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Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's Statement on the End of the Monuments Review Public Comment Period

(WASHINGTON) – On Monday, July 10, the formal public comment period closed for the review of national monuments. More than 1.2 million comments were received on Regulations.gov and thousands more were received via traditional mail. Twenty-seven national monuments designated since January 1, 1996 that are more than 100,000 acres, or that were considered to have inadequate public input are under review in accordance with [President Donald J. Trump's April 26, 2017, executive order](#).

“Too often under previous administrations, decisions were made in the Washington, D.C., bubble, far removed from the local residents who actually work the land and have to live with the consequences of D.C.’s actions. This monument review is the exact opposite,” **said Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke**. “President Trump and I opened the formal public comment period – the first-ever for monuments designated under the Antiquities Act – in order to give local stakeholders a voice in the decision-making process. After hearing some feedback, I’d like to remind and reassure folks that even if a monument is modified, the land will remain under federal ownership. I am strictly opposed to the sale or transfer of our public lands, and nothing in this review changes that policy.

“These comments, in addition to the extensive on-the-ground tours of monuments and meetings with stakeholders, will help inform my recommendations on the monuments,” **Zinke said**. “I appreciate everyone who took the time to log-on or write in and participate in our government.”

As required by the executive order, Secretary Zinke submitted an [interim report](#) to the White House in June with various recommendations and observations on Bears Ears National Monument, which suggested the monument be reduced in size to conform with the intent of the Antiquities Act, that of designating the smallest compatible area. The report also recommended the creation of a national conservation area, and official co-management by the local Tribal governments.

The report came after Zinke spent several days on the ground in Utah touring the monument by air, car, foot, and horseback, speaking with stakeholders from Tribal, local, state and federal government, as well as representatives from the conservation, historic preservation, agriculture, tourism, and education sectors. The Secretary met with the Bears Ears InterTribal Coalition while in Salt Lake City on May 7, and the Acting Deputy Secretary Jim Cason held a four-hour follow-up meeting with the Bears Ears Commission and the InterTribal Coalition on May 25.

The Secretary also traveled to Maine's Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, and to Boston to hold meetings on the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Marine Monument off the coast of New England. The Secretary plans to visit Oregon, New Mexico, and Nevada in the coming weeks.

Regarding the comment period, the executive order stated:

In making the requisite determinations, the Secretary is directed to consider:

(i) the requirements and original objectives of the Act, including the Act's requirement that reservations of land not exceed "the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected";

(ii) whether designated lands are appropriately classified under the Act as "historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, [or] other objects of historic or scientific interest";

(iii) the effects of a designation on the available uses of designated Federal lands, including consideration of the multiple-use policy of section 102(a)(7) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 U.S.C. 1701(a)(7)), as well as the effects on the available uses of Federal lands beyond the monument boundaries;

(iv) the effects of a designation on the use and enjoyment of non-Federal lands within or beyond monument boundaries;

(v) concerns of State, tribal, and local governments affected by a designation, including the economic development and fiscal condition of affected States, tribes, and localities;

(vi) the availability of Federal resources to properly manage designated areas; and

(vii) such other factors as the Secretary deems appropriate.

82 FR 20429-20430 (May 1, 2017).

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