

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

CC:
Secretary Sally Jewell
Department of the Interior

Director Neil Kornze
Bureau of Land Management

Secretary Tom Vilsack
Department of Agriculture

Undersecretary for Resources and Environment Robert Bonnie
Department of Agriculture

Chief for the US Forest Service Tom Tidwell
Department of Agriculture

Managing Director Christy Goldfuss
Council on Environmental Quality

July 14, 2016

Dear President Obama,

As leaders of major faith communities in the United States, we affirm the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal coalition's proposal for a Bears Ears National Monument in southeast Utah.

The Bears Ears National Monument proposal is historic because it is being led by five tribes that have unified for the cause of protecting their shared heritage: the Hopi Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the Pueblo of Zuni, and the Ute Indian Tribe. Twenty-six tribes have expressed support for the proposal.

The Bears Ears region has more than 100,000 archaeological sites across 1.9 million acres. This area has more archeological sites than Utah's Mighty Five National Parks combined. Petroglyphs, burial sites, and ancient cliff dwellings are valuable parts of our collective history. These antiquities are under imminent threat from continuing grave-robbing, vandalism, careless visitation and a lack of management resources. In fact, in the first four months of 2016, there have been five reported serious incidents of cultural resource damage. This reckless erasing of history, as well as the desecration of sacred places, must stop.



Native American traditional wisdom about stewardship of God's creation has too often been dismissed. This attitude has not only contributed to centuries of physical, cultural, and spiritual violence toward Native Americans; it has also been a detriment to everyone. We *all* depend on the integrity of God's creation. The tribes leading the Bears Ears national monument proposal have experience living sustainably on the land since time immemorial, and traditional knowledge related to Bears Ears is irreplaceable. Now, the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition is offering the United States a true gift: a national monument which will help our nation to learn from them.

As religious communities, we are on a journey towards racial justice and reconciliation, as well as healing the relationships among land and people. A Bears Ears National Monument would be a profoundly meaningful place for our communities to participate in the healing process. Please use the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate the Bears Ears region as a national monument.

In hope,
Bishop Elizabeth Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Chicago, IL

Bishop George E. Battle
Senior Bishop
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Charlotte, NC

Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Indianapolis, IN

Rev. Carol Devine
Minister of Green Chalice
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Nicholasville, KY

Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ
Cleveland, OH

Rev. Dr. Traci Blackmon
Director of Justice and Witness Ministries
United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

The Reverend Grady Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Louisville, KY

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe
General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church
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Bishop Francis Krebs
Presiding Bishop
Ecumenical Catholic Communion
St. Louis, MO

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS
Executive Director
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
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Sr. Margaret Magee, OSF
President
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Rev. Dr. Ian Mevorach
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Natick, MA

Rev. Dr. Genny Rowley
Eco-Justice Community Chair, Alliance of Baptists
Board Chair, Utah Interfaith Power and Light
Salt Lake City, Utah

Shantha Ready Alonso
Executive Director
Creation Justice Ministries
Washington, DC

The Episcopal Church