

April 9, 2018

Bureau of Land Management
US Forest Service
365 North Main, P.O. Box 7
Monticello, UT 84535

Dear BLM and USFS Planning Team,

The Conservation Alliance, Outdoor Alliance, and Outdoor Industry Association offer these comments for the public scoping process for the management plans for the Indian Creek and Shash Jaa Units of the Bears Ears National Monument. Our organizations represent outdoor industry companies that make and sell products for outdoor recreation and the human-powered outdoor recreation community. We value the public lands and waters that provide important outdoor recreation opportunities for our customers and recreationists, and the landscape covered by both the original and reduced Monument designations both contain world-renowned outdoor recreation opportunities that must be carefully considered in management plan development.

Our organizations and community strongly oppose President Trump's action to change the boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument (BENM), and we believe those actions to be illegal. The original monument boundaries were the result of a rigorous and transparent public process, and represent the minimum area necessary to protect the spectacular cultural artifacts and outdoor recreation opportunities on the landscape. We are confident that court challenges to the boundary changes will confirm that President Trump's actions were illegal, and that only Congress has the authority to revoke or reduce a national monument. Consequently, we maintain that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service (USFS) are premature in initiating a management planning process for a national monument whose boundaries are being challenged in court. The agencies should refrain from any planning efforts until the legitimacy of the boundaries is settled.

If the BLM and USFS are determined to prematurely pursue a planning process, we ask you to develop a plan that protects the recreation opportunities, archaeological sites, and areas of scientific interest within the original boundaries of the BENM as set forth in Presidential Proclamation 9558, because there is no legal basis for changing the original monument boundaries.

Additionally, according to the relevant language in Proclamation 9558, the BLM and Forest Service shall provide for "maximum public involvement" in the development of a management plan and "shall establish an advisory committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) to provide information and advice regarding the development of the management and consist of a fair and balanced representation of interested stakeholders," including "recreational users," among others. A FACA charter for a Bears Ears National Monument Advisory Committee was signed on January 18, 2017 by then-Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, but that FACA charter was never published in the Federal

Register, and now a new charter needs to be created and certified to meet this requirement under Proclamations 9558 and 9681. BLM and USFS must begin the process of chartering this FACA committee immediately so that it can provide meaningful advice regarding the development of a management plan.

Additionally, given the national and international prominence of Indian Creek as a rock climbing area, as well as the specific acknowledgment of climbing in Proclamation 9558, we believe that the Access Fund should represent the “recreational user” community on this advisory committee, as directed under Proclamations 9558 and 9681, given Access Fund's longstanding and deep involvement in Indian Creek planning and management.

Bears Ears was the first national monument designated at the request of Native American tribes, and the proclamation itself refers to the widespread archaeological and cultural sites and Native American artifacts that lie throughout the landscape. To honor these tribal connections to the Bears Ears region and the trust responsibility of the United States to the Tribes, Native American participation in management must begin early and incorporate extensive government-to-government consultation and collaboration throughout the planning process.

The original proclamation for Bears Ears National Monument also highlights the area’s world class outdoor recreation opportunities, including rock climbing, hunting, hiking, backpacking, canyoneering, whitewater rafting, mountain biking, and horseback riding. Because visitors travel from near and far, these lands support a growing economic and travel and tourism sectors that are a source of economic opportunity for the region. Any planning process must cover all of the recreation opportunities within the original boundaries of the BENM, and not simply within the Indian Creek and Shash Jaa units. On a related note, visitation to BENM has increased since designation without a corresponding increase in visitor services and infrastructure, and we ask the management agencies to develop an interim visitor management plan immediately, and ask that Congress adequately fund the area and its resources.

Further, Indian Creek has long suffered from a chronic lack of management resources. This shortcoming is especially problematic given the immeasurable significance and popularity of the area for rock climbers and many user groups. A lack of funding and other resources for BLM’s state office has led to shortages of human resources like field rangers or an agency presence of any kind. Agency resources to assist with capital improvements to address growing demand and the need for more toilets, hardened campsites, trails, and other stewardship needs are also insufficient. Non-governmental organizations such as the Access Fund, American Alpine Club, Rocky Mountain Field Institute, and others—along with partnerships with outdoor industry companies like Patagonia, The North Face, Black Diamond, Petzl, and others—have provided the funding and expertise to provide for management and stewardship in the Indian Creek Corridor. The management plan must be appropriately funded so it can address the current and future needs of the area.

To best protect the cultural sites and artifacts within the monument boundaries, the planning process must analyze direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on cultural resources and other resources and

values recognized under NEPA throughout the entire original monument boundaries. Additionally, the management plan must recognize that outdoor recreation, including the specific activities acknowledged in Proclamation 9558, are the gateway through which the public experiences and enjoys the monument's protected objects. Cultural resource protection will be best achieved by managing front country sites as a means of educating visitors while retaining a backcountry feel at other sites. This nuanced management would protect the resources while improving the outdoor recreation experience on the landscape.

The Bears Ears National Monument is among the crown jewels of our public lands system, and an important economic driver for communities dependent on outdoor recreation. According to a study by the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation generates \$88.7 billion in annual consumer spending and supports 7.6 million jobs nationwide. In Utah, outdoor recreation brings \$12.3 billion into the state, and creates 110,000 sustainable and long-lasting jobs. This economic engine is four times greater than the jobs supported by oil and gas development, mining, and logging combined. As long as our natural resources and outdoor infrastructure are properly managed and protected, our economy will continue to boom. Protecting the lands within the original boundaries of the BENM is an investment in our economic future.

Finally, basic maps depicting the outdoor recreation resources within the monument area are attached. Outdoor Alliance has extensive GIS data covering recreational opportunities within the monument area, which we are happy to share with the planning team on request.

Thank you for considering our perspective.

Sincerely,



John Sterling
Executive Director
The Conservation Alliance










Adam Cramer
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BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT REDUCTION

-  Original Monument (1.35 M Acres)
-  Reduced Monument (202 K Acres)
-  Hiking Trail
-  Mountain Biking Trail
-  Whitewater Paddling
-  Rock Climbing Site
-  Canyoneering Access



0 5 10 Miles

Sources: Access Fund, Adventure Projects, Bureau of Land Management, Esri, Utah Automated Geographic Reference Center

