

SCIENTISTS' CALL FOR RESTORING THE ORIGINAL BOUNDARIES AND INTENT OF BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT

04 DECEMBER 2017

Dear President Trump and Secretaries Zinke and Perdue:

We, the undersigned scientists, educators, and professional land and resource managers, write to express deep concern and disappointment over your decision to reduce the size and integrity of Bears Ears National Monument. We urge you to reverse this decision, restore the monument to its original boundaries, and work with the Bears Ears Commission of Tribes – which was established by presidential proclamation - and its many partners to develop a scientifically grounded, culturally informed, and effective plan for long-term stewardship. Among the signatories of this letter* are established scientists who have conducted original research in the region, educators who have used Bears Ears as an outdoor classroom to explore the connections between land, water, nature and culture, and professional resource managers who are tasked with protecting this landscape while encouraging sound and sustainable land use. Others recognize the scientific value of this unique landscape and wish to see its protection restored. Monument status safeguards irreplaceable resources, while providing new and immeasurable opportunities for all Americans to enjoy and participate in the stewardship of their public lands.

Bears Ears National Monument is of immense cultural value to all Americans. The five Tribes working together to protect and defend Bears Ears (Navajo, Hopi, Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and Zuni) share a commitment to this place, and their offer to share their knowledge to ensure that all Americans can enjoy this heritage is invaluable, generous, and visionary. This landscape is worthy of protection for its scientific value alone, yet it is the dedicated stewardship of the Tribes and Commission that makes this monument truly unique in the National Conservation Lands system. Bears Ears presents the country with an opportunity to move forward and develop new models for cooperation, respect, and success.

Multiple scientific assessments informed the Proclamation of December 28, 2016, and clearly established that this landscape is worthy of permanent protection. Nowhere else are geology, biology, human history, and culture so deeply intertwined, evident, and accessible as in Bears Ears National Monument. Rather than reducing the size and integrity of the Monument, we believe that the top priority of the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture should be to support the development and implementation of a management plan that will ensure sound stewardship of this landscape and its geological, biological, and cultural resources, in perpetuity. We pledge to assist the Bears Ears Intertribal Commission and the appropriate federal and state agencies in advancing this process.

* Those listed below sign as individuals; affiliations are listed for identification purposes only and do not imply institutional support for the positions expressed here.

We offer the following specific suggestions:

- Restore the monument to its original boundaries, agreed to in the proclamation
- Support a scientifically rigorous and culturally informed process to develop a management plan that reflects the goals articulated in the proclamation
- Respect the agreements previously reached with the five tribal governments that establish the central importance of tribal leadership in planning and management
- Create new opportunities for citizens to learn about, appreciate, and enjoy this landscape

We, as representatives of the scientific community, are committed to working with state and federal authorities, and with the Bears Ears Commission of Tribes, to ensure that management of the monument will serve all Americans, while also establishing a new model for collaborative management with Tribes, and an appropriate balance of conservation and sustainable land use. We urge you to protect scientific values, educational opportunities, and unique natural and cultural resources by restoring Bears Ears National Monument to its original extent, and we urge you to honor tribal leaders by continuing to engage in a new, more inclusive model for public land management.

We stand ready to work with you and with our many colleagues to safeguard this spectacular and irreplaceable part of America's history for the future enjoyment and benefit of all Americans.

Respectfully,

Thomas D Sisk, PhD[†]
Olajos-Goslow Chair of Environmental Science and Policy
Northern Arizona University

[Other signatories to be added below]

[†] Please address correspondence to Thomas D. Sisk, Landscape Conservation Initiative, PO Box 5694, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011; Thomas.Sisk@nau.edu