

**Washington Post - GSENM - KEPA boundary modifications, paleontology, Draft RMPs, & minerals questions (UT):** Reporter Juliet Eilperin requested to speak to a BLM representative on how certain areas were considered for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument boundary modifications, the status of grazing AUMs since 1996, wilderness study areas in the planning area, GSENM funding, paleontology research, casual fossil collection alternatives in the draft RMPs, and visitation statistics. Juliet's deadline is Friday, Oct.19 and she also specifically requested to speak to GSENM Paleontologist Alan Titus on paleontology resources. BLM Utah proposes to grant an interview with Acting Monument Manager Harry Barber, GSENM Paleontologist Alan Titus, with Acting Communications Director Kimberly Finch moderating the phone interview.

**Proposed Talking Points (if an interview is granted):**

*On boundary modifications:*

- In August 2017, Secretary Zinke submitted a report to the White House outlining recommendations on more than two dozen national monument designations. The Secretary has said "The recommendations I sent to the president on national monuments will maintain federal ownership of all federal land and protect the land under federal environmental regulations, and also provide a much needed change for the local communities who border and rely on these lands for hunting and fishing, economic development, traditional uses, and recreation." For questions on boundary modifications please contact [interior\\_press@ios.doi.gov](mailto:interior_press@ios.doi.gov).

*On Paria Canyon:*

- The Paria Canyon (Paria River corridor) remains protected within the Paria - Hackberry Wilderness Study Area (WSA) after being excluded from the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by Presidential Proclamation 9682.
- Pursuant to FLPMA, the BLM manages WSAs so as to not impair their suitability for designation as wilderness, whether they are included within a national monument or not.

*On GSENM funding and visitation:*

- Visitation has more than doubled in GSENM over the past 20 years (fiscal years 1997 to 2017), reaching almost one million visitors in FY 2017.
- The Draft RMPs/EIS identify new opportunities for recreation access and visitor services on both the GSENM units and KEPA lands (i.e., the lands excluded from the monument by Proclamation 9682).
- Funding has not changed significantly in the last 10 years.
- Please see attached for charts showing visitation and funding.

*On AUMs that have been “retired”:*

- Overall permitted use within the Monument is at roughly the same level now as it has been since the early 1990s. (443 AUMs less).
- No reductions have occurred as a result of the Monument’s designation, though small reductions within limited areas have taken place under normal BLM procedures to protect riparian resources and to address other issues. In fact, Proclamation 6920 (1996), which originally designated the GSENM states that “[n]othing in this proclamation shall be deemed to affect existing permits or leases for, or levels of, livestock grazing on Federal lands within the monument... ”

*On Wilderness Study Areas in the GSENM and KEPA:*

- The GSENM, prior to modification by Proclamation 9682, was comprised of 49.8 percentage of wilderness study areas. Currently, there are 221,768 acres of WSAs in the Kanab-Escalante Planning Area and 715,877 acres in the GSENM. Excluding WSAs from the GSENM does not change their status as WSAs, only an Act of Congress designate a WSA as wilderness or release it from WSA status.

*On the numbers of paleontological teams and researchers:*

- As of the beginning of 2018, there were 11 institutions, such as universities and museums, with permits to conduct paleontological research in GSENM and KEPA lands, including about 15 researchers.
- Historically, paleontological research in the GSENM has led to important new discoveries, often with international acclaim, increased public enthusiasm for BLM Utah, and greater understanding of the field of paleontology.
- Most of the work is focused on the Cretaceous vertebrate fossil resources of the Kaiparowits Plateau region, with the highest potential areas being retained in the GSENM.

*On the status of past and present paleontological funding:*

- The BLM has continuously funded non-federal partners to conduct paleontological research in GSENM since 1998.
- There have been no lapses, but sometimes the funding comes from the Monument’s internal budget rather than national level program funding.
- In FY18 there were five different paleontological research projects funded with a total of about \$56,000.
- Most of the work is focused inside the current Monument, due to the abundance of paleontological resources found within the GSENM, although some of the inventory work has also included KEPA lands.

*On mineral potential, the Colt Mesa Mine, and mining interest:*

- A mineral potential report was completed on April 20, 2018 for the lands excluded from the GSENM (KEPA). Linked here: [Mineral Potential Report](#).
- As of October 15, 2018, 17 mining claims had been recorded with the BLM Utah State Office on lands excluded from GSENM, however, two of those claims have subsequently been forfeited.
- At this time there have been no plans of operation or exploration notices filed for any mining claims on the lands excluded from GSENM by Proclamation 9682, including those near the Colt Mesa Mine.
- Glacier Lake Resources has never filed any claims, notices, or plans of operation with the BLM for any mineral resources in KEPA. Additionally, neither Glacier Lake, nor the current claimants, have contacted the BLM about sale or transfer of the claims filed near Colt Mesa.
- At this time the BLM has not received any exploration notices or plans of operation for the KEPA lands.

*On casual collection for fossils in the Draft RMPs/EIS:*

- All vertebrate fossils on federal lands are protected by the Paleontological Resource Preservation Act (PRPA) of 2009.
- The 2000 Monument Management Plan, which currently governs the GSENM units and the KEPA, prohibits casual collection (i.e., the unpermitted and small scale, hobby level collection of common invertebrate and plant fossils for non-commercial personal use).
- Alternatives C and D contain collecting closures in the KEPA where such use would potentially create conflicts with protecting more sensitive fossil resources. The Draft RMPs/EIS identify two areas inside the Monument for casual collection through the planning process where the collection of common invertebrate fossils (oyster shells and ammonites) would create minimal conflicts with protecting significant vertebrate fossils.
- Two areas inside the Monument were identified for casual collection through the planning process where historic collecting of common invertebrate fossils (oyster shells and ammonites) would create minimal conflicts with protecting significant vertebrate fossils.
- Casual collection was considered in Alternatives C and D because such collecting is compatible with the BLM's multiple use mission (ie. collecting of wood and hunting is already allowed in the Monument) and is not specifically prohibited by law.

*Attendance at the Draft RMPs/EIS public meetings*

On Oct 15-16, 2018, the BLM held public meetings on the GSENM-KEPA Draft RMPs/EIS. In total, 214 guests attended, 31 written comments and 29 verbal comments

were recorded. No interviews were provided by the BLM.