

Colorado's Camp Hale Now a National Monument

The U.S. government plans to teach future generations the history of the site, as well as maintain the area for outdoor activities

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A Colorado mountaintop where the Army's 10th Mountain Division trained during World War II was classified as a national monument last October after a declaration by President Joe Biden.

The more than 53,800-acre area will be maintained by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service agency. According to a press release from the Biden Administration, the former Camp Hale site will continue to support snow sports and other outdoor activities. A management plan also will support educating the public on the history of the region, including the history of the indigenous people of the area and the service of the 10th Mountain Division.

"This monument preserves and protects the mountains and valleys where the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division prepared for their brave service that ultimately brought WWII to a close," according to the statement from the Biden Administration. "The 10th Mountain Division played a pivotal role in the European theatre of the war by weakening Axis forces from their position in the Italian Alps, thanks to their specialized training acquired at and around Camp Hale."

Formerly known as the 10th Light Division (Alpine), the 10th Mountain Division was activated on July 15, 1943, at Camp Hale, about 80 miles west of Denver. Soldiers of the division began combat operations in January 1945 in northern Italy. After five months of combat, the division managed to "effectively destroy" five German divisions, according to official Army history. Almost 1,000 10th Mountain Division soldiers were killed in action, with nearly 4,000 being wounded. (See sidebar about former Sen. Robert J. Dole.)

The White House stated that, after the war, many veterans of Camp Hale returned to

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Colorado, where they lent their expertise to a “burgeoning” ski resort industry.

“More than 60 ski areas in the United States, including many of Colorado’s world-famous ski areas, owe their origin and development to these veterans,” it stated.

Camp Hale was declared a national monument after Biden used his authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906, which aims to protect important monuments and lands across the country. The Antiquities Act was first used by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. In 1917, after serving as president from 1901 to 1909, Roosevelt became a VFW member — the first president to do so. (See sidebar about presidents.)

This article is featured in the 2023 April issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Dave Spiva](#), associate editor for VFW magazine.