

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2021

The Honorable Deborah Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St., NW – 6156
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We write to express our strong support for President Biden's restoration of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and restoration and consideration of expanding the Bears Ears National Monument. These two National Monuments were unlawfully shrunk by the previous administration, putting at risk their treasured landscapes and irreplaceable cultural resources. To ensure these unique lands are protected for future generations, we urge you to restore both Monuments to their originally intended boundaries or greater.

In one of his first executive orders, President Biden charged you with conducting a review of the monument boundaries and conditions for Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments. That review is to be conducted in consultation with Tribal Governments, the Attorney General, the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, and the Secretary of Agriculture.

As a part of this effort, we strongly encourage you to expand Bear Ears to 1.9 million acres, as originally proposed by the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. The Inter-Tribal Coalition played a critical role in establishing the Monument, and due to the tribes' ancestral and cultural ties to the lands, their input is key in determining the appropriate boundaries of both monuments.

We understand that Utah's Governor and congressional delegation oppose restoration of these monuments. It is important to meet with them and hear their concerns, but we believe to ensure the lands and cultural sites are protected, the best course of action is to restore both monuments to their originally intended boundaries. Expanding the boundaries of both monuments helps meet the goals set by President Biden to expand environmental justice, promote and protect our public health and the environment, and conserve our national treasures and monuments, places that secure our national memory.

Native Americans have called the lands of the Bears Ears National Monument home for centuries. Many tribes consider these lands to be sacred and use them for ceremonies. They serve an important role in helping tribes to connect with their ancestors, and they help educate visitors from around the globe of the importance these places in the tribes' history. Although the tribal significance of these lands is reason enough to protect them, they also contains unique fossil records, imperiled native flora and fauna, and an ecosystem of red rock plateaus, forests and deserts that are unique to this part of the world .

Grand Staircase-Escalante was the first national monument entrusted to the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management and has been frequently referred to as the "Science Monument" for its unparalleled contribution to understanding Earth's geologic, paleontological, and living history. The Monument became a fixture in the area and the local economies have grown and flourished as a result.

We wholeheartedly support the full restoration of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and the expansion of Bears Ears National Monument. Securing durable, meaningful protection for these places and their irreplaceable objects is entirely consistent with the President's stated goals and policies; anything less would fall short of what is required at this moment and would jeopardize these treasured lands.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator