

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear President Trump and Secretary Burgum:

We write to express our strong opposition to President Trump's July 13, 2026 proclamations that illegally redrew the boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. These actions removed nearly three million acres from monument protection, reduced each monument by more than 90 percent, and placed irreplaceable cultural, historic, scientific, ecological, and recreational resources at risk of destruction and loss. This is an illegal attack on the integrity and legacy of the Antiquities Act as well as Tribal co-stewardship of public lands.

We are concerned that the monument's borders were illegally reduced to benefit extractive industries and corporate interests. In fact, numerous reports have detailed the mining industry's benefit through insider trading and preemptive claim staking within the monument's borders. Tomorrow ends the 60-day window after the proclamations were signed, allowing the administration to authorize new mineral leasing, oil and gas drilling, and mining claims within the previous boundaries of the monuments. This establishes a dangerous precedent that risks jeopardizing the integrity of these protected landscapes.

For more than 120 years, national monuments have preserved America's unique public lands, extraordinary history, and cultural heritage. Grand Staircase-Escalante contains world-class paleontological resources, the ancestral and current homelands of multiple Tribal Nations, striking geologic formations, unique plants and animals, stunning dark night skies, and landscapes that support robust local outdoor recreation economies. Bears Ears is a living cultural landscape with deep spiritual and ancestral importance to several sovereign Tribal Nations and is full of sacred sites that deserve enduring protection.

We are especially troubled that the President's proclamation disbanded the Bears Ears Commission, a first-of-its kind model of collaborative management between the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, and the Bureau of Land Management. Tribal leaders have always made clear

that Bears Ears is a sacred ancestral homeland and decisions affecting it must be made through meaningful government-to-government consultation. The Department of the Interior had previously committed to meet with the Bears Ears Commission if changes to the monument were under consideration; no such meeting occurred before these proclamations were signed, representing yet another broken promise to the Tribes. Just one week after the proclamation was signed, the Bureau of Land Management removed from official signs the seals of the Tribal nations who were a part of the Inter-Tribal Coalition, a physical manifestation of the Trump administration's unwillingness to consult with Tribal governments on land management decisions. Representatives for the Grand Staircase-Escalante Inter-Tribal Coalition have also reported that they were not consulted before the monument was illegally reduced.

The Antiquities Act authorizes presidents to protect historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest. It does not grant presidents the power to undo or reduce national monuments established by their predecessors. Congress has retained authority over the disposition and management of federal public lands, and past efforts to slash Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante were immediately challenged in federal court. By again attempting to eliminate vast portions of these monuments, the administration invites needless uncertainty and undermines the stability that local communities, Tribes, land managers, scientists, recreation users, and businesses need.

The lands removed from protection are not empty spaces: they include cultural sites, paleontological resources, wildlife habitat, waterways, scenic routes, recreation areas and beloved public lands that help define southern Utah and the American landscape.

Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments are national treasures. The American people deserve public lands policy grounded in law, science, respect for Tribal sovereignty, and stewardship—not political decisions against the desires of the vast majority of Americans. We stand with Tribal Nations, local communities, scientists, conservationists, outdoor recreation businesses, and Americans across the country who believe these landscapes should remain protected.

Protecting public lands supports rural prosperity and responsible public access. Monument designations support outdoor recreation, heritage tourism, hunting and fishing, scientific research, grazing under appropriate management, and durable local economies. At the same time, monument status prevents the loss of cultural and natural resources that cannot be replaced once damaged.

Sincerely,

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