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From: Hinson, Alex
Sent: 2017-08-24T17:42:07-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: *News Alert* Hispanic Ranchers encouraged by lands proposal
Received: 2017-08-24T17:42:12-04:00

NBC Montana: Hispanic ranchers encouraged by lands proposal

VIA AP

August 24, 2017

2:50 p.m.

Hispanic ranchers from New Mexico who met with U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke while he gathered information about national monuments say they're encouraged that the changes could help them get more grazing and water rights.

The ranchers spoke after Zinke say he was recommending unspecified changes for some of the monuments he reviewed but not recommending the elimination of any of them.

Dave Sanchez of the Northern New Mexico Stockmen's Association say the monument designations allow grazing but that federal land manages change priorities for the land and push ranchers out.

He says Zinke was receptive to ranchers' concerns when he met with them last month.

2:30 p.m.

A Utah Republican state lawmaker who wants the status of Bears Ears National Monument rescinded says he can "live with" a size reduction to the 2,100-square mile monument if it's among recommendations by U.S. Secretary Ryan Zinke to President Donald Trump.

Rep. Mike Noel says that would be a good compromise that would bolster tourism with a new, appropriately sized national monument while still allowing the lands to be used for other activities that locals have been doing for generations.

Noel says Zinke's recommendation for undisclosed changes to a handful of monuments indicates the recommendations will be reasonable and address conflicting views over the monuments' future.

He accused environmentalists of being selfish in insisting on no changes for the monuments.

Noel is among those who want economic activity like timber harvesting and mineral production on land where it is not currently allowed because of monument rules.

11:15 a.m.

Environmental groups are roundly condemning recommendations for changes to some U.S. national monuments.

League of Conservation Voters President Gene Karpinski says Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's review of the national monuments "has been a complete sham" and a pretext for "selling out our public lands and waters" to the oil industry and others.

Ben Schreiber, senior political strategist at Friends of the Earth, says Zinke's action is illegal and "he can rest assured that his latest giveaway to corporate polluters will be litigated in the courts."

And Jamie Williams, president of The Wilderness Society, is urging President Donald Trump to "ignore these illegal and dangerous recommendations and instead act to preserve these beloved places."

Twenty-seven monuments have been under review.

Zinke told The Associated Press he was not recommending that any be eliminated but that there would be changes to a "handful" without disclosing details.

A White House official says President Donald Trump has received U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's recommendations about national monuments protecting wilderness and ocean.

The official says Trump is reviewing Zinke's "recommendations to determine the best path forward for the American people."

The official was not authorized to publicly discuss a draft report and insisted on anonymity.

Zinke told The Associated Press Thursday he's recommending none of 27 national monuments be eliminated.

But he says there would be changes to a "handful."

10:15 a.m.

A recommendation not to eliminate any of 27 U.S. national monuments protecting wilderness and ocean has not alleviated concerns from conservation and tribal groups advocating for total preservation.

Gavin Noyes of Utah's tribal coalition Dine Bikeyah that pushed to preserve the Bears Ears National Monument on tribal lands in southeastern Utah says it is prepared to launch a legal fight against even a slight reduction in that monument's size.

Defenders of Wildlife vice president of landscape conservation Mark Salvo says downsizing any national monuments would have a negative impact on fish, wildlife and plants.

He criticized U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke for not making public a list of recommendations about the monuments.

9 a.m.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said he's recommending that none of 27 national monuments carved from wilderness and ocean and under review by the Trump administration be eliminated.

But there would be changes to a "handful," he said.

Zinke told The Associated Press that unspecified boundary adjustments for some monuments designated over the past four decades will be included in the recommendations he planned to give President Donald Trump on Thursday. None of the sites would revert to new ownership, he said, while public access for uses such as hunting, fishing or grazing would be maintained or restored.

He also spoke of protecting tribal interests and historical land grants, pointing to monuments in New Mexico, where Hispanic ranchers have opposed two monuments proclaimed by President Barack Obama.

Zinke declined to say whether portions of the monuments would be opened up to oil and gas drilling, mining, logging and other industries for which Trump has advocated.

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