

**From:** Benally, Rebecca  
**To:** [Downey Magallanes](#)  
**Subject:** RBenally Op-Ed  
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**Attachments:** [Thank You Op-Ed.docx](#)

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Downey,  
Sending you ther first draft of Op-ed, add, delete, etc., as you wish.

Rebecca

Last month, U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke submitted a report to the White House recommending a reduction in size of both the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. As San Juan County's First Female Native American Commissioner, it is my distinct pleasure to formally thank Secretary Zinke for his thoughtful and considerate recommendation.

Thank you, Sec. Zinke, for taking the 'boots on the ground' approach to spending time with those that use this land on a daily basis. Accompanying you as we toured Bears Ears and the incredible land surrounding it, the honor was all ours as Commissioners. Thank you for riding alongside ranchers, for overlooking the sacred land with its native tribes, and for showing civility and fairness to those who spoke up from all sides. This land has a lot to offer and means many different things to our diverse and ever growing population. We use this land for hunting, fishing, cultural traditions, recreation, and for general enjoyment. Overall, we are lucky to live in one of God's beautiful creations, or as Sec. Zinke describes, "it is drop dead gorgeous country, no question about it."

To have our voices heard restores trust at all levels of our government and should reassure us that Sec. Zinke aims to be a collaborator and advocate. His recommendation emphasizes that public land is just that: public land, for each and every one of us. "No President should use the authority under the Antiquities Act to restrict public access, prevent hunting and fishing, burden private land, or eliminate traditional land uses, unless such action is needed to protect the object," Zinke said in a statement. "The recommendations I sent to the president on national monuments will maintain federal ownership of all federal land and protect the land under federal environmental regulations, and also provide a much needed change for the local communities who border and rely on these lands for hunting and fishing, economic development, traditional uses, and recreation."

Sec. Zinke's recommendation is a triumph for public land rights and for each and every one of us that raised our voice in response to the federal overreach of President Obama.

Thank you, Secretary Zinke.

-Commissioner Rebecca Benally