keep part of the land open to traditional activities did not satisfy those who opposed protecting the North Woods, as they suspected that the Quimbys viewed a monument as merely a step towards designating a national park in the future. Mitchell reiterated the negative connotation that the federal government has to those living in northern Maine:

We have been opposed to a monument as we are a national park, for the same reasons: federal control of the area brings change to the governance of the local area and impacts logging, recreational use of the land, and the loss of tax revenue. We have already seen areas closed off to ATV use and problems with traffic on private logging roads. And more importantly, this monument is merely a stepping stone to the 3.2m acre national park that was proposed in 2000 and is currently being campaigned for now by enviro groups in Maine and Washington DC.

Mitchell further argued that the encroaching federal government will destroy the cultures of the North Maine Woods, maintaining that locals “...know a park can only follow this (the



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national monument) and that would destroy the fabric of their communities, just as has happened in other places like Cuyahoga, Ohio and through the western states.” There is a general sense amongst these communities that the federal government and the identity and culture of the North Maine Woods simply cannot coexist.

Identity politics also played a role in the region’s collective perception of Roxanne Quimby. She is from Massachusetts, and despite being a long time resident of Maine, was viewed as an out of state “other” seeking to assert her own agenda over a community that she was not a part of (Harrison 2006, 411). Her ideas of wilderness as well as her lifestyle choices clashed with those of local residents. As a vegetarian, conservationist, and successful businesswoman, she is a controversial figure amongst northern Maine’s male-centric, hunting communities (Harrison 2006). It did not matter to these local communities that Quimby owned land or that she lived in the region. It was the principle of a perceived outsider coming in and taking away land, resources, and traditional activities from these communities that created conflict. This ties back to the idea that opposition groups often perceived designations of national monuments to be undemocratic. Those in northern Maine consider Quimby a wealthy outsider, and her purchasing of millions of acres of land that was formerly accessible to locals with the intention of designating a national park is thought of as undemocratic.

It may seem strange that residents of northern Maine would fear loss of recreational access to land as a result of federal ownership, as private ownership would indicate no public access. However, in the North Woods of Maine, unrestricted access to private land is expected. Paper companies that owned millions of acres of land in Maine allowed public use

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of their private land for recreational purposes (Hutchins & Stormer 2013, 32). This access to private land is a key aspect of the North Woods' symbolic landscape. Traditional activities like fishing, snowmobiling, and hunting are inextricably tied to the identities of these communities and are engrained in the landscape. Identity of place needs to be constantly reproduced by the associated culture to maintain existence; therefore, a change in land-ownership from private to public hands can be interpreted as a threat to the identity of the North Woods. Access to private land is an inextricable aspect of the identity of northern Maine, and this clashes with how southern Mainers and most other park users understand private land use (Hutchins & Stormer 2013). This can be further applied to the ways in which these two conflicting identities, within Maine and the United States, understand recreation. As discussed earlier, those who support federal park land assume that wilderness holds the same meaning for all Americans. However, out of state tourists as well as southern Mainers view outdoor recreation, and the outdoors more broadly, quite differently than those in northern Maine do. They often consider national parks to be the pinnacles of outdoor experiences, and this viewpoint is privileged over others, like those found in northern Maine. To these communities, federal land ownership and national parks actually threaten their access to the outdoors, as they consider the woods to represent more traditional activities like logging, fishing, and snowmobiling.

Anne Mitchell explained the differing views of wilderness that those in northern Maine and everywhere else hold true, as well as the role that access to private land plays in the everyday lives of northern Mainers:

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The North Woods of Maine is basically a working forest, or industrial forest, as some call it. It is not the “wilderness” that the enviro groups would have you believe. There is a network of private logging roads that give people access to the woods for camping, fishing, hunting and other recreation that they would not otherwise have with such ease without these roads. Maine’s long-standing tradition of open access to privately owned land is unique in its functionality with the logging industry.

These activities and the traditional lifestyle associated with them inform the identities of those living in northern Maine, and because identities have to be constantly reproduced to continue existing, Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument threatens the cultural identities of the communities of northern Maine.

The North Woods of Maine serve as a symbolic landscape to the local communities who reside within them. The existing cultures of these communities today are reliant on the practices and lifestyles of their ancestors who worked the land for centuries before them. Applying Cosgrove’s framework of culture and landscape to the North Maine Woods, these traditional communities of northern Maine are considered an alternative culture whose land use and practices differ from those considered the norm, in this case southern Mainers and many other groups in the United States. The way of life traditional to Maine’s North Woods holds symbolic meaning to the communities that live there, and inform the cultural identity of these groups. To outsiders, the North Maine Woods are valuable because of their scenery, but to the communities living there, the woods are a part of who they consider themselves to be. Opposition to the Maine Woods National Park, and later Katahdin Woods and Waters

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National Monument, can be understood as identity politics as opponents of these parks mobilized because they believed their identity and culture were under threat.

### **History of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument**

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM) is a protected area that has undergone great change throughout its history as federal land and waters, the most obvious being its name. Its history as protected land began in 2000, when President Clinton designated the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve through executive order (Sproat & Gross 2008). President George W. Bush then designated the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument in 2006, and in doing so created the largest protected marine area in the world at the time, as well the most extensive conservation effort in the history of the United States (Sproat & Gross 2008). The same year that the monument was designated, an initiative to rename the park with a Hawaiian name was started by the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (CWG), an organization that would eventually lead the campaign to expand the monument (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2016). It is comprised of scholars, local activists, teachers, resource managers, representatives from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Office of Hawaiian Relations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), other government agencies (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2016), and local “pono”, a Hawaiian term describing fisherman involved in small-scale fishing endeavors who focus on conservation (Miner 2016). The CWG tasked two respected Hawaiian elders, Uncle Buzzy Agard and Auntie Pua Kanahele, with providing possible names for the monument (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2016).

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Agard is a traditional fisherman in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, located within the national monument, and worked on the campaign supporting the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, and Kanahale is an esteemed Hawaiian scholar (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2016). Kanahale and Agard came up with a list of possible names, and the group eventually chose “Papahānaumokuākea” (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2016). On February 27, 2007, the name of the monument was officially changed to Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument by an executive order, in an effort to better include the identity and culture of native Hawaiians in the monument (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2016).

Encompassing 139,797 square miles of water surrounding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (Office of Hawaiian Affairs 2016) the marine monument was created to protect the ecosystems unique to the island chain as well as prevent fishing and other extractive industries (Rieser 2012, 211). As the world’s coral reefs continue to deteriorate, PMNM is known to be fairly pristine, with low rates of coral disease as well as an abundance of animals that do not exist elsewhere (Selkoe et al. 2009, 636). The coral reefs within the park provide a habitat for more than 7,000 species (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2017). About 25 percent of these species can only be found in the waters surrounding the Hawaiian Islands (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2017). The islands within PMNM are also often described as the most geographically isolated archipelago on Earth; the nearest continent is 3,800 kilometers away, and the nearest island that is not a part of the NWHI is 900 kilometers away (Ward 2010, 7). The landscape of PMNM is so unique that the federal land was named an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010 (Ward 2010, 6).

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When President Bush created the monument, new restrictions came along with it. The extraction of oil and gas well as coral became illegal as soon as the area became a monument and permits are required to conduct research and to participate in traditional Hawaiian practices (Ward 2010, 13). Commercial fishing was supposed to be slowly phased out, eventually becoming completely illegal in 2011 (Ward 2010). However, in January of 2010, the remaining fishers were bought out by the National Marine Fisheries Service, officially ending commercial fishing in the waters of PMNM (Kittinger 2011, 2).

Over time, nine other preserves surpassed PMNM in size, meaning the monument was no longer the most expansive protected area (Rand 2016). However, on August 26, 2016, President Obama made a historic move when he once again made PMNM the largest protected area in the world (Eilperin 2016). He increased the size of PMNM to 582,578 square miles, about four times bigger than its former size (Eilperin 2016). President Obama expanded the monument's borders all the way to the edge of the 200 mile limit of United State's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surrounding Hawaii (Barnett 2016). Within the expanded area, commercial fishing and other extractive activities were immediately made illegal (Eilperin 2016). Extractions of resources for research and traditional Hawaiian practices, as well as recreational fishing, are all legal with the right permits (Eilperin 2016). The push for expanding the monument started when a group of native Hawaiian leaders wrote a letter to President Obama in January of 2016 with the original proposition of expanding PMNM to the EEZ boundary (Expand Papahanaumokuakea 2017). That March, the CWG convened and recommended the expansion of the monument, but excluded the waters surrounding the Islands of Nihau and Kauai (Expand Papahanaumokuakea 2017). In May of

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2016, members of the Obama administration visited Hawaii and participated in forums, hearing opinions from those on either side of the debate (Expand Papahānaumokuākea 2017).

The potential expansion of PMNM was formally opposed by the majority Democratic Hawaii State Senate, the majority Democratic Hawaiian House of Representatives, the Republican Governor of the Northern Marianas Islands, local mayors, as well as local fishing associations such as the Hawaii Longline Association and the Hawaii Fisherman's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition (Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council 2016). In fact, the Hawaiian fishing industry was perhaps that most outspoken opponent of the expansion of PMNM. Despite the opposition of local lawmakers, the support of Democratic Hawaiian Senators tipped the scales in favor of the expansion (Barnett 2016). Brian Schatz, a Democratic U.S. Senator from Hawaii, supported the plan created by the CWG, arguing that it served as a compromise for Hawaii's fisherman, as it kept the boundary on the western side of the monument where it was, which would permit some fishermen to continue working in their traditional waters (Barnett 2016). Democratic Governor of Hawaii David Ige came forward and publically support the expansion of PMNM on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and two days later, Obama used the powers afforded to him by the Antiquities Act, and expanded PMNM (Expand Papahānaumokuākea 2017). While there was no documented survey of the Hawaiian public gauging public support for the expansion of PMNM, many public meetings were hosted by the Department of Interior and other federal agencies and hundreds of locals attended these meetings across the islands (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2017).

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### **Identity Politics in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands**

The case of opposition to the expansion of PMNM is more complex than the case of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. Unlike the paper and timber industries in northern Maine which have effectively failed, the fishing industries, and longline fishing industry in particular, are a thriving aspect of the economy of the landscape surrounding PMNM. The expansion of PMNM directly threatens these activities. Since the Hawaiian Islands were discovered, particularly in the areas near PMNM, the local economy has centered on extractive industries, such as whaling, fishing, and birding (Ward 2010, 12). And while some of these activities have gone by the wayside, the fishing industry of Hawaii is still extremely robust. So on the surface, opposition to the expansion seems rooted in economic fears. However, with deeper analysis, the role of identity politics in local opposition becomes hard to ignore. Both supporters and opponents of the expansion of PMNM invoked identity politics in their cases both for and against the park.

The NWHI within the monument are considered a sacred landscape to Native Hawaiians, and are an integral part of their identity (Kerr et. al 2016, 12). According to Hawaiian tradition, the site of the monument is home to the place where “Po”, the realm of the gods, and “Ao”, the realm of light, come together (Freestone et al. 2007, 196). In Hawaiian mythology, the NWHI serve as a path for Hawaiians to travel when they die, until they reach the realm of the gods (Freestone et al. 2007) The name “Papahānaumokuākea” pays homage to Hawaiian tradition regarding the creation of the Hawaiian Islands. “Papahānaumoku” is a Hawaiian mother deity that represents the Earth, and Wakea is a father-like deity that represents the sky (Freestone et al. 2007). When these two beings came



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together, according to tradition, the Hawaiian Islands were created (Freestone et al. 2007). Broken up even more, the name “Papahānaumokuākea” combines four Hawaiian words, including “Papa”, which refers to the Hawaiian earth mother, “Hanau” meaning birth, “Moku” translating to island, and “Akea” which roughly translates to a broad (Ward 2010, 13). Giving the monument this sacred name was an attempt to symbolize the continuing of Hawaiian culture as well as to connect Hawaiians to their native identity (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 2016).

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group maintained that expanding the monument had nothing to do with politics or the ability to say that PMNM is the largest protected area in the world (Miner 2016). Supporters argued that the expansion was entirely intended to preserve the area’s marine resources, for both ecological and cultural purposes (Miner 2016). While protecting unique and endangered species as well as addressing issues of climate change were perhaps the biggest forces driving the campaign for expansion, there was also a focus on protecting the cultural landscape of the NWHI for native Hawaiians. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which formally endorsed the expansion in May of 2016, argued that by preserving more of Hawaii’s oceans, they would be carrying on the traditions of their ancestors, who believed in creating “pu’uhonua”, or refuges, for Hawaii’s natural resources (Office of Hawaiian Affairs 2016).

Supporters of the expansion of PMNM also maintained that while commercial fishing would become illegal, longline fishermen would experience minimal effects, as only about five percent of longline fishermen have recently worked in waters included in the proposed expansion (Office of Hawaiian Affairs 2016). Similarly, supporters argued that the expansion

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would have little effect on the traditional activities of native Hawaiians such as subsistence fishing, as these activities would be allowed with a permit (Office of Hawaiian Affairs 2016). According to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, every native Hawaiian that has ever applied for a permit to access the monument has been granted one (Office of Hawaiian Affairs 2016).

Despite the name being changed in an attempt at honoring native Hawaiian culture, opponents saw the proposed expansion years later as a move accomplishing the opposite of that (Barnett 2016). Some native Hawaiians viewed the potential expansion of PMNM as the federal government stealing their ancestral, sacred land from them (Hannah 2016, 32). As in other cases of proposed national monument creation, there was a sentiment shared amongst some Hawaiians that they do not need outsiders to tell them how to control their natural resources (Hannah 2016). To outsiders, the area of PMNM is valuable for their marine natural resources. However, to native Hawaiians, the landscape of the monument represents their heritage, and access to the resources of park is a major part of the native Hawaiian identity. In an interview with the National Geographic, the chairman of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council Edwin Ebisui Jr. argued that expanding the monument would serve as a blow to native Hawaiian culture:

To the native Hawaiian, access to marine resources is very, very important and always will be. I don't see how quadrupling the size of the prohibited fishing area in any way furthers their cultural interests (Barnett 2016).

Opponents viewed the expansion as the federal government and President Obama putting ecological interests above those of native Hawaiians, as well as aiming to make a political statement about conservation at the expense of their identity. Fishing associations like the

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Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council argued that the freedom to fish is vital to the identity of native Hawaiians, and limiting their access to these traditional practices also works to limit their cultural identities (Barnett 2016). In their letter to President Obama formally opposing the expansion of PMNM, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council argued that:

The cultural and economic importance of fisheries to Hawaii are unmatched elsewhere in the Nation... Healthy fisheries sustained indigenous Hawaiian communities for over 1,500 years, and fisheries continue to remain important today (Simonds and Ebisui Jr., 2016).

Opponents felt that expanding the monument was more about political motives rather than ecological ones. Some native Hawaiians have also expressed a feeling of exclusion from the decision making process; while the CWG is comprised of native Hawaiians, opponents argue that they represent a select group that isn't necessarily representative of those that use the monument (Watson et al. 2014, 6).

Opponents in the fishing industry such as the Hawaii Longline Association argued that there was no scientific proof that expanding the monument would benefit preservation of the NWHI's marine resources, and maintained that the current boundaries were sufficient to fulfill the conservation needs of the region (Martin 2016). Furthermore, Hawaiian fishermen expressed that expanding the monument would show that the federal government does not respect the fishing industry of Hawaii, and applied even further, the culture of the NWHI, as fishing is such an integral aspect of the identity of native Hawaiians (Martin 2016). In fact, some fishermen viewed the proposed expansion of PMNM as an attack on native Hawaiian

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culture because the fishing industry plays such a large part of the NWHI's history, as well as its current culture (Martin 2016).

Some native Hawaiians, including employees of the OHA, an institution that as a whole supports the expansion of PMNM, believe that large-scale, permanent restrictions on fishing threaten the traditions and culture of native Hawaiians (Kelleher 2016). Opponents argued the expansion would impose restrictions contrary to the ways in which natural resources were conserved in Hawaii's past (Kelleher 2016). Throughout Hawaii's history, temporary moratoriums were implemented on fishing when overharvesting occurred (Kelleher 2016). In a state that struggles with food scarcity and that relies on importations so heavily, a threat to fishing is considered a threat to food security.

Similarly, native Hawaiians feared that they would lose access to their sacred landscape; particularly, groups that practice traditional voyages to the NWHI. While native Hawaiians can access the monument with a permit, opponents argued that in the past, these permits were not widely publicized and there was a long period between applying and being granted a permit, preventing native Hawaiians from accessing their ancestral landscape for long periods of time (Hannah 2016, 33). Identity of place must continue to be reproduced in order to exist, and if native Hawaiians lose easy access to the NWHI, they risk losing their cultural identity, as they no longer would be able to practice it. Indigenous communities in the United States are becoming increasingly rare, and the culture of native Hawaiians depends on their access to the sacred landscape of the NWHI. The ability to practice traditional activities in the NWHI is integral to the identities of native Hawaiians. The key role of the

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NWHI in the identities of native Hawaiians makes a strong case for identity politics as a strong contributing factor in opposition to the expansion of PMNM.

### **Discussion**

Throughout this research, identity politics emerges as a viable explanation for opposition to the creation of national park land. This is not to argue that it is the only source of opposition at work. In some cases, such as that of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, the identity argument fits easily, as the economic argument is very thin. The paper and timber industries are failing, something that is acknowledged by all supporters of the park and some opponents. The fear of change in lifestyle and industry in the North Maine Woods, which may seem like an economic argument at face-value, actually highlights a fear of change in the traditions and culture amongst opponents of the park. In the case of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, the economic argument makes more sense, as the fishing industry is still robust in the area surrounding PMNM. However, while commercial fishing was threatened with the proposed expansion, longline fishing and other more traditional native fishing techniques faced minimal effects. In this case, a mix of economics and identity as sources of opposition seem to be at work. Unlike the case of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, the fishing industry played an extremely active role in opposing the expansion of PMNM, and it's hard to argue that their opposition is based in much other than economics as industries are solely focused on making money. However, the opposition found amongst native fishermen fits better in an identity framework, as their work would not have really been affected by the expansion. Instead, it was the threat to sacred, ancestral land that contributed to the opposition from these groups.

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A factor that could make the identity politics theory a little bit weaker is that of partisan politics. President Obama faced intense backlash for designating both PMNM and KWNM, but there is no evidence that President Bush faced much opposition when first creating PMNM. President Obama also often faced criticism that he was overstepping the powers of the executive branch when he designated national monuments (Rott 2016). In the case of PMNM, there were accusations that Obama was more focused on cementing his legacy as the environmental president rather than protecting the natural resources located within PMNM (Beck 2016). However, the partisan argument becomes unclear when considering the local governments in play. While the Maine Senators and Governor who opposed the monument were Republicans, most of the Hawaiian state representatives that opposed the expansion of PMNM were Democrats. Partisanship as a source for local opposition is a factor that remains unexplored in the literature and for the most part is not explicitly invoked by local opponents. Partisan politics is certainly an aspect of opposition that cannot be ignored, and needs to be further explored in future research.

### **Conclusion**

While it is clear that identity politics cannot explain away all of the opposition that national monuments face, it is a source that has been largely overlooked by the academic community and needs more attention. Identity can be used as a lens with which to understand a lot of different factors that drive park opposition. Between the two case studies, there are common threads that point to identity as a driving factor of community opposition. The sentiment that these communities do not need to be told how to manage their own land, the fear of the federal government coming and stealing land that is not theirs, a change in industry

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creating a change in culture, and the loss of ability to practice traditional activities such as fishing, hunting, and snowmobiling can all be attributed to a community's identity and culture feeling threatened, in turn spurring local opposition. There is very little research done by political scientists that analyzes opposition to national monuments and parks. This field of research needs the voices of political scientists as community opposition is inherently political, and this perspective is all but missing from the existing literature. This research provides a starting point for identity politics to be further explored as an important, and in some cases essential, source of community opposition to national parks and monuments.

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