

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

March 1, 2017

Dear Secretary Zinke, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Mr. Speaker and Madam Leader:

As people of Mormon faith, we are asking that you support and maintain the national monument designation of the 'Bears Ears' region in Utah. We urge you to reject any proposal to repeal it or change its boundaries.

Bears Ears is special place that shares the heritage of some of the early pioneers of the early LDS faith. Mormons first traveled to the Bears Ears region in the late 19th century. The San Juan Mission expedition sought to establish a new settlement in what we now know as Bluff, Utah. The pioneers were responding to the plan of President Brigham Young, who had called on Mormons to establish communities throughout the West. They smoothed sections of the rock surface and built dugways along their route. Carved rock inscriptions, trails, corrals, and cabins give us insight into the lives of prospectors, ranchers, and early archeologists. These features are still visible today as signs of their journey.

Furthermore, our LDS faith guides us to respect the beliefs and religious practices of other cultures, especially those closest to us. We as a religious community maintain the collective memory of LDS religious persecution and forced migration. We seek to be partners in healing the legacy of religious persecution and displacement anywhere it has happened – including among our Native American brothers and sisters. We understand that Native Americans hold their faith histories to be sacred, just as we do ours. Given the degradation of over one hundred thousand sacred ancestral dwellings & artifacts of the five tribes of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, and given our nation's history of broken treaties with these tribes, the extermination raids, the collective trauma from 53 forced marches of the Dine during the years of the Long Walk, and the decades of brutal acculturation methods imposed by our institutions, it is imperative that their ancestral lands continue to be protected as a national monument under the advice of the tribes of the Bears Ears region.

Lastly, LDS people share a reverence for our earthly existence, and all of God's creations. We are aware of the many LDS scriptures that admonish us to be good stewards over the earth and protect the purity of our air, water and soil.

For these reasons, we ask you to respect our desire, the desire of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, and many other major tribes across our nation, in upholding the new Bears Ears National Monument. We ask you to reject any attempt to repeal or diminish the National Monument.

We are thrilled that this spectacular & sacred land of the Bears Ears region will be protected for future generations!

With gratitude & highest regard,

UTAH

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Chair, Mormon Environmental Stewardship
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Torrey, Utah

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Sunday School Teacher
Midvale, Utah
Union Ward

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Murray, Utah

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Undergraduate Student
Orem, Utah

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Salt Lake Parleys 5th

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Provo, Utah

Nathanael Sato
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Jackson Ward
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Meridith Buehner
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Karin Richens
Primary Teacher
Murray, Utah

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