

# Conversation Contents

**Fwd: Public Comment Extension Request**

**Attachments:**

/150. Fwd: Public Comment Extension Request/1.1 UDB Letter to Zinke\_Ext Req 5-24-17.pdf

**"Benedetto, Kathleen" <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>**

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**From:** "Benedetto, Kathleen" <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed May 31 2017 10:03:45 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Downey Magallanes <downey\_magallanes@ios.doi.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Public Comment Extension Request  
**Attachments:** UDB Letter to Zinke\_Ext Req 5-24-17.pdf

This went to Bowman and others. KB

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Utah Dine Bikeyah** <[protectbears@ios.doi.gov](mailto:protectbears@ios.doi.gov)>  
Date: Thu, May 25, 2017 at 12:03 AM  
Subject: Public Comment Extension Request  
To: [RR Bowman@ios.doi.gov](mailto:RR_Bowman@ios.doi.gov), [kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov),  
[marshall\\_critchfield@ios.doi.gov](mailto:marshall_critchfield@ios.doi.gov), [timothy\\_williams@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_williams@ios.doi.gov), [micah\\_chambers@ios.doi.gov](mailto:micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov)

Dear Secretary Zinke,

I am writing to formally request that you extend the DOI comment period by one week, OR if this is not possible, we request that you recommend to President Trump's administration that it spend additional time meeting with the thousands of local Bears Ears National Monument supporters who were not given the opportunity to be heard either on your visit or during this expedited comment period.

Utah Diné Bikéyah Board Members and staff are hearing from community members who are frustrated by both the extremely expedited comment period as well the lack of opportunity to get their voices heard by DOI and are formally requesting either a one week extension of this deadline, OR additional fact-finding by the Trump administration staff (OMB, CEQ, or Cabinet officials). Bears Ears supporters and opponents are nearly evenly split (seemingly across racial and/or religious lines) within the county, and the majority of San Juan County is Native American (49% Native American, prior to the 7% increase in county population in 2016, the majority of which may be Navajo.) Many of those who may be left out of this review process are represented by Tribal governments, but just like any society San Juan County has community leaders and stakeholders on-reservation who hold critical information to your decision. UDB's reasons for requesting this action are numerous, however only three are detailed below.

1) Last night the DOI public comment upload website appeared to be down for approximately 90 minutes during a critical time for San Juan County residents to upload comments (5:00-6:30 PM Mountain Time). This has happened at several other times during the comment period, which

seems unacceptable given the additional barriers and costs community members face in San Juan County as they attempt to submit comments.

2) Traditional Knowledge exists in Utah, but has not been requested. At a minimum, Secretary Zinke should request the contact information from UDB of the more than 70 individuals who carefully detailed their cultural ties to Bears Ears in developing the proposal in 2010-2011. These individuals have critical information regarding objects and boundaries that either DOI or the Trump administration should solicit prior to any boundary adjustments. Some of these elders have passed on, but those who are alive may hold critical information regarding cultural resources that may be harmed if the boundary is shrunk. UDB has access to the elders and some of the data that these individuals provided prior to the Navajo Nation and other Tribes writing the proposal. UDB has been communicating this fact to your office for three months, but has not heard a response from you or any indication that you seek to gather this necessary, integral and obtainable information.

3) Technological barriers are high in southern San Juan County. We do not know if you are aware, but conditions on-reservation are starkly different than in northern San Juan County, yet you did not visit this half of the county, nor invite any on-reservation supporters of the National Monument to meet with you or hear their concerns during your visit. The DOI comment period length and format is particularly troubling given the lack of access on-reservation to basic services such as the internet, cell towers, and smart phones in the southern half of San Juan County where most people live (40% of the region lacks access to water; road infrastructure and electricity services are also lacking). Secretary Zinke dismissed this concern when it was raised by the media during his visit, but the fact remains that southern San Juan County residents are likely to struggle to have their voices heard due to both technological and monetary hurdles that are not an issue in most communities in the United States.

To help address two of the above problems, Utah Diné Bikéyah hosted a public comment session tonight (Wednesday, May 24th) in Monument Valley, Utah. The purposes of this meeting are to provide cultural appropriate support (translators, video/ audio equipment, and printed documents) for individuals to meaningfully engage in the review process. We will scan and upload these comments for anyone (for or against the monument) who does not have ready access to these resources . This meeting was also organized in response to fruitless efforts of these communities to convince you to visit them and hear their voices over the past three months. These requests to be heard have resulted in another level of frustration by both your lack of attention and seeming lack of awareness of both on-the-ground conditions and history of the proposal. Local support has been consistent and vocal over the past seven years, yet is being undermined by dismissive statements from the Utah Congressional delegation that Native people are opposed to the National Monument. An example of this support was demonstrated by more than 500 local Bears Ears supporters who attended the Bears Ears celebration on January 7th, 2017, in response to the designation, as well as at each of the annual UDB sponsored "Summer Gatherings" in the Bears Ears meadow, which have drawn hundreds of people together for a weekend of cultural exchange.

In closing, please consider either extending the comment deadline, or recommending that President Trump engage local on-reservation communities prior to taking any action on Bears Ears.

Sincerely,

A rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a signature.

Gavin Noyes

Executive Director

Utah Dine Bikeyah

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**Kathleen Benedetto**

Special Assistant to the Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
(202) 208-5934



May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Ryan Zinke

Secretary of the Department of the Interior

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, DC 20240

Email: [exsec@ios.doi.gov](mailto:exsec@ios.doi.gov), [timothy\\_williams@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_williams@ios.doi.gov), [micah\\_chambers@ios.doi.gov](mailto:micah_chambers@ios.doi.gov), [kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov), [marshall\\_critchfield@ios.doi.gov](mailto:marshall_critchfield@ios.doi.gov), [RR\\_Bowman@ios.doi.gov](mailto:RR_Bowman@ios.doi.gov)

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