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Sent: 2017-09-20T08:37:32-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: *News Alert* EDITORIAL: A smaller Gold Butte no big deal
Received: 2017-09-20T08:37:36-04:00

Las Vegas Review Journal: EDITORIAL: A smaller Gold Butte no big deal
September 19, 2017

Local environmentalists and Nevada Democrats are curling up in their safe spaces upon news that the Trump administration is prepared to downsize the new Gold Butte National Monument near Mesquite.

Speculation along those lines had been rampant for weeks in the wake of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's review of 27 monuments created over the past few decades by four presidents under the 1907 Antiquities Act. But on Sunday night, The Wall Street Journal, citing a leaked report sent from Mr. Zinke to the White House, revealed that Gold Butte and a handful of other monuments are likely to be reduced.

Right on cue came the palpitations and indignation.

"This callous proposal will needlessly punish local, predominantly rural communities that depend on parks and public lands for outdoor recreation, sustainable jobs and economic growth," said a statement from Jamie Williams, president of the Wilderness Society.

Ms. Williams suffers from an utter disconnect. In fact —trigger alert! — many rural residents living near these new designations, including those in Nevada, want no part of the more stringent land-use restrictions that accompany monument status. It's worth noting that Mesquite officials had requested the Gold Butte modification to ensure the city maintained access to certain water rights.

Meanwhile, first-term Rep. Jacky Rosen, a Democrat, was clutching her pearls, claiming the move will "endanger Nevada's natural beauty and chip away at our cultural heritage."

Such ridiculous rhetoric aside, Mr. Zinke's recommendations are actually quite modest and leave the majority of new monuments untouched, including Nevada's other new designation, Basin and Range, which straddles Lincoln and Nye counties. They also urge President Donald Trump to "request congressional authority to enable tribal co-management of sensitive cultural areas, such as Native American artifacts" in Gold Butte, the Journal reports.

That's a proposal green activists should embrace.

Monuments designated under the Antiquities Act are supposed to be confined to the "smallest" area necessary to protect the objects deserving of protection. Gold Butte is now almost 300,000 acres and would cover about 38 percent of Rhode Island. Whether President Donald Trump accepts Mr. Zinke's analysis remains to be seen. But the idea that a slight reduction in Gold Butte's size will result in environmental catastrophe — particularly in a state where some 85 percent of the land is already under the domain of distant Beltway bureaucrats — is patently

ridiculous.

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