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NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Bishop 'happier' if Zinke had revoked Bears Ears

Kellie Lunney, E&E News reporter

Published: Wednesday, June 14, 2017

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House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) on the House floor. C SPAN

The chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee said yesterday that he was "a little" disappointed that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke didn't recommend revoking the status of Bears Ears National Monument in his interim review.

While Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) said he was satisfied with Zinke's recommendation to significantly shrink the 1.35-million-acre monument in southeastern Utah, he acknowledged to reporters that he "would have been happier if it was completely redone." But he then added that he is "still convinced [Zinke's] probably going to do it the right way."

Zinke bought himself some time with the interim review of Bears Ears; the final recommendations, including where and by how much to reduce the monument, will come later this summer when the Interior secretary's report on 27 monuments is due.

Although Utah's Legislature adopted a resolution earlier this year encouraging President Trump to revoke the monument's status entirely, Zinke indicated on a press call Monday that he would not make that recommendation in his final report due Aug. 24. "Certainly, rescinding the monument was an option, but looking at it, there are some antiquities within the monument that I think deserve to be protected," he said (*E&E News PM*, June 12).

Still, Bishop said he is confident Interior will come up with the "correct" map for redrawing the boundaries of Bears Ears.

"That is time-consuming," Bishop said, "and that's what I was freaking out [about], thinking that if he did something different than what he did, I would have to come up with a map."

In the meantime, however, the chairman can focus on shepherding Bears Ears-related legislation through Congress — his ultimate goal. Zinke has said he wants Congress to weigh in on the Bears Ears site: The interim report asked lawmakers to establish co-management of the site with tribal nations, as well as to protect some portions of the monument as national recreation or conservation areas.

Bishop yesterday was eager to pursue such legislation. "The [legislative] language is ready," he said.

But he wants to talk to the rest of the Utah congressional delegation "to make sure we're all there, especially the senators." Then he joked, "So, I'll have to find them when they are

awake."

Bishop said the "management aspect" of Bears Ears is "really important" to him.

"Writing down what the practices will be, and getting them into statute and not leaving it up to secretarial discretion in the future," he said, "so the next administration won't just come back with a 2-million-acre monument."

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