

**For Immediate Release**

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**2 Million Americans Across the Country Have Spoken:  
Leave Our National Monuments Alone**

*Thousands of Utah residents join effort urging Secretary to maintain protections for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument*

**Escalante, Utah July 12, 2017** – After an unprecedented review of national monuments, 2.7 million Americans across the country have spoken out in support of maintaining current protections for our national monuments. On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017, President Trump issued an Executive Order directing Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to conduct a review of national monuments created since 1996.

“Our national monuments across the country, including Grand Staircase-Escalante, are overwhelmingly popular and this review is unprecedented and completely uncalled for,” said Nicole Croft, Executive Director of Grand Staircase Escalante Partners. “Secretary Zinke needs to listen to the millions of Americans who have made their opinions heard and stand up for Grand Staircase-Escalante and our protected public lands.”

With the public comment period closing yesterday, Secretary Zinke has until August 24<sup>th</sup> to deliver his recommendations to President Trump under the Executive Order. This could result in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument losing current protections or having the current boundaries drastically reduced. A broad coalition of community members including scientists, local business owners, and thousands of everyday Americans who love and value the outdoors joined together to oppose any changes to Grand Staircase-Escalante or any other national monument.

“Behind each national monument—and the plans guiding their management—are well-documented facts about the cultural and natural resources under the monument’s protection,” said Nicole Croft. “Grand Staircase Escalante Partners has also filed comments with the Secretary of the Interior. These comments demonstrate that in the 21 years since the designation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument the inventory and understanding of the Monument’s exceptional archaeological, paleontological, geologic, ecological, and other resources have only grown stronger. Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument has also become a deeply valued and integral part of the communities that surround it. The administration can’t eliminate or alter national monuments without undermining the very cultural and natural resources they protect.”

The overwhelming response in support of America’s national monuments is consistent with recent opinion polling of Western voters. Colorado College found that 80 percent of voters support keeping current national monument designations in place.

With the public comment period now closed, Secretary Zinke has until August 24<sup>th</sup> to deliver his recommendations to President Trump.

Altering the status of our national monuments is not only an attack on America's public lands legacy and our native and cultural heritage, it will hurt surrounding communities and small businesses that have come to rely on access to these places. Outdoor recreation alone [drives a \\$887 billion economy](#). In Utah, this equates to 122,000 jobs and \$856 million in state and local tax revenue. In addition, numerous [studies have shown](#) that communities located near monuments and other protected public lands have stronger economies, and that the outdoor and recreational opportunities they provide increase residents' quality of life, making areas near monuments more attractive to new residents, entrepreneurs and small businesses, and investment.

Since it was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, the Antiquities Act has been used on a bipartisan basis by the majority of subsequent U.S. presidents to protect America's most iconic natural, cultural, and historic places and has never been used by a President to eliminate a national monument.

Note: While regulations.gov reflects 1,410,857 individual comments, dozens of concerned groups also gathered public comments to submit to Secretary Zinke. A survey of those groups reveals more than 1.3 million additional public comments in support of Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante, and other national monuments. When uploaded to regulations.gov, however, each collection will display as a single comment.

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Grand Staircase Escalante Partners was established in 2004 as the official friends group to the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Four core programs support our mission: the Frontier Science School, the Site Steward program, the Paleo Program, and the Escalante River Watershed Partnership. Grand Staircase Escalante Partners is committed to preserving and protecting the vast landscape of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. More information on GSEP can be found at: [www.gsenm.org](http://www.gsenm.org). A copy of GSEP's Comments to the Department of the Interior can be found at: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=DOI-2017-0002-574082>.