

RESOLUTION OF THE
NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEE OF THE
NAVJAO NATION COUNCIL

23RD Navajo Nation Council---First Year 2015

AN ACTION

RELATING TO THE RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND THE NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEE; SUPPORTING THE UTAH DINÉ BIKEYAH CONSERVATION PROPOSAL FOR THE FEDERAL DESIGNATION OF BEAR'S EARS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA/NATIONAL MONUMENT IN SAN JUAN COUNTY, UTAH, TO PROTECT NATIVE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS ON FEDERAL LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

WHEREAS:

1. The Navajo Nation Council is the governing body of the Navajo Nation. 2 N.N.C. §102(A). All powers not delegated are reserved to the Navajo Nation Council. 2 N.N.C. §102(B). The Navajo Nation Council shall supervise all powers delegated. 2 N.N.C. §102(C).
2. The Naabik'íyáti' Committee is one of five standing committees of the Navajo Nation Council and is comprised of all twenty-four members of the Navajo Nation Council. The Committee is authorized to assist and coordinate all requests for information, appearances and testimony relating to proposed county, state and federal legislation impacting the Navajo Nation. 2 N.N.C. §§ 180 and 701(A)(6).
3. The Navajo Nation includes communities in San Juan County, Utah; these communities depend on federal lands and resources within San Juan County, Utah; a copy of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Utah Dine Bikeyah, A Utah Non-Profit Corporation and the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources is attached as Exhibit B; and
4. The Navajo Nation members occupy a special status as both U.S. citizens and members of the Navajo Nation whose ancestral lands encompass all of San Juan County; and

5. Bear's Ears area within San Juan County, Utah, is part of the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument to consist of 1.9 million acres and would include additional Wilderness units within and outside of its boundary. This region is the ancestral home of many Southwestern Native American Tribes, including the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, Zia, and Jemez Pueblos along with the Ute Mountain, Southern, and Uintah Ouray Utes, the San Juan, Kaibab, and Utah Paiute Tribes and the Jicarilla Apache Tribes which assert their affiliation, occupation and enduring use of these lands. The Bear's Ears region is also the birthplace of Navajo Headman Manuelito; and
6. The proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument is bordered on the west by the Colorado River and on the south by the San Juan River and the Navajo Nation; the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument is characterized by prodigious topographic diversity and striking landforms containing intricately rich ecological systems; the Navajo and other Tribes depend upon the land within the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument to sustain their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices. Cedar Mesa, the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument's centerpiece, offers sprawling vistas of Comb and Butler Washes, and extends beyond to Moki, Red, Dark, Grand Gulch, and White canyons that each support verdant ribbons of riparian habitat. Desert bighorn sheep grace the lower desert lands while the 11,000 foot Abajo Mountains host forests of ponderosa pine, spruce, fir and aspen, providing a home to mule deer, elk, black bear and mountain lion, sacred icons of the mesa's original peoples. Paramount for the Navajo, the majority of the regions inhabitants, is the proper management of the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument's native plants and wildlife that are food, shelter and medicine and its cultural sites that are central to their spiritual practices; and
7. This region contains unsurpassed cultural and paleontological resources; the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument is world renowned for the integrity and abundance of its archaeological resources. Six cultural special management areas are within the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument boundaries: Alkali Ridge National Historic Landmark, the Hole-in-the-Rock Historical Trail and the Grand Gulch, Big Westwater Ruin, Dance Hall Rock, Sand

Island Petroglyph Panel, the Newspaper Rock Petroglyph Panel, and the Butler Wash Archaeological District National Register site. Also occurring in the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument's 19 distinct geologic units are scientifically significant vertebrate and non-vertebrate paleontological resources that are particularly abundant in the Cedar Mountain, Burro Canyon, Morrison, and Chinle Formations; and

8. The proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument has been inhabited for more than 12,000 years by multiple indigenous cultures, which crossed, and built civilizations on these lands. At the Lime Ridge Clovis site is evidence of Paleoindian occupation and the archaeological record indicates widespread use between 6000 B.C. and A.D. 100 by Archaic Peoples. Possessing numerous Archaic Period sites of varying size and complexity are Cedar Mesa, Elk Ridge, and Montezuma Canyon. While other notable sites include Alkali Ridge, Cowboy Cave, Old Man Cave, and Dust Devil Cave. The heaviest occupation of the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument lands was perhaps by the Formative Period Peoples (AD 100-AD 1300) who left very large numbers of archaeological sites ranging from small lithic scatters to large highly complex village sites; and
9. The proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument includes Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Areas and lands with Wilderness Characteristics and U.S. Forest Service Roadless Areas. Vast, remote desert mesas cut by sheer walled serpentine canyons provide unparalleled solitude and scenic quality that is comparable to or exceeds those found in nearby national parks and monuments, such as Canyonlands, Arches, Grand Staircase, Natural Bridges, Hovenweep, and Mesa Verde; and
10. Priority Management values to protect within the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument are: archaeological, wildlife, natural and scenic resources. An essential aspect of the proposed National Conservation Area/National Monument's management is to better protect these resources and to ensure their ongoing and sustainable use; and
11. Native Americans have unique and important cultural and historical ties to the land, its wildlife and other natural resources; and the Navajo people have traditional ties to this particular landscape for hunting, medicinal herbs, food gathering, firewood gathering and the grazing of livestock; and

12. Native Americans have shown quality and excellence in managing lands and natural resources to protect the cultural integrity of the homeland of Native peoples; and
13. These areas are under constant threat of cultural vandalism, looting of Native cultural sites, indiscriminate off road vehicle use that damages areas sacred to Native peoples, energy development footprints that negatively impact lands of historic and cultural importance, and general degradation of wildlife and plant habitats of importance to Native traditional practices; and
14. To prevent this rapid destruction of lands in the San Juan County region important to Native peoples, formal protection as a national conservation area or national monument is required; and
15. Formal protection of the area as a National Conservation Area/National Monument will provide important consistency and quality to management of these lands, and define principles of management that will positively affect Native values on these lands in the following ways:
 - A. Protection will be permanent, part of a national system of protected lands that carry strong and clear legal definitions of the primacy of conservation of cultural, historical and ecological values that define Native connections to these lands.
 - B. Protection as a national conservation area or national monument creates important opportunities for Native American co-management of these resources and increased funding for protection with an emphasis on conservation and preservation of the region's cultural and natural resources.
 - C. Protection should be at the largest landscape level possible, providing connectivity of wildlife and plant habitats, ecological integrity of the region and be comprehensive in its protection of Native sacred sites, which cannot be considered out of the context of the larger landscape.
 - D. Protection of the region as a national conservation area or national monument will be a top priority for concerned federal agencies, with public involvement and prioritization of staffing, resources and cooperation with Native peoples.

16. It is in the best interest of the Navajo Nation to support the federal designation of 1.9 million acres in San Juan County, Utah, as the Bear's Ears National Conservation Area/National Monument. Resolutions in support of the federal designation are attached as Exhibit A.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL'S NAABIK'ÍYÁTI' COMMITTEE EXTENDS ITS SUPPORT FOR:

1. The designation of the 1.9 million acres in San Juan County, Utah, as the Bear's Ears National Conservation Area/National Monument.
2. The designation of identified roadless areas as wilderness under the Wilderness Act.
3. Establishment of Collaborative Management Agreement(s) between the Navajo Nation, other Tribes and the federal government to improve management and elevate the Native American voice in the long-term sustainable management of the region.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Naabik'íyáti' Committee of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council at a duly called meeting in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (Arizona), at which a quorum was present and that the same was passed by a vote of 15 in favor, 0 oppose, 0 Abstain this 12th Day of March, 2015.



Honorable Lorenzo C. Bates, Chairperson
Naabik'íyáti' Committee

Motion: Honorable Alton Joe Shepherd
Second: Honorable Jonathan Nez

Bear's Ears

A Proposed National Conservation Area/ National Monument



An Initiative of the Navajo Nation and Utah Diné Bikéyah

In February 2010 former Utah Senator Bob Bennett invited Utah Navajo residents to develop a proposal on issues such as wilderness, conservation, and development of public lands in San Juan County, Utah. An assessment was carried out under the authority of all seven Navajo Chapter Houses in Utah that built on interviews with dozens of elders and medicine men. The initial result of this work was the creation of a "Navajo Lands of Interest" map that was widely circulated among Navajo communities and elected officials on and off reservation. This map was the basis of subsequent discussions between the Navajo Nation and San Juan County aimed at developing a shared legislative proposal to advance to Congressman Bishop. Today, more than two years after formal discussions began, and eighteen months after submitting the Bear's Ears proposal, the Navajo Nation is still waiting for a San Juan County response.

In April 2013, the Navajo Nation and the Utah Diné Bikéyah organization proposed the creation of the 1.9 million acre Bear's Ears National Conservation Area and wilderness designations. This approach provides the best management for a diversity of uses, while directing resources towards priority cultural and biological resource protection. To honor our deep history in this region, we are also proposing that the Navajo Nation, other Tribes, and Utah Diné Bikéyah have a formal role in planning and managing the Bear's Ears National Conservation Area/ National Monument.

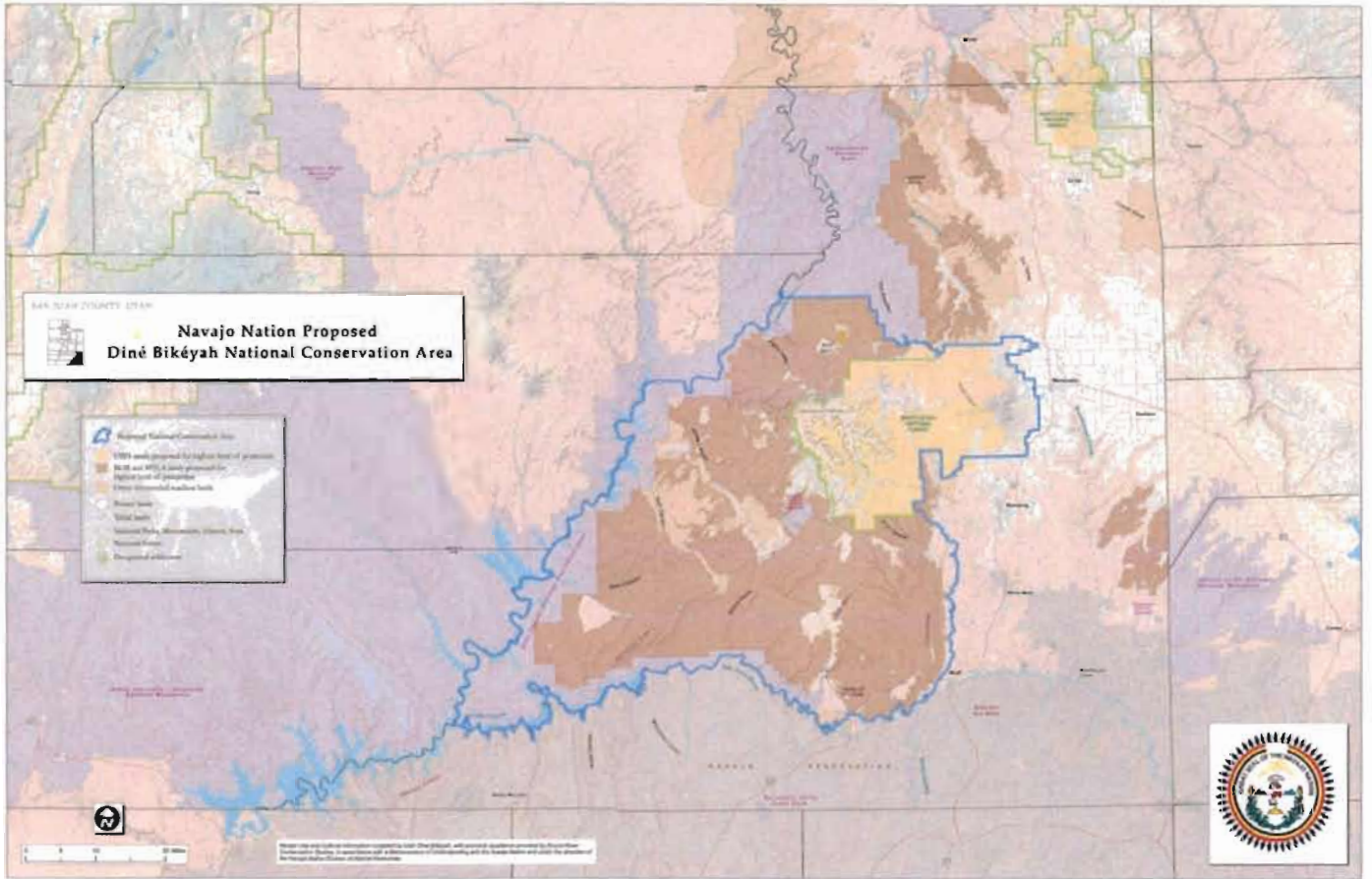
This region has been used by Native People for millennia, contains some of our country's richest archaeological sites and continues to serve as a pilgrimage site for many tribal members due to its historical significance. It is significant as the birthplace of Navajo Headman Manuelito and as the former center of civilization for many modern day Pueblo

Nations, including the Hopi. The Navajo Nation and Utah Diné Bikéyah organization have proposed this conservation region be set aside to protect traditional activities and sacred places to include Cedar Mesa, White Canyon, Dark Canyon, Comb Ridge, Nokai Dome, Abajo Peak, Ruin Park, the San Juan River, and Comb Ridge.

As part of Congressman Bishop's Eastern Utah Land-Use Initiative several Tribal Nations and Navajo Chapter Houses have been adopting resolutions of support for the Bear's Ears proposal. The Hopi Tribe and All Pueblo Council of Governors have endorsed protection for the region, and all seven Navajo Chapter Houses in Utah have taken supportive action. Most recently Utah Navajo communities have come together at eight Town Hall meetings where they discussed the proposal and hand-wrote nearly 400 public comments that were submitted to San Juan County on November 30th. 64% of the total responses during the public process that ended requested designation of the Bear's Ears NCA/NM and wilderness.

Utah Navajo People have been actively advancing protection for this region for nearly five years and continue to educate and involve all US citizens who hold interests in these lands. Native American Tribes have seldom had their voices heard in the debate over public lands and it is time to recognize the depth of history and intergenerational stewardship exhibited by Tribes across these landscapes. Protection is welcome whether through Congressional or administrative action. Local people are determined to take action to make this happen and we hold out hope that one day soon our voices will finally be heard.

Ahyéhé- Thank you.



Utah Diné Bikéyah, 501(c)3 non-profit organization
utahdinebikeyah@gmail.com
 Phone: (801) 521-7398