



# Bears Ears National Monument Draft Management Plan

## Fact Sheet

The Bears Ears National Monument conserves one of the richest cultural landscapes in the United States, covering 1.36 million acres of public land in southeastern Utah. The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for managing 1,075,000 acres, and the Forest Service is responsible for managing 290,000 acres. The resource management plan for the monument will guide how the monument will be managed by both agencies on behalf of the American public. The draft plan was released in March 2024 and was informed by discussions with cooperating agencies, the State of Utah, and the Bears Ears Commission.

The draft plan contains five alternatives, including a preferred alternative, for public consideration. The final resource management plan will be informed by public feedback and may incorporate any element within the range of alternatives analyzed in the draft plan. Comments on the draft are being accepted for 90 days following publication in the *Federal Register*.

## Existing and Future Public Uses

The preferred alternative in the draft plan invites use and enjoyment of the Bears Ears National Monument, while protecting monument “objects”—the resources that the monument was established to protect. The proclamation details how the entire Bears Ears landscape is an object of historic and scientific interest as well as sacred land of spiritual significance, a historic homeland, and a place of belonging for Indigenous Peoples from the Southwest. The proclamation notes other important uses in the area, including historic grazing and world-class outdoor recreation opportunities. In this context, each of the management alternatives addresses monument objects as well as the other uses of the Bears Ears landscape.

## Recreation

### *Hiking*

Under all alternatives, existing trails would presently remain open for use and new trails may be designated. Trails that may harm cultural sites will be evaluated for ways to avoid or reduce impacts. The preferred alternative seeks to encourage visitors to hike on existing trails. It allows off-trail hiking, while continuing to evaluate areas and trails for use or closure, if needed. It also specifies circumstances in which a special recreation permit is required, such as for large groups.

### *Camping*

Under all alternatives, dispersed camping—that is, camping outside of designated campgrounds—would be permitted in the monument, with some restrictions. Additional campgrounds and campsites may be designated. If selected, the preferred alternative provides for ongoing evaluation to inform where to designate camping sites and areas and to monitor water use and waste disposal by visitors to determine if additional management is required.

## *Climbing*

Under all alternatives, existing access points, trails, and routes would be honored. Consistent with existing policy in the popular climbing destination Indian Creek, climbing is not permitted on, near, or above cultural sites, or to access cultural sites, and may not interfere with raptor nests. Routes can be closed if monument objects are being harmed. The preferred alternative permits replacement of existing bolts, anchors, and fixed gear on existing climbing and canyoneering routes as needed for safety reasons and requires approval from the agencies for new routes that require placement of such gear.

## *Hunting*

Hunting and shed antler collection is allowed in the monument, following regulations of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Additional details on shed antler collection are found within the plan.

## **Motorized and mechanized vehicles**

Throughout the monument, the monument proclamation requires that motorized and mechanized vehicles must stay on designated routes. For motorized vehicles, the draft plan identifies the existing system of roads. Certain areas have limitations on motorized and mechanized use, such as designated wilderness. For both motorized and mechanized vehicles, additional decisions on specific routes to be maintained or removed will be deferred to a specific travel management plan.

## **Grazing**

The preferred alternative would maintain 88% (1,194,529 acres) of the monument as available for grazing. The preferred alternative also prioritizes the review and processing of grazing permits and leases, including compliance monitoring and resource assessments, in order to protect monument objects. Under all alternatives, leases that are voluntarily relinquished by current leaseholders would be retired from future livestock grazing, as required by the monument proclamation. The number of livestock permitted to graze within the monument is the same across the preferred alternative and two of the three other action alternatives.

## **Tribal and public participation**

President Biden's proclamation established the Bears Ears Commission to "ensure that management decisions affecting the monument reflect expertise and traditional and historical knowledge of Tribal Nations" by providing "guidance and recommendations on the development and implementation of management plans and on management of the entire monument." The agencies have sought that guidance and recommendations.