



March 3, 2017

The Honorable Ryan K. Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We congratulate you on your appointment to the position of Secretary of the Interior. Your experience and expertise in dealing with public lands issues in the American West will be invaluable in your new role. The undersigned nonprofit organizations look forward to working with you. Because our organizations pursue missions that include the archaeology of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico, we are urgently compelled to raise a high-priority issue as you begin your appointment.

We write to request that the Department of Interior continue to support the designation of the Bears Ears National Monument. Support for Bears Ears is rightly rooted in a deep respect for sacred Native American sites and cultural landscapes that are protected within that area. As nonprofit organizations from the four states of the United States Southwest, we are committed to the celebration and protection of the cultural resources of our nation. Therefore, we also ask that you recognize the scientific values of the Bears Ears National Monument. Furthermore, the heritage values of the Bears Ears National Monument celebrate the diversity of the American nation, and they have the potential for long-term economic benefits to southeastern Utah through heritage tourism.

Over the past month, Utah's legislators and governor have called on President Trump to rescind the Bears Ears National Monument designation. On the other hand, polls of Utahns conducted in 2016 showed that as many as 71 percent of the state's citizens supported creation of a Bears Ears National Monument. National monuments designated under the Antiquities Act have often been controversial in the near term after proclamation, and Bears Ears seems to be following that historical pattern.

Unlike some previous Antiquities Act designations, however, the Bears Ears Proclamation by President Obama was remarkably meticulous. The proclamation describes the diverse archaeological, historical, cultural, natural, and scientific objects that merit protection through designation as a national monument. Professional assessment of these resources was extensive; the identification of resources based on the traditional knowledge of multiple Native American tribes was unparalleled and thorough; and public discussion of the potential monument was some of the most intensive ever implemented.

Simply put, the magnitude of the effort that was invested in carefully defining and ultimately designating this national monument was unprecedented. That effort resulted in a smaller monument than was originally proposed. To contemplate any further reduction of the size of the Bears Ears National Monument is to fail to protect untold numbers of objects that were explicitly referenced in the December 28, 2016 proclamation.

Finally, we must affirm that Bears Ears National Monument has a beauty and a richness of resources that cannot be appreciated by a brief visit to Salt Lake City, which is more than 300 miles from the Bears Ears area. It is inappropriate to presuppose the nature and value of these resources without a visit to experience them directly. Moreover, the sacred nature of the cultural landscape that will be protected by the Bears Ears National Monument can only be conveyed by members of the tribes with centuries and even millennia of connections to that landscape. We urge you to experience the Bears Ears in the company of tribal members who can give voice to that legacy.

Like you, our organizations are deeply committed to the conservation ethic championed by Theodore Roosevelt. In that spirit, we look forward to working with you to celebrate and protect the public lands of this nation. Please feel free to call upon us for any assistance we might provide in getting out to experience the Bears Ears area directly.

Regional signatory nonprofit organizations:

Archaeology Southwest
Tucson, Arizona

Amerind Foundation
Dragoon, Arizona

Museum of Northern Arizona
Flagstaff, Arizona

SRI Foundation
Rio Rancho, New Mexico

Crow Canyon Archaeological Center
Cortez, Colorado

Colorado Plateau Archaeological Alliance
Ogden, Utah

Friends of Cedar Mesa
Bluff, Utah

