

Pinnacles National Park is the United States' 59th National Park and the 9th in California

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) today joined with Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird, National Park Service Pacific West Regional Director Chris Legnertz and other local officials to celebrate the elevation of Pinnacles National Park.

Previously a national monument, Pinnacles National Park is the 59th national park in United States and the 9th in California. Established in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt, Pinnacles National Monument was the 11th oldest national monument until its recent upgrade to a national park.

"President Theodore Roosevelt would be proud of what we have accomplished here," said Congressman Farr. "He saw the wisdom in preserving this special place for generations of Americans. Today, we honor that legacy by completing his work and elevating Pinnacles to a national park."

Congressman Farr's bill to establish the new national park, H.R. 3641, the Pinnacles National Park Act, passed the House of Representatives unanimously in July of 2012. It was brought forward by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) in the Senate, where it was also passed unanimously in December. President Obama signed the act on January 10, 2013 to officially establish the park. Cosponsors of the legislation included Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) and Congressman Jeff Denham (R-Turlock.)

The park draws its name from the volcanic spires that were formed by the eruption of the Neenach Volcano over 23 million years ago. Located along the San Andreas Fault, the Pinnacles have traveled almost 200 miles north along the Pacific Plate to their present location east of the Salinas Valley.

"Often referred to as the missing novel in our National Park's library," said Congressman Farr. "This treasure will finally take its rightful place on the shelf next to Yosemite, the Grand Canyon and all of our other wonderful parks. Today is a great day not just for California but for all Americans, who will want to now come visit this geological and ecological wonder."

The Pinnacles system is home to 149 species of birds, 49 mammals, 22 reptiles, six amphibians, 68 butterflies, 36 dragonflies and damselflies, nearly 400 bees and many thousands of other invertebrates. Inside the park's talus caves resides a species of special

concern, the Townsend's big-eared bat. During the breeding months, portions of the caves are closed to the public to protect the largest maternity colony between San Francisco and Mexico.

The park is also home to 31 endangered California condors. Since 2003, the Park Service has been part of the California Condor Recovery Program to re-establish California condors at Pinnacles. Pinnacles is the only location within the National Park Service that serves as a release site for the program.

The legislation moved quickly through Congress because of its broad, grassroots support due to the positive impact it would have on the surrounding communities. It was supported by Monterey and San Benito counties, including their respective Chambers of Commerce and Visitors Bureaus. Ken Burns, director of The National Parks: America's Best Idea also supported the legislation.

Last year, Pinnacles attracted more than 343,000 visitors, injecting \$4.8 million into the local economy and creating 48 jobs. With the new status, the park will now draw even more visitors and help boost the communities of Monterey and San Benito counties.

"The Central Coast is ready to welcome visitors to our national treasure," said Congressman Farr. "Few experiences can compare to exploring the park's caves, hiking through meadows filled with springtime wildflowers or catching a glimpse of a California condor as it flies high above the spire-like rock formations. I want to invite all Americans to come experience their new national park."

To access photos for coverage from today's event at Pinnacles National Park, please click <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usinterior/>

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