

March 17, 2017

Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary of the Department of the Interior  
1849 C. Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Honorable Michael Scuse  
Acting Secretary of the Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Zinke and Acting Secretary Scuse,

This letter is to inform you that the Bears Ears Commission, which was established in President Obama's Bears Ears National Monument Proclamation, is now fully constituted. The elected Commissioners from the five sovereign Native American Tribes are : Alfred Lomahquahu - the Hopi Nation, Davis Filfred and James Adakai - the Navajo Nation, Terry Knight - the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Shaun Chappoose - the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah Ouray, and Carleton Bowekaty - the Zuni Tribe. We urge you to meet with the Commission members as soon as possible, and there will be a good opportunity will when Secretary Zinke makes his first visit to Utah as Secretary. This letter sets forth the reasons that such meeting would be beneficial as soon as possible.

Our five Tribes were the driving force in the effort to create the Bears Ears National Monument. Our people were forcibly removed from the Bears Ears area in the mid-1800s but we have always continued to return to this cultural landscape for ceremonies, hunting, gathering of herbs and medicines, and other purposes. Then, beginning in 2010, we turned to formal protection. We conducted a tremendous amount of research into the scientific, historic, and cultural values of the region. Based on that research, we developed boundaries for a protected area. Then, in October 2015, we submitted a comprehensive, formal proposal for protection as a national monument or other designated area and took the lead in meetings with the Obama Administration and the Utah Delegation. This was the first time in history that American Indian Tribes had ever petitioned for a national monument or other such designation. Making the monument a reality required long and hard work by a large number of Indian people, especially our tribal leaders and traditional practitioners.

The purpose of the Proclamation is to honor the Tribes, both historic and contemporary, the land, and the relationship between the Tribes and the land. The proclamation, in many places, emphasizes the importance of incorporating tribal traditional knowledge into all aspects of monument management. To be certain that the Tribes are fully represented in managing the new monument, the Proclamation calls for a regime of collaborative management between the tribes and the federal agencies. Our Commission was established "to *ensure* that management decisions affecting the monument reflect tribal expertise and historical knowledge." (emphasis added).

Among other provisions, your two agencies are directed to “partner” with the Commission, to “meaningfully engage” the Commission in monument management, to “carefully and fully consider” recommendations of the Commission, and to conduct “meaningful engagement” with the Commission. All of these provisions are now fully in force as federal law.

Now that our Commission has been fully constituted, we are most anxious to meet with agency officials in the field and, as mentioned, Secretary Zinke during his Utah visit. These will be opportunities to begin discussions on fulfilling the promise of this historic opportunity to create a unique and highly productive system of collaborative management.

We have heard reports that the Trump Administration may be considering actions to reduce the size of the monument or to eliminate it entirely. If that is correct, we would consider it essential that we are able to have full discussions with you about those possibilities. Of course, from our standpoint, any such actions would be absolute tragedies in terms of impacts on our people today and the eternal values and traditions of our many generations of ancestors. Needless to say, if such actions are not being considered, than the meetings would be extraordinarily productive in terms of starting to put in place a system of collaborative management that would make this monument one of the brightest stars in America's public land system.

We invite you to meet with the Commission when you visit Utah in March so that we may discuss the Bears Ears National Monument, its importance to our Nations, and our management priorities with you. Please contact Commission member Carleton Bowekaty at (505) 879-2826 or [Carleton.Bowekaty@ashiwi.org](mailto:Carleton.Bowekaty@ashiwi.org) to arrange this meeting.

Respectfully,



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Alfred Lomahquahu

Bears Ears Commission Interim Co-Chair



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Carleton Bowekaty

Bears Ears Commission Interim Co-Chair

Cc: Ed Roberson, State Director – Utah, Bureau of Land Management  
Nora Rasure, Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service  
Tyler Ashcroft, Project Manager, Bureau of Land Management  
Michael Diem, Moab/Monticello District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service