

From: Bowman, Randal
To: [Moody, Joan](#)
Subject: Re: From Greenwire -- NATIONAL MONUMENTS: Comments on Interior review heavily favor status quo — group
Date: Friday, May 26, 2017 1:15:19 PM

thanks

On Fri, May 26, 2017 at 2:14 PM, Moody, Joan <joan_moody@ios.doi.gov> wrote:
interior_press@ios.doi.gov ATTN: Heather--for press calls only
(email is better than phone)

On Fri, May 26, 2017 at 2:13 PM, Bowman, Randal <randal_bowman@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

Thanks. I had the newsletter waiting in my email when I got back. They found more supportive comments than my own skip through them did - I thought it more like 99-1 against the review, while they had it 96-3.

If I get any media inquiries, who should I refer them to - Laura and Heather, or one of the career staff?

On Fri, May 26, 2017 at 2:05 PM, Moody, Joan <joan_moody@ios.doi.gov> wrote:



AN E&E NEWS PUBLICATION

NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Comments on Interior review heavily favor status quo — group

Jennifer Yachnin, E&E News reporter

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Public comments on an Interior Department review of dozens of national monuments is skewing toward retaining existing designations for sites, including Bears Ears National Monument, according to the Center for Western Priorities. Josh Ewing/Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition

Public comments on an Interior Department review of the status of dozens of national monuments is skewing heavily in favor of retaining existing designations,

including the Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah, according to a new analysis by the Center for Western Priorities.

Ahead of tonight's deadline for comments on whether the Trump administration should pursue changes to Bears Ears monument, Interior reported collecting more than 100,000 submissions on the website Regulations.gov.

According to its analysis, the Center for Western Priorities reported yesterday that 96 percent of those submissions "expressed support for national monument designations," with 3 percent opposing current designations.

At the time of its survey, approximately 90,000 comments had been collected, and the center randomly sampled 500 submissions. The survey had a margin of error of 4 percentage points.

More than half of the submissions examined also specifically referenced the Bears Ears monument, with a similar level of support for maintaining the existing site.

"The overwhelming support for Bears Ears should come as no surprise," said CWP Executive Director Jennifer Rokala. "National monuments are monuments to America's heritage and history. They're wildly popular across the country, and Bears Ears is no exception."

President Trump issued an executive order in late April directing the Interior Department to review the status of dozens of monuments created since 1996, with a particular focus on those sites comprising more than 100,000 acres.

The final review will include an assessment of 27 monuments, with a particular focus on the 1.35-million-acre Bears Ears site, which President Obama designated in his final weeks in office.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is set to issue an interim report on the review by June 10, at which time he could make recommendations about whether to reduce the boundaries of the Utah monument or rescind its status entirely.

A final report on all monuments under review is due by late August.

During a recent visit to Utah to tour both Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, created during the Clinton administration, Zinke stressed the importance of the comment collection at Regulations.gov as a key indicator of public sentiment about the monuments ([Greenwire](#), May 11).

"This is the first time ever a formal comment period has been set up in order to give local communities a voice in Antiquities Act monument designations, and advocates for all sides of the issue took advantage of the opportunity to have their voices heard," said Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift. The Antiquities Act of 1906 is the law under which presidents may designate federal lands as monuments to protect areas of scientific, cultural or historical value.

Swift added: "Advocates can be confident that a team here at the Department will review every single comment that was submitted. The Secretary met with advocates on all sides of the issue and is encouraged by the public's participation in the process."

In a statement, Zinke echoed comments he made during his visit to Utah, in which he said he remains an "optimist" about the review process and its outcome.

"After being on the ground for a few days and talking to people on all sides I think everyone has a lot more in common than previously thought. Everyone wants to preserve the important areas, the question is what vehicle of land management," Zinke said. During his tour of Bears Ears, Zinke told E&E News all options remained on the table but did discount the idea of national park status.

But groups like the Utah Diné Bikéyah, a Navajo environmental group that supports the Bears Ears monument, criticized Zinke for failing to hold public forums during his visit, arguing that many Native Americans do not have access to internet or cellular service in the San Juan County area.

"We're really concerned about the lack of sensitivity to what the conditions are in southern San Juan County. There's very little internet down there; there's very little cell service; there's also huge language barriers," Utah Diné Bikéyah Executive Director Gavin Noyes told E&E News. "We feel like this 15-day comment period ... really just leaves out all of the local Native American supporters and the community members that have worked so hard to keep the area protected."

The Utah Diné Bikéyah, which has gathered nearly 20,000 comments for submission, held its own listening session Wednesday night, Noyes said, during which it videotaped submissions from tribal elders that it plans to submit to the Interior Department.

"DOI should have been more sensitive to the structure of how they're doing this," Noyes said.

Dozens of other organizations likewise opted to solicit and bundle feedback about the monument process — the 15-day comment period is shorter than the standard window for public feedback on most regulatory processes — which CWP reported total about 685,000 additional comments.

Among those collecting feedback are Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Earthjustice, NextGen Climate, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Center for American Progress, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Audubon Society, the Outdoor Industry Association and the National Wildlife Federation.

Earthjustice told E&E News that it had collected more than 69,000 comments via its own online action center, including nearly 16,000 personalized missives.

"Though they were only given a brief window to do so, the public has roared its

support for Bears Ears National Monument," said Earthjustice managing attorney Heidi McIntosh. "Americans everywhere are urging Secretary Zinke to stand with the Native American tribes with sacred ties to these lands, documenting the economic benefits of national monuments, quoting Teddy Roosevelt, and sharing their experiences exploring this special landscape. By the end of the comment period, we expect Secretary Zinke will receive over a half-million comments in support of Bears Ears National Monument, solidifying its importance as a national treasure."

Democratic leaders weigh in

Democratic leaders in Congress issued their own letter to Zinke yesterday, urging the Interior secretary to "reject efforts" to alter any of the national monuments.

"These treasured landscapes and cultural and historic landmarks are woven into the fabric of our country," wrote Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California and House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer of Maryland.

"That is why we are deeply troubled by the President's April 26th executive order establishing a process that could lead to the diminishment or outright repeal of national monuments designated by his predecessors," the letter continued. "It is unconscionable to think that this Administration would sell out America's outdoor heritage to benefit corporate interests in the oil, gas, and mining industries."

The missive follows a letter from House Natural Resources Committee ranking member Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and 85 other Democrats yesterday that cautioned Zinke that only Congress has the authority to reduce the boundaries or revoke the status of national monuments ([Greenwire](#), May 25).

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