

David B. Madsen and Kevin T. Jones
Former State Archaeologists of Utah

President Barack Obama,
Washington, D.C.

December 12, 2016

Dear President Obama:

As the only two State Archaeologists Utah has ever had, we encourage you to designate the Bears Ears area of southeastern Utah as a National Monument. We write because we endorse the efforts of Native American Tribes to protect their heritage, and are concerned with what impending political changes may mean for the irreplaceable archaeological and heritage resources of the area.

Reports and letters of support from sovereign Tribes, environmental organizations and concerned individual citizens detail the uniquely preserved intact archaeological and Native American heritage sites in the region. Caves and rockshelters, cliff dwellings, and multi-story dwellings adorn the slickrock canyons and sculpted mesas. Based on our nearly 70 combined years as working archaeologists in the region we concur with and endorse the many voices describing the wonders of the area and the reasons given for designating it as a National Monument.

Perhaps just as importantly, relatively intact ecosystems are threatened by resource extraction industry in the region. Designation of a Bears Ears National Monument will not only protect the archaeological sites, but will link the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Natural Bridges National Monument, Canyonlands National Park, and Arches National Park into a large and continuous refugium for the plant and animal species of the southern Rocky Mountains.

Unfortunately, saving these unique and largely undisturbed cultural and environmental treasures from development may be impossible without prompt action. Republicans in congress are moving to eliminate any hindrance to development and resource extraction on Public Lands in the West. We have personal experience with the power of this movement. In Utah, legislative actions have gradually eviscerated Utah's 1973 Antiquities Act, which created the office of the State Archaeologist, and did much to protect Utah's rich archaeological heritage. That office has now been abolished, and permits for archaeological work associated with any development work are now issued by the Governor's office, in order to eliminate any possibility that oil, gas, and mining developments may be held up or curtailed.

Threats to the Antiquities Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and other laws and regulations that protect natural and cultural resources on Public Lands are looming. Failure to protect the Bears Ears now will likely result in damaging development and land sales. While a National Monument will be opposed by some, it will provide the many more concerned citizens of this country and their representatives a toe-hold from which to fight to save the Bears Ears, not unlike the toe-holds pecked into the cliffs by the ancient ones of the area. Please President Obama, this designation is extremely important to the many Native American tribes in the Four Corners area, and without it, these sacred and scientifically and historically significant treasures may be lost forever.

We appreciate your concern and implore you to act. We stand ready to help in any way we can and to provide any information that may assist you in making your decision.

Sincerely,



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