



## **BEARS EARS INTER-TRIBAL COALITION**

A Partnership of the Hopi, Navajo, Uintah & Ouray Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and Zuni Governments

January 20, 2016

Hon. Rob Bishop  
Hon. Jason Chaffetz  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

### **RE: Public Lands Initiative Legislation Falls Short of Meeting Local Needs**

Dear Representatives Bishop and Chaffetz,

Thank you for delivering the Discussion Draft of the proposed Public Lands Initiative (PLI) to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe on January 14th. The Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition (BEITC) has carefully reviewed this language, and finds it woefully inadequate in addressing our needs in the areas of collaborative management and land preservation.

Our Tribes made a straightforward request to you for the Bears Ears proposal. Listed below are major shortcomings of this legislation among many others:

- The boundaries of the Bears Ears National Conservation Area fail to protect essential cultural sites and wildlife habitat areas that we have asked to be preserved;
- The PLI does not elevate the voice of Native Americans as co-equals alongside federal land managers in the management of the Bears Ears NCA. Instead, the PLI offers Tribes only a consultative role in advising on the area's management;
- The PLI fails to give adequate representation to regional tribes in its proposed Commission. This includes the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe that administers land in the proposal. Creating only two seats for Tribal representation on the Commission and overlooking one of two local Tribes is simply unacceptable;
- The PLI would permanently open too many acres to mineral extraction within and surrounding the Bears Ears proposal;
- The Coalition is concerned that the bill will contain limitations on the 1906 Antiquities Act. The Coalition and tribes nationwide value the Antiquities Act because it protects and preserves culturally significant areas that are essential for the traditional and cultural continuity of tribal people. The Coalition cannot support legislation that includes limitations on the President's authority under the Antiquities Act;
- The PLI goes against the position of the Ute Indian Tribe that opposes land transfers within the Uncompahgre reservation boundary to the State of Utah.

Native Americans represented by the BEITC are asking for an equal voice in land management and for protection of a large and significant ancestral landscape containing more than 100,000 archaeological sites. Your proposal falls well short of meeting our needs.

The Draft confirms the inequitable treatment of Tribes over the past three years and our need to seek other means of protecting the living cultural landscape we call Bears Ears.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ALFRED LOMAHQUAHU', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alfred Lomahquahu  
Hopi Tribe Vice-Chairman &  
Co-Chair Bears Ears  
Inter-Tribal Coalition

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ERIC DESCHEENIE', with a large, stylized 'D' at the end.

Eric Descheenie  
Executive Staff Assistant, Navajo Nation Office of the  
President and Vice President & Co-Chair, Bears  
Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition