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Archaeology Southwest Joins Native American Tribes in Calling for President Obama to Protect Bears Ears as a National Monument

Tucson, AZ (July 15, 2016)—Archaeology Southwest urges officials from the U.S. Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service to recommend that President Obama protect the Bears Ears region in Southeastern Utah as a national monument.

“The Bears Ears region is a living landscape that provides important connections to our past and present,” stated Archaeology Southwest president Bill Doelle. “Each archaeological site—and there are an estimated 100,000—is part of a much greater story that is gradually emerging. Enduring protection is essential to fully realizing the depth and breadth of that saga.”

The Bears Ears region is not only a singular natural landscape, but also a cultural one. Over millennia, people transformed the rugged lands to meet biological, social, and spiritual needs. Traces of their lives include ancient dart points, rock art, roads, and cliff dwellings, as well as myriad other places of great significance to contemporary Native American tribes and descendants of the region’s Euro-American settlers. In 2014, Archaeology Southwest devoted a special double issue of its *Archaeology Southwest Magazine* to Cedar Mesa and the Bears Ears region in order to raise awareness of the region’s spectacular archaeology.

Unfortunately, ongoing looting, grave robbing and vandalism in the Cedar Mesa and Bears Ears region have insulted Native American spirituality, marred the scientific record, and erased American history. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has recently stated that they are currently investigating nearly a half dozen looting and vandalism cases in the area.

In June 2016, more than 700 archaeologists signed a letter to President Barack Obama urging him to designate a Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah. His authority to do so was set forth in the Antiquities Act of 1906, which was established in order to protect historic landmarks, archaeological sites, and other objects of historic or scientific interest on lands owned or controlled by the federal government. Almost every president since Theodore Roosevelt has used the act to accomplish conservation goals in the public interest.

The effort to have President Obama designate a Bears Ears National Monument is being led a coalition of five sovereign Native American Tribal Nations. There is support for this designation from the outdoor recreation industry and other business leaders, archaeologists, communities of faith, and conservation groups.



U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, Agriculture Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment Robert Bonnie, and other officials are touring the Bears Ears region this week and are holding a listening session on Saturday, July 16, in Bluff, Utah.

“We applaud Secretary Jewell, Undersecretary Bonnie, and other administration officials for coming to Utah to meet with stakeholders and discuss how to protect an area of such extraordinary cultural significance,” stated Doelle. “A national monument designation for Bears Ears will acknowledge the importance of this area to Tribal nations, help conserve irreplaceable archaeological sites, and encourage respectful visitation. It is a legacy that millions of Americans who champion the preservation of America’s rich, diverse heritage will be proud of.”

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About Archaeology Southwest

Archaeology Southwest is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, that explores and protects the places of our past across the American Southwest and Mexican Northwest. For three decades, Archaeology Southwest has fostered meaningful connections to the past and respectfully safeguarded its irreplaceable resources. Learn more at archaeologysouthwest.org.