



May 22, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write to affirm our support for national monuments in Colorado and our nation, and request that you refrain from modifying any national monument designations in our state. The threat of rolling back protections is worrisome to communities in Colorado and across the country. Instead, we encourage you to focus your Department's limited resources on the sustainable management of our nation's public lands and waters, and our valuable natural resources.

According to a bipartisan poll conducted by the State of the Rockies Project at Colorado College, a strong majority of Coloradans prioritize protecting water, air, and wildlife with opportunities for recreation on public land over more development on those lands. A majority of Coloradans also oppose transferring control of federal public lands to states.

National monuments across the country preserve our collective history, our culture, and our shared identity. This is true of national monuments in Colorado like Canyons of the Ancients, which contains over 6,000 archeological sites, the highest known density of sites in the United States. It is also true of places like Bears Ears, which is the ancestral land of tribes across the West, including the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute in Colorado. Any steps to diminish protections for these public lands would be an affront to Coloradans and to future generations of Americans.

The designation of Bears Ears as a national monument was an important step towards restoring our nation's commitment to the tribes—including the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute—and provided them a greater voice in the future management of their ancestral lands. Given the region's historic and scientific significance—with its ancient dwellings, rock art, and artifacts telling a story and a history for generations of native people—its designation under the Antiquities Act was warranted. While it is rare for any designation to enjoy unanimous consent, the foresight of a broad coalition—including 30 tribes—to protect an area of cultural importance should not be unraveled by the interests of a few. Executive actions to remove protections for this designation would be unprecedented and future legislative proposals to diminish its size would be unpopular across the country.

Recent monument designations in Colorado are the product of robust public engagement and in many cases years of deliberation that preceded their designation under the Antiquities Act. In our experience, consultation between the Administration and local elected officials was frequent and straightforward. Furthermore, the management of our national monuments is consistent with the principles of multiple use for federal public lands. At Browns Canyon, designated in 2015, outdoor recreation like fly-fishing and whitewater rafting are among the most popular activities and co-exist well with the grazing that has helped sustain the agricultural economy in this area. Years of dialogue, both before and after the designation, will lead to balanced management that promotes resource conservation and historic preservation alongside ranching and recreation.

Again, we urge you not to modify monument designations in Colorado and warn against taking unprecedented steps to roll back protections for existing national monuments. Such actions would deprive the future generations of Americans who have yet to experience these iconic landscapes or study their rich history. Instead, the Department of Interior should ensure that agencies managing these monuments, like the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, have the staff and the resources they need to manage these lands sustainably and best protect the places that define us as a country.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

