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THE TRIBUNE

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AND LOIS CAPPS

The Central Coast is renowned for its scenic landscapes and vibrant environment. The Carrizo Plain National Monument east of San Luis Obispo is a key contributor to this well-deserved reputation.

After years of terrible drought in California, much-needed rain brought the hills of the Carrizo Plain brilliantly alive, blanketed by purple and gold wildflowers.

Thousands of visitors flocked to witness the "superbloom," to catch a glimpse of this natural wonder that was so expansive it was captured in photographs taken by NASA satellites.

As Carrizo Plain's beautiful grasslands were gaining national attention for this historic bloom, the president simultaneously penned a misguided executive order requiring the Department of the Interior to evaluate monu-



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Thousands of people flocked to the Carrizo Plain National Monument this spring to witness the "superbloom."

LOCAL VIEWPOINT

If you think the Carrizo Plain is worth protecting, tell Trump

ment declarations made by his three most recent predecessors.

The Carrizo Plain falls into this category, along with 21 other national monuments across the country. That could end protections for our most treasured natural landscapes and leave the Carrizo Plain vulnerable to future oil drilling and mining.

This executive order is a blatant attempt to undermine the National Antiquities Act, one of the nation's most important conservation tools, and poses a direct threat to the

preservation of the unique habitat on the Central Coast.

Contrary to the president's assertion that this review combats a "massive federal land grab," the process of determining the boundaries of the Carrizo Plain was not arbitrary. It included careful economic and environmental impact review.

From its conception all the way up until now, significant planning and research went into deciding the borders of the national monument. There have been countless public meetings and pub-

over 400 miles, but because of agricultural and urban development, the Carrizo Plain National Monument is now the largest undeveloped remnant of this thriving ecosystem. It continues to provide crucial habitats for the conservation of numerous plants and animals, including the protected species San Joaquin kit fox and giant kangaroo rat and the California condor.

The size and isolation of the plain has made it ideal for long-term conservation efforts, and essential for safeguarding the plants and animals native to the Central Coast.

Soda Lake is the rarest landmark in the Carrizo Plains, as it is the largest remaining alkali wetland in southern California and the only closed basin within the coastal mountains. The spectacular geological fixtures across the Carrizo Plain were created by the San Andreas Fault, as the national monument is nestled right along the fault line.

The Carrizo Plain offers more than protection of natural wonders, it also preserves Painted Rock, a sacred site for Native Americans. The 4-millennia-old pictographs are considered one of the finest examples of rock art in the world.

Central Coast residents know these monuments are not only critical to protecting unique landscapes and ecological

habitats for endangered species, they are also an economic engine. The monument brings flocks of people to the Central Coast from across the nation and the globe that invest in our local businesses and tourism economy, contributing to the \$1.59 billion in annual travel spending in San Luis Obispo County.

This year, Congressman Carbajal will introduce legislation to further protect natural areas of the Central Coast within both the Carrizo Plain National Monument and the Los Padres National Forest, building on the important work that former Congresswoman Capps did to protect this special place.

It is vital that the Central Coast stand united against this threat. The Department of the Interior has opened a comment period through July 10. To voice your concern, visit www.regulations.gov.

As your current and former representative for the Central Coast, we will continue to fight to protect our invaluable open spaces. California's 24th Congressional District is easily one of the most vibrant and ecologically diverse districts in Congress, which is why we are dedicated to preserving our environment from irreparable damage.

Salud Carbajal, D-Santa Barbara, was elected in November after the retirement of Rep. Lois Capps.