

From: <Catherine_Callaway@ios.doi.gov>
To: Randal_Bowman@ios.doi.gov
Subject: DCN: EST-00003224 - Antiquities Act
Date: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 5:13:17 PM
Attachments: [3224 in.pdf](#)

Tasked to OEIA.



Elko County Board of Commissioners

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May 26, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
United States Secretary of the Interior

Re: National Monuments Review

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Elko County Board of Commissioners believes the designation of National Monuments under the Antiquities Act is a flagrant abuse of federal government authority in that all avenues of public comment, public opposition and impacts are not heard.

Additionally, the Act has become a political tool to reward favored groups and individuals and punish opponents. In the case of the Basin and Range Monument in Nevada and Bear's Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante Monuments in Utah, the designations also directly defied the wishes of the states' legislators.

Former U.S. Senator Harry Reid attempted to designate the Basin and Range Monument legislatively through Congress and failed. The only real cultural value in the vast 700,000-acre monument is the existence of a few petroglyphs. There is widespread speculation that Sen. Reid sought the designation as part of his longstanding effort to block the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Storage Facility. A proposed railroad spur from Utah to Yucca Mountain would have gone through the area of the monument. What Sen. Reid could not accomplish legislatively; he was able to accomplish through his friendship with President Barack Obama. An obvious reward to Sen. Reid for his work as Senate Majority Leader.

The Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument was another political maneuver. During the 1996 presidential race, President Bill Clinton declared the monument from Arizona, looking across the Grand Canyon at the massive 1.9 million acres of Utah that he was designating. Utah officials were only given a 24-hour notice of the impending action. The move closed off a huge coal deposit and rendered useless scattered sections of land given to Utah at statehood as trust lands to finance schools. The maneuver was a reward to Arizona that ended up favoring Clinton by a narrow two percent margin in the presidential election, and punishment for Utah that voted overwhelmingly for Clinton's opponent Bob Dole.

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The process is completely out-of-hand. During his eight-year presidency, Barack Obama designated 550 million acres as national monuments. To put that in perspective, the Louisiana Purchase expanded the nation's land holding by 530 million acres. Let that sink in: in eight years President Obama closed off more acreage than President Thomas Jefferson was able to gain with the Louisiana Purchase.

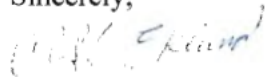
Conversely, it has been the experience of Elko County when seeking federal lands for public purposes, such as parks and fire stations, that the process is terribly cumbersome, years in length and requires numerous expensive studies. An excruciating process even for just a few acres. For example, Elko County endured a 10-year ordeal to secure two acres adjacent to the small rural community of Jarbidge for a cemetery.

Elko County is a big county of nearly 11 million acres, but the federal government controls 8 million of those acres. Our communities are literally landlocked by federal lands.

The Elko County Board of Commissioners respectfully asks that you carefully review all these recent monument declarations to ensure that no more acreage than absolutely necessary is included. We find it hard to believe that it is necessary to designate hundreds of thousands of acres to protect any single cultural asset. The board also hopes you consider whether or not the declarations were supported by residents of the area and the state legislators.

Good luck in your endeavor.

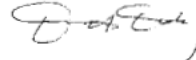
Sincerely,



Cliff Eklund, Chair



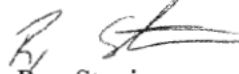
Delmo Andreozzi, Vice- Chair



Demar Dahl



Jon Karr



Rex Steninger

cc: United States Senator Dean Heller
United States Representative Mark Amodei
Nevada State Senator Pete Goicoechea
Nevada Assemblyman John Ellison