

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Wednesday, September 2, 2026

Contacts:

Conservation Lands Foundation, Kris Deutschman kris@conservationlands.org, 916-425-7174
Grand Staircase Escalante Partners, Jackie Grant jackie@gsenm.org, 435-269-1237
Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, P. David Polly, pdpolly@pollylab.org, 812-272-2945

Conservation Lands Foundation and Partners Legally Challenge President Trump's Latest Assault on Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument
Groups seek to reactivate landmark litigation defending national monuments

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Conservation Lands Foundation, Grand Staircase Escalante Partners, and Society of Vertebrate Paleontology today filed motions asking the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to allow them to challenge President Trump's most recent assault on Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The organizations are seeking to expedite their challenge to President Trump's July 13, 2026, proclamation eliminating nearly 90 percent of the monument.

The filing revives litigation first brought in December 2017, when Conservation Lands Foundation and its partners challenged President Trump's initial de-designation of Grand Staircase-Escalante as a protected, national monument. The July 13, 2026, proclamation again reduces the size of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in southern Utah, this time by about 90%, shrinking it from approximately 1.87 million acres down to roughly 181,500 acres.

Filing a new complaint challenging President Trump's assault on Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is only the first step envisioned to defend this treasured landscape. By filing this motion and proposed complaint now, the Conservation Lands Foundation and its co-plaintiffs are positioned to challenge at any moment any Bureau of Land Management (BLM) implementation decisions undermining the integrity of the national monument and otherwise threatening these protections. Plaintiffs have been tracking BLM activity on the ground, and will remain vigilant if BLM attempts to open the landscape to mining claims, mineral leasing, drilling, road construction or other activities that could cause permanent harm.

"The president does not have the authority to erase Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and we will not stand by while this administration attempts to sacrifice this extraordinary landscape to mining, drilling and other destructive development. Grand Staircase-Escalante is an irreplaceable cultural and scientific landscape and an essential part of the country's National Conservation Lands. We are returning to court to defend the law, the integrity of our public lands and the generations of people who have fought to protect this place." **Chris Hill, CEO of Conservation Lands Foundation.**

"Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument has generated predictable growth and economic stability in southern Utah for thirty years. Over this time, local family-run businesses have grown around the guiding industry, scientific exploration of the Monument, and providing sustenance and lodging for millions of visitors. Long-term, stable economic growth is much more valuable to our local communities than the boom-and-bust economies that go hand in hand with extractive industries. We are obligated to return to court to protect our local communities and the

inherent value of Utah's public lands." **Dr. Jackie Grant, Executive Director of Grand Staircase Escalante Partners.**

"Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was established in part to conserve the amazing paleontological resources there and to enhance their value through scientific study and education. It was so amazingly successful that our scientific understanding of Cretaceous life and dinosaur ecosystems has been completely revolutionized. The downsizing has stripped conservation priority from literally 98% of the more than 3,000 fossil sites found in the Monument, including the discovery sites of the theropod *Lythronax* ("King of Gore") and the ceratopsian *Utahceratops*." **P. David Polly, Monument Liaison and Past President, Society of Vertebrate Paleontology**

The Antiquities Act of 1906 authorizes presidents to establish national monuments to protect historic landmarks, structures and objects of historic or scientific interest on federal lands. The lawsuit argues that the law does not give presidents the power to revoke or substantially diminish monuments established by their predecessors. That authority rests with Congress.

Why Grand Staircase-Escalante matters

Grand Staircase-Escalante protects one of the country's most important landscapes for paleontological research, wildlife habitat, watersheds, recreation and scientific discovery. Its remote plateaus, canyons and badlands contain irreplaceable natural and cultural resources and have yielded discoveries that continue to deepen scientific understanding of the region and the planet's history.

Background on the Grand Staircase-Escalante litigation

In December 2017, Conservation Lands Foundation and its co-plaintiffs filed suit challenging President Trump's initial de-designation of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. At the same time, a separate coalition of national and regional conservation groups also filed suit. The Grand Staircase-Escalante cases were assigned to Judge Chutkan in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

After a series of preliminary rulings favorable to Conservation Lands Foundation and its co-plaintiffs, the parties completed briefing on summary judgment in June 2020. The case has been administratively closed since early 2021, meaning that it has not remained on the judge's active docket but can be returned to it by motion.

In October 2021, President Biden issued a new Antiquities Act proclamation redesignating and expanding Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. In August 2022, the State of Utah, Garfield and Kane Counties, the Blue Ribbon Coalition and others challenged that proclamation in the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah.

The plaintiffs are asking the court to reopen the case, grant leave to file the first supplemental complaint which challenges President Trump's July 13, 2026, proclamation eliminating nearly 1.4 million acres from protection under the Antiquities Act.

###