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Subject: E+E News: Tribes remain unsatisfied as Zinke tours Bears Ears
Date: Monday, May 08, 2017 1:28:54 PM

NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Tribes remain unsatisfied as Zinke tours Bears Ears

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Published: Monday, May 8, 2017

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2017/05/08/stories/1060054183>

(Left to right) Utah Gov. Gary Herbert (R) shows Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke views of Salt Lake City and the Wasatch Range yesterday as Zinke began a four-day trip to Utah to inspect two disputed national monuments. Photo courtesy of @SecretaryZinke via Twitter.

Members of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition remain discouraged about the future of their 1.35-million-acre monument in southeastern Utah following a meeting yesterday with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, asserting the one-hour session was insufficient to address their concerns.

As the Interior Department pursues a review of the status of 27 national monuments — and prepares to recommend potential boundary changes or eliminations — Zinke is in Utah this week to visit both the Bears Ears and the Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments.

He is scheduled to take an aerial tour of Bears Ears this morning along with Utah Gov. Gary Herbert (R) and members of the state's congressional delegation.

The Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition had lambasted Zinke last week over his decision to meet with San Juan County commissioners opposed to the site as well as Utah Republican leaders who have likewise called for rescinding the nation's newest monument ([Greenwire](#), April 27).

Following a meeting yesterday in Salt Lake City, Navajo Nation Council Delegate Davis Filfred told the *Salt Lake Tribune* that the meeting was overdue and that he hoped to have additional discussions about the monument's future.

"I told him today that you met with the Utah delegation more than a couple of times thus far, and this is the first time that we are meeting," said Filfred, who is a member of both the coalition and the Bears Ears Commission that is tasked with advising the federal government about the monument's management.

"I'm requesting equal time," he said. He later said of the meeting that Zinke is "asking this question as if we're supposed to answer it in one sentence, one phrase, one paragraph."

Following the meeting with the coalition — which represents the Hopi, Navajo, Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute and Zuni and urged the creation of the monument — Zinke praised its members, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported.

"I think they're smart, capable, passionate, and have a deep sense of tie to their culture and want to preserve it," he said.

Under an executive order signed by President Trump last month, Zinke has until June 10 to issue an interim report on his recommendations for national monuments including the Bears Ears site.

He then has until late August to issue a final report.

Zinke told local media that he does not have "any predisposition of outcome" on his recommendations for Bears Ears, but reiterated his concern that some monuments are larger than needed to protect the cultural, scientific or historical areas of interest.

"Over the course of our history, I think it's undisputed that the monuments have been an effective tool to save [and] preserve some of our greatest cultural treasures," Zinke said of monuments created under the Antiquities Act of 1906, which allows presidents to issue protections for federal lands.

He later added: "Some of the monuments are, I don't want to say universally, but certainly widely supported and accepted. The Bears Ears is not widely supported or accepted in the state of Utah."

In addition, Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch (R) asserted yesterday to the *Salt Lake Tribune* that Native Americans with ties to Bears Ears had been "manipulated sometimes by people" and that the monument could eventually bar tribal members from partaking in unspecified activities.

"The Indians, they don't fully understand that a lot of the things that they currently take for granted on those lands, they won't be able to do if it's made clearly into a monument or a wilderness," Hatch said. But he declined to offer specifics. "That'd take too much time right now."

But protestors in Salt Lake City ahead of Zinke's meeting with the coalition urged him to ignore Hatch's advice.

"Don't touch our monuments," Utah Dine Bikeyah Executive Director Gavin Noyes said at the Saturday rally, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Other local media estimated the event drew more than 2,000 protesters. "Listen to the people, not the delegation."

Opponents of the monument organized by the Stewards of San Juan County held their own rally Saturday in Blanding, Utah, near the monument.

"San Juan County is eager to have Secretary Zinke visit our home and see firsthand why locals oppose the national monument designation. We have worked tirelessly to advocate for what's best for this land, and it's nice to know that someone is finally listening," Stewards of San Juan County President Jami Bayles said in a statement.