

USDA Forest Service

Executive Summary of Review of National Monuments under EO 13792 (April 26, 2017) Bears Ears National Monument on National Forest System Land

Key Information about Bears Ears National Monument

Bears Ears National Monument (BENM) was designated on December 28, 2016. BENM consists of 1,351,849 acres in San Juan County, Utah, jointly managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) (1.063 million acres managed by the BLM; 290,000 acres managed by the USFS, Manti-La Sal National Forest). Prior to designation, the area was managed by the BLM and USFS and continues to be following designation. Located in southeast Utah's canyon country, BENM offers unparalleled recreation opportunities. The area is one of the most significant cultural landscapes in the United States, with thousands of archaeological sites and important areas of spiritual significance to American Indian tribes. Overall, multiple use activities are allowed in BENM that are compatible with the protection of resources and objectives identified in the Presidential Proclamation. Multiple use activities are subject to decisions made in current and future BLM resource management planning efforts which include public participation. Unlike national monuments managed by other federal agencies, monuments and other conservation areas managed by the BLM continue to allow for multiple uses according to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Summary of Public Engagement Prior to Designation

The idea of a national monument in this area is not a new one: calls for protection of the Bears Ears area began more than 80 years ago. Six years ago, several tribes began working on a specific proposal to protect this area under the Antiquities Act. Last year, at the invitation of the tribes, senior representatives from the Department of Interior and the USFS attended an Inter-Tribal Council meeting in the field at the Bears Ears buttes to engage in government-to-government dialogue. In July 2016, Secretary Jewell was joined at a public meeting in Bluff, Utah, by Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Robert Bonnie, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Larry Roberts, BLM Director Neil Kornze, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis, and staff from the offices of Governor Herbert, Congressman Chaffetz, Congressman Bishop, Senator Lee, and Senator Hatch. At the meeting, an overflow crowd of over 1,500 citizens attended. The majority of speakers encouraged permanent protection for this iconic landscape, as did the majority of almost 600 written comments. On that trip, senior officials also met with a number of local stakeholders to discuss protection of the area, including a meeting with the San Juan County Commission that was well-attended by local citizens. The Governor, members of Utah's congressional delegation, and the San Juan County Commission support protection for the area, but unanimously opposed monument designation.

The boundary of BENM is largely congruent with similar designations proposed in the Utah Public Lands Initiative (UPLI) (H.R. 5780), which was introduced by Representatives Bishop and Chaffetz after extensive consultations with stakeholders. Their UPLI, which Governor Herbert also supported, proposed to conserve roughly the same area as the BENM by designating two National Conservation Areas (Indian Creek and Bears Ears) as well as the Mancos Mesa Wilderness. The UPLI also proposed to designate most of the current Wilderness Study Areas as wilderness.

There is overwhelming support from tribal governments for protecting this important cultural landscape. A coalition of five federally recognized tribes – Hopi, Navajo, Ute Mountain Ute, Zuni, and Ute Indian Tribe of the Uinta Ouray – came together to develop a tribal proposal for protecting 1.9 million acres of public land in the Bears Ears area, which is the ancestral grounds of numerous tribes in the region and remains an important area for traditional and ceremonial use. Over two dozen other tribes endorsed their tribal proposal, as well as the National Congress of American Indians. All seven tribes located in Utah and the Utah Tribal Leaders Association endorsed the tribal proposal. The Navajo Nation, which has seven chapter houses located in Utah, has supported the tribal proposal at its highest levels, including support from its President and the Navajo Nation Council. Six of their seven chapter houses in Utah support the tribal proposal, and the one that has rescinded its support has instead advocated for protecting the area through the Utah Public Lands Initiative (UPLI). To reflect tribal expertise and traditional and historical knowledge, the BENM Presidential Proclamation established a Bears Ears Commission, which enables tribes to share information and advice with federal land managers.

Significance of the National Forest System Lands within the Monument

The monument is named after the Bears Ears Buttes, located on the National Forest System lands within the monument. Due to their prominence on the landscape, many Tribes' oral history includes stories and references about these buttes. In addition, the Tribes have a long history with the Bears Ears buttes and the lands surrounding them. Area Indian tribes have identified historic and spiritually significant connections with this landscape in the monument. They collect important plants, ceremonial firewood, and other resources. While some of the tribes were agronomic based, others relied upon hunting and gathering on the "island of forest" within the monument. The tribes also hold formal ceremonies and seek individual healing in different locations on Forest System lands surrounding the buttes.

The portion of Bears Ears Monument located on the Manti-La Sal National Forest contains extensive historic, cultural, and recreation resources. While only 15-20 percent of the monument has been surveyed, there are over 3,500 documented heritage sites including prehistoric, protohistoric/historic, and historic. This area of the national forest represents one of the highest concentrations of Ancestral Puebloan sites of any ranger district within the National Forest System. A "core" area of the national forest within the monument (86,000 acres) contains over

2,027 Puebloan sites, most of which are Pueblo I. The Pueblo I culture is unique to only a few locations and the Forest System Lands in the monument has the only high elevation communities of this era. Sites include hunting camps and blinds, ceremonial sites, granaries, stone quarries, villages and residences, agricultural systems, kilns, rock art, and shrines. Protohistoric/Historic sites include sweat lodges, hogans, and resource procurement locations.

The BENM portion of the Manti-La Sal National Forest experiences a wide variety of summer and winter recreational activities, including camping, hiking, off highway vehicle/motorcycle riding, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and cultural resource tourism. Most of the activities are related to dispersed recreation. The monument has 133 miles of non-motorized trails (50 miles located in the Dark Canyon wilderness), 65 miles of motorized trails (including several long loop rides), and 462 miles of National Forest System roads. The monument contains 73,100 acres of Inventoried Roadless Areas, 50,000 acres of designated wilderness, and a Research Natural Area (approx. 300 acres) that provide opportunities of solitude. Twenty four outfitter and guides permitted operations provide recreational experiences including “Jeeping”, hunting, site seeing, back packing, and mountain biking. The San Juan hunt unit is one of the most popular and sought after limited entry deer and elk units in the state of Utah. Each of these types of recreation activities were allowed prior to monument designation and continue to be allowed since designation.

The National Forest System portion of the BENM has some of the most well-recognized and notable geologic features on the Manti-La Sal National Forest. It contains numerous forested canyons that contain hanging seeps and springs, and a wide array of vividly colorful cliff bands. There are also numerous arches, spires, plateaus. This area of the national forest also been identified as one of the best locations to observe “dark skies” in the night.

Summary of National Monument Activities since Designation

Collaboration is an integral component for successful management of the BENM. Since its designation, Forest Service representatives participate in weekly conference calls with the BLM to discuss management related to the BENM. In addition, the Forest Service and BLM have attended monthly coordination meetings with the Tribal Commission. The Forest Service also has been coordinating with elected officials, interest groups, and the public to proactively share information about the BENM.

In anticipation of an increase in visitor use of the area, the Manti-La Sal National is hiring additional law enforcement and forest protection officers for the 2017 summer season specific to the BENM. The forest will also station forest protection officers at the Gooseberry Guard Station to make contact with the public during the summer. The Forest Service is providing educational materials about protecting archeological resources.

The Monticello Ranger District and Manti-La Sal National Forest Supervisor's offices are answering many phone calls and receiving many visitors specifically asking questions about BENM. Questions are also being submitted online. The forest is experiencing a substantial increase visitation related to BENM. For example, while there are no developed Forest Service campsites in the BENM, monitoring of dispersed sites shows that—near the Bear's Ears themselves—sites that were rarely used before the monument designation are now full most of the time. The forest is making an effort to ensure visitors have necessary information to assist in their safety, enjoyment, and protection of the resources. The BLM has prepared frequently asked questions and maps for the public, which the Forest Service is also making available. Lastly, the forest is investing in LIDAR imagery for portions of the BENM, to be used to identify previously unrecorded archaeological sites

Summary of Activities in Area for 5 years Preceding Pre-Designation

These lands have been managed according to the 1986 Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, which will be followed in the interim until the BLM and the Forest Service develop a joint management plan for the BENM.

Summary of Available Economic Information since Designation

The primary economic drivers for the National Forest System portion of BENM are recreation and tourism and grazing activities. There are no producing oil and gas wells and no coal developments in the National Forest System portion of the BENM. And while there are 78 active unpatented mining claims for uranium in the BENM, there are no active mining operations on National Forest System lands. In addition, up to 53,000 acres of the BENM is designated as suitable for timber production within the monument boundaries, but there are no current or planned sales within the area. Lastly, there are nine Forest Service allotments wholly or partially contained within BENM. These allotments include 11,078 permitted Animal Unit Months (AUMs).