



# PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Lori Weigel, Public Opinion Strategies

RE: Utah Voters Support Protection of Bears Ears Area as National Monument; Place High Importance on Protecting Historic Sites and Artifacts in the Area

DATE: May 16, 2016

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The national polling firm, Public Opinion Strategies, recently completed a survey of Utah voters regarding a potential National Monument designation for the Bears Ears area in southeastern Utah.<sup>1</sup> The survey results show that **voters throughout the state overwhelmingly support designating the Bears Ears area as a National Monument**, thereby protecting these areas from development, mining and other resource extraction activities. Support is significant among all demographic, geographic and partisan sub-groups in the state.

Support may in part be due to the electorate's high rates of outdoor recreation and visiting national public lands. Residents place a high level of importance on ensuring that these public lands are protected as a way to safeguard historic artifacts and sites, for wildlife, and for families.

Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **Seven-in-ten Utah voters (71 percent) support designating the Bears Ears area as a National Monument.** As just 32 percent of voters indicated having heard something about the proposal, survey respondents received a brief explanation of the proposal in order to ensure all respondents had the same level of information on the topic:

*"As you may know, some of the national public lands in Utah are designated as national monuments, with protections for natural areas and water similar to those in national parks. The public can view camp, fish, hike, hunt, view wildlife, ride ATV's and enjoy other recreation and ranchers can lease land for grazing in Utah's national monuments. They are also protected from development, mining and other kinds of resource extraction.*

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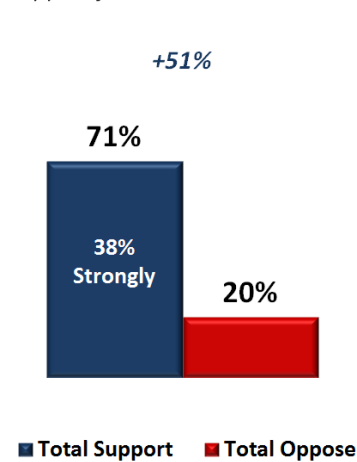
<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From May 11-12 and 14, 2016, Public Opinion Strategies completed 500 telephone interviews with registered voters in Utah who are likely to vote in the November 2016 presidential election. The margin of sampling error for this representative statewide sample is +/-4.38%. Margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

*One proposal that originated with five local Native American tribes is to protect 1.9 million acres of existing public lands surrounding the Bears Ears buttes south of Canyonlands National Park as a National Monument, in large part to protect ancient cliff dwellings and sacred Native American sites.”*

Again, the overwhelming majority of Utah voters support the proposed protection of these public lands with National Monument designation, with nearly two-in-five strongly in support, as one can see in the graph below. Opposition is fairly minimal.

- **Support for designating these public lands as a National Monument is widespread and broad-based.** Majorities of all key subgroups of the electorate statewide express this sentiment, including:

Support for Increased Protection



- 77 percent of women and 65 percent of men;
- 85 percent of voters under age 25, 72 percent of 25-34 year olds, 71 percent of 35-44 year olds, 68% of 45-64 year olds and 72 percent of seniors;
- 75 percent of voters in the Salt Lake area, 71 percent on the Wasatch front and 67 percent in the rest of the state;
- 92 percent of Democrats, 73 percent of independents, and 63 percent of GOP voters;
- 65 percent of sportsmen; and
- 68 percent of those indicating their religion as Latter-Day Saints/Mormon.

Notably, support is even more intense among those who indicate having heard something about the proposed National Monument designations prior to the survey as those who had not. Among those already aware of the proposal, 70 percent express support for the idea, but the intensity of support is ten points higher than overall - nearly half (48 percent) are strongly in support.

- **Voters offer a wide range of rationales for their support for National Monument designation for these public lands surrounding the Bears Ears buttes.** We provided respondents with the opportunity to tell us the reasons they support the proposal. Most focused on the importance of preserving the lands due to the Native American history and artifacts there, and a desire to ensure that these natural and historic areas are protected for future generations. There is also a strong sense that public lands are important for outdoor recreation and that should be prioritized over commercial activities.

*“I think so much of our lands, the Indian ruins and stuff, have been ruined by people. I think they need to be protected.” -- GOP senior woman in Salt Lake County*

*“I am definitely for preserving that part of our national heritage, it is very important. I have visited some of the cliff dwelling ruins, those in New Mexico and Arizona. While I’m not Native*

*American myself...I still see so much value in making sure that we preserve those kinds of monuments and the land regions around them for future generations. I'm very strongly for that for personal experience.” – GOP 35-44 year old man in Utah County*

*“The reasons I would support is so that we could use it for camping and hiking, especially if it has Indian relics. That's fabulous history for the next generation to see, know, and learn about. Pictures aren't the same as seeing it for real. That's why I would support it.” – GOP 35-44 year old woman in Utah County*

*“I've seen too much abuse of our land for the sake of making money. Raping our wilderness to get resources out of there and not cleaning up after yourself, I don't like that. I think nature is part of our identity and heritage, and it needs to stay that way.” – GOP 35-44 year old man in Weber County*

*“Just because I think it's important to preserve land and keep it from other interests that might destroy it.” – GOP 55-64 year old woman in Utah County*

*“I'm a coal miner, so we've got to be able to access some. But the more ground that we set aside as national parks, and national monuments, the better I think.” – Democratic 55-64 year old man in Carbon County*

*“Mostly just the way I was raised up, a largely Boy Scouting and active outdoor family. I spent the better half of my childhood down in southern Utah in those national parks and national lands down there and I would very much like to see those expanded or at least maintained and not diminished at all.” – GOP 35-44 year old man in Salt Lake County*

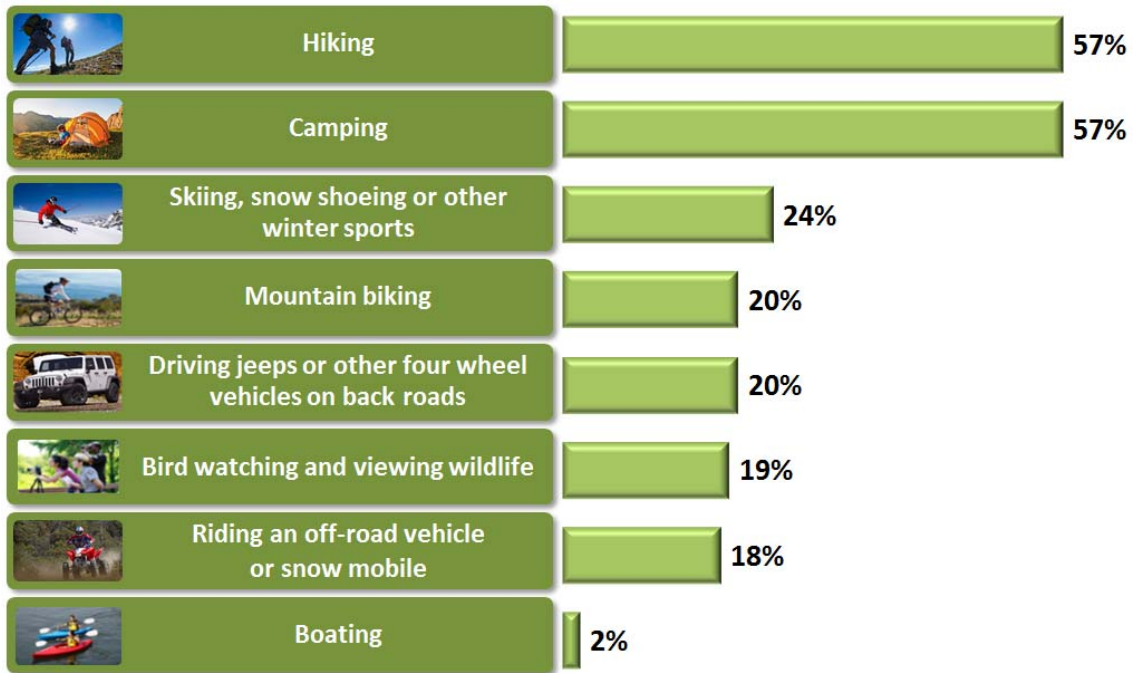
- **Notably, some opponents appear to be confused about what can and cannot take place on these lands.** For example, some worried about grazing and whether that would be affected, or even camping and hunting. A few respondents expressed concern about federal government owning more land in the state (possibly not focusing in on the fact that these are already national public lands), some are concerned about the economy of Utah being affected, and a number simply wanted additional information.

- **Voters see a wide-range of benefits to increasing protections for the public lands in the Bears Ears Buttes area, particularly as a way to safeguard historic artifacts and sites, for wildlife, and for families.** As the following table highlights, the top-tier benefits in importance for Utah voters are ones linked to history, children/families and wildlife.

Benefit	% Extremely or Very Important	% Total Important
Better protect petroglyphs, cliff dwellings, Mormon pioneer artifacts, and other unique historic sites from looters and vandals	83%	96%
Provide opportunities for children to get outside and explore nature	83%	95%
Conserve natural areas and wildlife habitat	78%	96%
Protect the home of more than one hundred thousand Native American archaeological and cultural sites including cliff dwellings and ancient sites, considered sacred by many tribes.	78%	95%
Protect habitat for threatened animals, such as bighorn sheep, eagles and dozens of other types of birds	73%	96%
Provide families with affordable places to vacation, recreate and spend time together	72%	94%
Continue to allow recreational opportunities for those who come to hike, camp, hunt, ride off-road vehicles and recreate here	65%	94%
Sustain small businesses that create jobs in nearby communities	65%	94%
Protect for local residents and visitors some of the best outdoor recreation in the region, including world famous attractions like rock climbing at Indian Creek, rafting the San Juan River, hunting on Elk Ridge, Four Wheel Driving the Hole in the Rock Trail, and Hiking through Grand Gulch	65%	94%
Provide access for off-road vehicle users, horseback riders, cyclists, and hikers	48%	90%
Preserve opportunities for local ranchers to graze livestock on these lands	46%	85%
Increase the number of rangers and enhance services for visitors	43%	89%
Preserve opportunities for hunting	34%	78%

- **Utah residents do in fact express a strong affinity for the outdoors by reporting high rates of outdoor recreation and visiting national public lands.** A stunning 89 percent say they have visited national public lands in the last year, with GOP voters more likely to say they have visited (92%) than either independents (89%) or Democrats (83%).

In addition, the overwhelming majority of voters in the state report regularly participating in at least one of a number of outdoor recreation activities (84 percent statewide), with hiking (57 percent) and campaign (57 percent) reported as the most frequent activities. The reported rates of participation are quite significant:



- **Voters tend to reject concerns about public lands broadly.** When given two viewpoints about public lands protection, voters overwhelmingly say they agree more with a statement detailing positive benefits, rather than concerns.

Public lands like national monuments, national forests, and wildlife refuges support our economy; provide opportunities to hunt, fish, and enjoy the outdoors with family and friends, protect our heritage, and enhance our overall quality of life. **84%**

Public lands like national monuments, national forests, and wildlife refuges keep land off the tax rolls, cost government to maintain them, and prevent opportunities for mining or other industrial activities that could provide jobs. **11%**

- **In conclusion**, the survey clearly demonstrates support among Utah voters for national public lands broadly, and for a specific proposal to designate the Bears Ears buttes area as a National Monument. They perceive many aspects of the designation of this area as important, particularly, the benefits for protecting historic artifacts and sites, conserving wildlife habitat, and providing nature and recreation opportunities for families and children.