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**Washington Times: Interior's Ryan Zinke thankfully suggests shrinking national monuments**

**Cheryl Chumley**  
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Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke proposed this week to shrink the size of four national monuments.

What a win for conservatives — a triumph for private property advocates. The government has gone way beyond its Antiquities Act bounds, at least in spirit, in recent years to set aside millions upon millions of acres of land for federal oversight and management. Oftentimes, such land designations leave the likes of fishers, hunters and recreational riders in the lurch — and that's the best-case scenario.

The worst?

Americans find themselves facing the slow erosion of private property rights, while would-be miners suffer the very real plight of losing jobs, losing money, losing the freedom to tap resources as they see fit.

It's high time reason be restored to the oft-burdensome, oft-restrictive government bureaucracies in charge of all the U.S. land management and control, agencies that include the National Parks Service, Bureau of Land Management and Environmental Protection Agency. That Zinke is taking the first steps toward reining in the bureaucracy via a scale-back of some national monuments is an about-time moment in time.

Specifically, Zinke is proposing to shrink borders of the 1.35 million acre Bears Ears National Monument declared — to much consternation to Utah ranchers — by Barack Obama. He's also said to be proposing smaller sizes for three other monstrous monuments, including the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument declared by Bill Clinton.

His draft didn't get into the numbers. And his plan's not yet been released publicly, The New York Times reported. But the fact he's moving forward on the pare-down is cheerful news in itself. President Donald Trump, in April, ordered a review of 27 national monuments totaling 553 million acres of land and sea to weigh environmental concerns against, say, drilling and mining hopes.

Let's hope these four coming up for size reductions are the drop in the bucket, and that all 27 will face similar fate. The left may be lining up lawsuits — but let 'em come. Founding Fathers never envisioned a country where vast swaths of properties would be maintained, regulated and restricted by federal bureaucrats. That's why they penned so many private property protections in the Constitution.

Then came the Antiquities Act in 1906, and since, presidents fueled by special interest environmental lobbyists have taken it on themselves with increasing regularity and alarm to place large properties under federal control.

But now?

it's a new administration — one with a drain the swamp mentality. And certainly, turning back the tide on government take-over of lands and ocean properties fits under that umbrella. The winners of these national monuments shrinks are clearly the American people — clearly the Constitution.

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Alex Hinson

Deputy Press Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
C: 202-641-5381