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FYI

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Review of Nevada's national monuments chills legislator

An aerial photo of Tramp Ridge in Gold Butte National Monument on Friday, July 21, 2017. Gold Butte is the name for both a mountain peak and nearby ghost town in the eastern hook of Clark County. Bizuayehu Tesfaye Las Vegas Review-Journal @bizutesfaye

U.S. Rep. Ruben Kihuen, D-North Las Vegas, speaks during a press conference at Spring Preserve on Friday, July 21, 2017, in La Vegas. Bizuayehu Tesfaye Las Vegas Review-Journal @bizutesfaye

U.S. Rep. Ruben Kihuen, D-North Las Vegas, speaks during a press conference at Spring Preserve as Fawn Douglas, left, member of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, and Mauricia Baca, right, executive director of Outside Las Vegas Foundation, look on Friday, July 21, 2017, in La Vegas. Bizuayehu Tesfaye Las Vegas Review-Journal @bizutesfaye

An aerial photo of Gold Butte National Monument on Friday, July 21, 2017. Gold Butte is the name for both a mountain peak and nearby ghost town in the eastern hook of Clark County. Bizuayehu Tesfaye Las Vegas Review-Journal @bizutesfaye

An aerial photo of Tramp Ridge in Gold Butte National Monument on Friday, July 21, 2017. Gold Butte is the name for both a mountain peak and nearby ghost town in the eastern hook of Clark County. Bizuayehu Tesfaye Las Vegas Review-Journal @bizutesfaye

An aerial photo of a deep sink hole known as "Devil's Throat" in Gold Butte National Monument on Friday, July 21, 2017. Gold Butte is the name for both a mountain peak and nearby ghost town in the eastern hook of Clark County. Bizuayehu Tesfaye Las Vegas Review-Journal @bizutesfaye

An aerial photo of Lime Ridge in Gold Butte National Monument on Friday, July 21, 2017. Gold Butte is the name for both a mountain peak and nearby ghost town in the eastern hook of Clark County. Bizuayehu Tesfaye Las Vegas Review-Journal @bizutesfaye

By Henry Brean Las Vegas Review-Journal
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Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is expected in Nevada soon to review two national monuments here, but the Democratic congressman who represents the area said he feels left out of the process.

At a press conference in Las Vegas on Friday, Rep. Ruben Kihuen called it "highly disrespectful" for Zinke not to tell him about his upcoming visit or respond to a letter the congressman sent to Zinke's office a week ago about the ongoing national monuments review.

President Donald Trump has ordered Zinke to scrutinize 22 monuments created by presidential decree since Jan. 1, 1996, to determine if the designations should be scaled back or eliminated to allow more public use and economic development. Five marine national monuments in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans are also under review.

During a June 26 stop in Pahrump, Zinke promised to return to Nevada in July to talk to local stakeholders and tour Gold Butte and Basin and Range national monuments before he decides whether they should be reduced, rescinded or left intact.

Most of the people at Friday's pro-monument press conference at the Springs Preserve seemed to be under the impression that Zinke's tour would take place early next week, but Interior Department press secretary Heather Swift later said no trip has been scheduled. Swift also disputed Kihuen's claims of being ignored. "The congressman's letter will be received by the Office of Congressional Affairs and be processed accordingly," she said in an email. "The secretary is on Capitol Hill quite often and always enjoys talking with members about local issues while he's there."

Monuments mean money

Whenever Zinke does come to Nevada, both Kihuen and Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., said they have requested to meet with him. Titus said she also expects Zinke to hear from conservationists and tribal representatives who fought long and hard for the protection of Gold Butte, especially.

"We worry that he only meets with people who tell him what he wants to hear," the congresswoman said before taking the podium at Friday's press conference. "We're just going to keep after him."

If the Trump administration won't be swayed by an environmental argument, perhaps Zinke and company will listen to an economic one, Titus said. Outdoor recreation at monuments and other attractions brings millions of dollars and thousands of jobs for the Silver State, she said.

So far, Kihuen said, he has not been impressed by the administration's efforts to involve all stakeholders in the review. "They have not done enough outreach to my constituents. They have not done enough outreach to the American people," the first-term congressman said.

“The majority of the American people support national monuments, and they’re not listening to them. That’s disappointing.”

Zinke faces ‘easy call’

Friday’s press conference was organized by the Center for Western Priorities, a Denver-based conservation group that is in the midst of a seven-state road trip to advocate on behalf of the monuments under review. Jesse Prentice-Dunn, advocacy director for the center, said they have covered more than 1,500 miles so far and heard from a wide variety of people who want the monuments near them left alone.

He said that seems to be the overwhelming sentiment everywhere. According to an analysis conducted by the center, more than 98 percent of the roughly 1.4 million public comments submitted as part of the administration’s review came from people who favor keeping the monuments as they are. “So it should be an easy call for Secretary Zinke,” Prentice-Dunn said.

On July 10, 2015, President Barack Obama used his authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate Basin and Range National Monument on 704,000 acres of federal land in remote Lincoln and Nye counties.

He invoked the Antiquities Act again on Dec. 28, 2016, a few weeks before leaving office, to establish Gold Butte National Monument on 297,000 acres in northeastern Clark County best known as the site of rancher Cliven Bundy’s standoff with federal authorities in 2014.

Critics of the proclamations accused Obama of abusing his authority and locking away large swaths of public land in Nevada that might otherwise be put to use in ways that would generate jobs and revenue.

After the designations, Sen. Dean Heller and U.S. Rep. Mark Amodei, both Nevada Republicans, sponsored legislation in the Senate and House seeking to limit future presidents from creating monuments without more input from local leaders and stakeholders.

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Follow [@RefriedBrean](https://twitter.com/RefriedBrean) on Twitter. Review-Journal Washington correspondent Gary Martin contributed to this report.

About the monuments

In his proclamation designating **Gold Butte National Monument**, President Barack Obama called the region “a landscape of contrast and transition, where dramatically chiseled red sandstone, twisting canyons, and tree-clad mountains punctuate flat stretches of the Mojave Desert.”

Gold Butte encompasses nearly 300,000 and was created Dec. 28, 2016.

Basin and Range National Monument was designated in July 2015 and covers 704,000 acres in Lincoln and Nye counties.

Obama’s proclamation said, “The vast, rugged landscape redefines our notions of distance and space and brings into sharp focus the will and resolve of the people who have lived here. The unbroken expanse is an invaluable treasure for our Nation and will continue to serve as an irreplaceable resource for archaeologists, historians, and ecologists for generations to come.”

No changes for Colorado monument

Just as Friday’s pro-monument press conference in Las Vegas was getting underway, the Department of the Interior announced it is recommending no changes to Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Colorado.

“Canyons of the Ancients is gorgeous land, but its monument status as the most high-density Native American archaeological sites in the nation is clear,” Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke

said in a written statement. “The history at this site spans thousands of years, and the federal protection of these objects and history will help us preserve this site for a thousand more years.”

This was the fourth recommendation issued by Zinke since he began his Trump-ordered review of 22 national monuments created by presidential decree since Jan. 1, 1996.

Zinke also has recommended no changes for Craters of the Moon in Idaho and Hanford Reach in Washington.

He has announced that he is recommending an as-yet-unspecified [boundary reduction for Bears Ears National Monument in Utah](#).

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