

**From:** Center for Western Priorities  
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**Subject:** RESPONSE to Secretary Zinke's recommendation to shrink Bears Ears  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 12, 2017

## **RESPONSE to Ryan Zinke's recommendation to shrink Bears Ears**

DENVER—Interior Secretary Zinke [has recommended](#) President Trump eliminate portions of Bears Ears National Monument. The Center for Western Priorities released the following statement from **Executive Director Jennifer Rokala**:

"This is an undeniable attack on our national monuments and America's public lands. The decision should be an easy one—more than 1 million Americans, including Utahns by a 9 to 1 margin, have asked President Trump to leave Bears Ears National Monument alone. Instead of reinforcing America's conservation heritage, Secretary Zinke is recommending President Trump take actions that are both unprecedented and illegal.

"The law is clear: only Congress can modify or erase a national monument. This report, while disappointing, is not a surprise. President Trump made it clear the fix was in from the moment he signed the executive order, despite overwhelming public support for national monuments."

### **Background**

The text of the Antiquities Act, signed by President Teddy Roosevelt in 1906, plainly gives the president authority to create, but not rescind or modify national monuments. The Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 re-confirmed that the power to create national monuments is a "one way" authority given by Congress to the president. (See [Squillace et al. 2017](#) for the drafting history of FLPMA and the relevant section of the law.) Since FLPMA's passage, no president has attempted to eliminate or alter a national monument.

During the brief 15-day comment period, hundreds of thousands of Americans voiced their

support for Bears Ears National Monument. The [Center for Western Priorities' analysis of individual comments](#) submitted to regulations.gov found 96 percent of those comments supported monument designations. When combined with bundled comments collected by advocacy groups, well over 99 percent of public comments told Secretary Zinke and President Trump to leave our national monuments alone.

This recommendation also goes against the wishes of Utahns. Self-identified Utah residents [supported maintaining](#) Bears Ears National Monument by a 9-to-1 margin in comments submitted to the Interior Department, an overwhelming majority.

During Ryan Zinke's 4-day trip to Utah, he went out of his way to avoid listening to monument supporters, spending just 90 minutes with advocates for Bears Ears. The Secretary refused to meet with business leaders near Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and left Utah as a crowd outside the airport chanted "[talk to us](#)."

## Learn More

- [New analysis of submitted comments finds overwhelming in-state support for national monuments](#)
- [New analysis shows national monument support dominates public comment period](#)
- [Interior Secretary Zinke hikes to Native American ruin with Koch-backed political operative while snubbing tribal leaders](#)
- [What Ryan Zinke could learn from Sally Jewell](#)

For more information, visit [westernpriorities.org](http://westernpriorities.org). To speak with an expert on public lands, contact Jesse Prentice-Dunn at 720-204-1886 or [jesse@westernpriorities.org](mailto:jesse@westernpriorities.org).

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*The Center for Western Priorities is a conservation policy and advocacy organization focused on land and energy issues across the American West.*

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