

To: Robert Howarth[robert_howarth@ios.doi.gov]
From: lacey_smethers@ios.doi.gov
Sent: 2017-10-12T12:34:00-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Re: Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument
Received: 2017-10-12T12:34:47-04:00

On Mon, Mar 27, 2017 at 1:17 PM, Nina Brownell <brownell.nina@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Evening,

My name is Nina Brownell and I am a resident of Boulder, Utah (Garfield County). I am writing to express my deep concern with the resolution to shrink the monument, and I urge oppose this effort. I understand that people were upset with how the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument was created in 1996, largely because locals were not consulted in the decision. However, I believe that the monument has had a lasting positive impact on the area, and I fear that in supporting such an enormous reduction in the monument we will undermine all of the growth from the past 20 years.

A few weeks ago in Boulder I attended the Town Council Meeting, during which the resolution to shrink the monument was discussed. The overwhelming consensus was that Boulder residents are opposed to the resolution and want the monument to stay as it is. In Boulder, and in other Garfield County towns, we depend on tourism, and tourism has skyrocketed since the creation of the monument. We all fear that this reduction in the monument will decrease tourism, particularly if some of the current monument land is opened to extractive industries. And not only will shrinking the monument have a likely negative effect on tourism in the area, but it also will potentially hurt ranchers as well. We do not know what the new boundaries will be, and then we do not know what will happen to that newly un-designated land. And this means that ranchers might lose some of their grazing area, especially if that land is opened to mining. At the Boulder Town Council Meeting, we heard the concerns of the ranchers in town who have experienced more difficulties grazing since the monument was created. But what was clear was that those problems could be solved through working with the BLM (with the monument in its current size) to improve management. Ranchers still have their grazing rights on the current monument, and if Garfield County residents and city officials want to help the ranchers, then we should advocate for them with BLM and improve communication between residents and BLM staff. Simply reducing the size of the monument has the potential to take grazing rights away from ranchers altogether.

As I listened to the positions of the Boulder residents at that meeting, it became obvious that the only people that the reduction would help would be the mining companies that come in and exploit this land, not the residents. And to the argument that a coal mine, for example, would create jobs in the area: I say that these are not the jobs that we want. Not only are jobs in mining and extraction often dangerous (both in the short term and the long term physical effects), but they are also not long-lasting. These jobs are not sustainable, and they do not "invest" in the areas; they take resources, while adding no value to the area. And I would even argue that we don't necessarily need more jobs in the area right now. At least in Boulder and Escalante, there are more jobs than there are people. We are desperate for more contractors, electricians, plumbers, and mechanics, to name a few, all of which would add skills to the area and promote the growth of these towns. If we really want to see the people in our towns thrive, then we should be more creative (and more effective) than simply supporting a reduction in the monument, such as creating job training programs or scholarships to actually encourage sustainability and growth.

I am also concerned for myself and other Garfield County property owners because I am worried that our property values will decrease if the monument is reduced. People have invested in land in these towns because of the monument - we thought we could depend on the natural beauty and lack of development on monument land, which is currently threatened. I have little doubt that if the monument is opened to extraction, our property values will decrease. We are currently lucky to have some of the best air quality in the country, and I am appalled that we are jeopardizing that.

I could go on for much longer about my opposition to the resolution to shrink the monument, but I will stop

myself here. So please, I beg you to oppose the shrinking the monument because I truly believe that this will hurt Garfield County, both in the short and long term. My job and property are potentially threatened by the reduction, along with the lives and livelihoods of many others. Our towns and cities can do better than this - we can be more creative in our efforts to improve life in Garfield County.

Thanks for your time,
Nina Brownell

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