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Why This Sportsman Supports President Trump In Reversing Obama's Bears Ears Land Grab

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By [Kyle Lamb](#)

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As I recently listened to a popular podcast, it amazed me to hear two hunting enthusiasts bash President Trump for redefining the boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument. The archery hunters quickly decided Trump's decision would hurt their hunting rights. It would only be a matter of minutes before real estate developers and oil companies broke ground.

When I heard President Obama had declared Bears Ears a national monument in the last month of his presidency, I was excited. But after digging into what he had actually made happen, I realized it was bad, for two reasons.

One, the Utah people didn't want it; and two, this would be bad for access and ability to hunt for sportsmen like me—if not now, in the future. So, what are the facts as we know them?

Obama Stuck a Big 'No Use' Sign on Bears Ears

On December 28, 2016, Obama created the Bears Ears National monument with the stroke of a pen. He did not seek congressional authorization, instead yanking the land into restricted federal domain using the century-old Antiquities Act. He ignored Utah's elected representatives and others voices that have been protesting federal control and this possibility for years.

The Antiquities Act allows the president to change the management of *existing federal lands* without congressional consent. As president, Obama [used this law more than any president had](#) before, by far, vacuuming up 550 million acres by creating 34 national monuments. That's about one-quarter of the national monument total, created in just the past decade.

Wyoming is the only state in the country not covered by this act. Wyoming made a deal in 1950, trading the creation of Grand Teton National Park for future exemption from the power of the act—a deal they see as very good in hindsight.

Bear Ears was already federally controlled land. Obama deemed it a national monument, which has extreme effects on what is called "multiple uses." This forbids it from broad public use such as hunting and fishing, and prioritizes keeping the land as little touched by humans as possible.

As soon as the president signed the order, Utahns lost more of their voices and rights. Utah Republican Sen. Mike Lee said, "This arrogant act by a lame duck president will not stand. I will work tirelessly with Congress and the incoming Trump administration to honor the

will of the people of Utah and undo this designation.” A [poll found](#) 60 percent of Utahns opposed designating the land as Obama did, preferring it to remain more open to the public. Imagine that, states wanting to make their own decisions.

Further, land rights are already a tense topic in western states, where [the federal government owns approximately half the land](#), as opposed to percentages in the single digits in eastern and Midwestern states. Western states regularly complain about being forbidden to manage their own territory, and to keep income from and decisions about it closer to the land itself.

So why did Obama do this? The easy answer is to leave a legacy with the extreme environmentalists—those always ready to challenge land management more friendly to humans. Second, it worked well with his mantra of helping those who can’t help themselves—the Indian tribes of Utah (who are [at best split](#) about the designation). Lastly, this was a perfect way to limit multiple land uses in the future.

Whereas the laws governing the federal Bureau of Land Management require them to make room for everybody, the Antiquities Act lets the federal agency restrict its use to a greater extent. If you don’t think that can happen, try hunting elk in Grand Teton National Park. Obama’s designation could have, for example, led to motorized vehicle bans, which affect hunting and local ranching.

What Trump Did with Bears Ears

After Utah’s governor signed a resolution Utah’s legislature passed asking President Trump to rescind Obama’s designation of Bears Ears as a national monument, Trump ordered a review of Bears Ears and 26 other federal monuments. On December 4, 2017, after the [review had been completed by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke](#), Trump signed an order reducing the size of the Bears Ears

monument designation by 1.3 million acres, keeping about 50,000 acres as a national monument.

Trump's decision doesn't delete public lands. It doesn't turn them over to big business. His actions simply put most of this stretch of Utah back where it belongs: As multiple-use lands where the people of Utah and others can hunt and enjoy other recreational activities with minimal bureaucracy. Trump saved Utah, and the rest of us, from DC bureaucrats.

Of course some might make money from using this land. Multiple uses include cattle and sheep ranchers, recreation providers, outfitters, and others. But don't be bamboozled by the liberal media. Big bulldozers are not standing by to roll in and start strip-mining. This simply reverts the land to its use possibilities available just one year ago, when the area was still well managed.

The BLM, which is still in charge of the property, manages in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and a bunch of other federal and state laws. The reality is that there is no economic incentive or legal prerogative to ruin this landscape.

American Sportsmen, Don't Be Bamboozled

To my friends, the hunters of America, I say wake up! Don't get sucked into the wrong side of the discussion by left-leaning media. We should not let organizations that don't really care about us leverage us by touting "hunters' and anglers' rights." Some of these organizations undermine what we should stand for as Americans. We are hardworking, gun-owning hunters with jobs, families, and a love of freedom.

Organizations such as Sierra Club are too eager to lie with the liberal left. They would love if hunting were outlawed right after

government took away our guns. Simply using the terms hunter, wilderness, or sportsman does not give them free reign to misrepresent those who spent their hard-earned money on membership. People who buy tags and support on-the-ground conservation deserve informed and restrained representation by the groups they give their money to.

Some hunting and fishing websites read like a Teddy Roosevelt memorial and use TR's image, which leads people to believe they are on the side of the outdoorsman. They have been too quick to jump up next to radical environmental interests for the sake of popularity. If you are a member, and a group doesn't represent you, demand change, or leave.

Let's look at Obama's decision another way. We need to be able to afford to take care of all these lands. America's national monuments and parks have huge maintenance backlogs. We waste federal money and limit economic opportunity when we overregulate.

People use these lands. They build their livelihoods on them—ranchers, recreationalists, and yes, even guys who find the gas that you use to drive your car to Starbucks. Remember, the money brought into BLM through those lands belongs to all Americans. It pays the bills so we can have public lands. Obama wanted to continue to force the decision-making, the concentration of power, to Washington. Who knows better, bureaucrats or the American people on the ground?

As a sportsman and American, I support President Trump's decision. It might be time to conduct your own research and try to sort out the facts from the fiction before you accept hype at face value.

Sergeant Major Kyle E. Lamb (retired) spent more than 21 years with the United States Army, most of those years with U.S. Army Special Operations. SGM Lamb has conducted combat operations in numerous

theaters of operation, including Mogadishu, Somalia (Black Hawk Down), and has served numerous combat tours in Iraq. SGM Lamb is the author of several books including his latest, Leadership in the Shadows, available from [Viking Tactics, Inc.](#) and [Amazon.com](#).

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Benjamin J. Cassidy
Department of the Interior
Immediate Office of the Secretary
Senior Deputy Director for External and Intergovernmental Affairs

benjamin_cassidy@ios.doi.gov

(202) 208-4219 w

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