



April 16, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Bears Ears Initiative

President Obama,

The Bears Ears region is distinctive and significant in both culture and tradition to surrounding tribes, including the Navajo Nation. It is a unique cultural landscape including ancient villages, cliff dwellings, rock art, and the gravesites of our ancestors. The Bears Ears region is especially important to the Navajo Nation (Diné) as the birthplace of Headman Manuelito, an important figure in our contemporary history who helped our people return from Bosque Redondo to our Diné homeland after the Long Walk. Diné relate to the Bears Ears and the surrounding lands much like non-native people relate to a relative. When we visit the Bears Ears region, we greet these places by their names as if they were people - other than human people - with whom we can communicate, and who can communicate with us. Through this relationship, we are able to negotiate healing, not just of body, but also of mind, soul, and heart, but also as a community and society.

With this, the Navajo Nation respectfully requests that 1.9 million acres of federal public lands around the Bears Ears Buttes (Shash Jaa') in southeastern Utah be designated a national monument pursuant to the Antiquities Act of 1906. Furthermore, because of the Navajo people's direct tie to this land, there must be co-equal management of these lands that is respectful and will ensure protection of our history that exists in every part of this region. While your administration may be criticized using your Presidential authority, for the Navajo Nation and many tribes, your action will be one that will be remembered amongst our People for centuries as protecting our sacred resources, our history and our memories while preserving what we consider a place of healing and spirituality.

At the 2015 White House Tribal Nations Conference that you stated you will "*review tribal proposals to permanently protect sacred lands for future generations.*" Throughout your 8 years in office, you have been a friend to tribes and our initiatives, we can only hope and pray before you leave office you will "Protect the Bear Ears".

Respectfully,

THE NAVAJO NATION

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Russell Begaye".

Russell Begaye, President

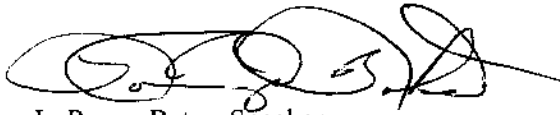
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Nez".

Jonathan Nez, Vice President

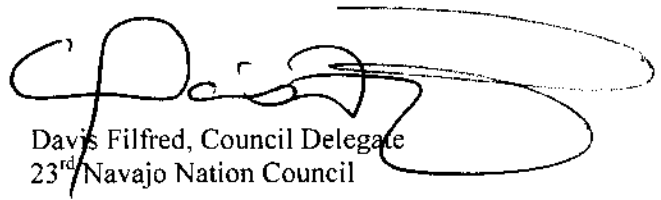
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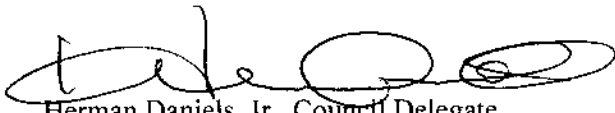
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LoRenzo Bates, Speaker
23rd Navajo Nation Council



Davis Filfred, Council Delegate
23rd Navajo Nation Council



Herman Daniels, Jr., Council Delegate
23rd Navajo Nation Council



Walter Phelps, Council Delegate
23rd Navajo Nation Council

CC: The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture
The Honorable Christina W. Goldfuss, Managing Director,
White House Council on Environmental Quality