

Navajo Nation Council condemns downsizing of Bears Ears National Monument

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 08 December 2017 09:21



SALT LAKE CITY – Leaders of the Navajo Nation expressed disappointment at President Trump’s announcement that he will diminish the size of the Bears Ears National Monument. President Trump made the announcement at the Utah State Capitol Dec. 4.

Former President Obama designated the national monument on Dec. 28, 2016. The proclamation established the Bears Ears Commission to guide and provide recommendations on management of the landscape, honoring traditional knowledge as a resource to be protected. Navajo people continue to use the monument to collect firewood, herbs and medicine, and to hunt.

Navajo Nation Council members have supported the Bears Ears National Monument through several resolutions, including the most recent resolution passed in January, which supports

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former President Obama's proclamation establishing the Bears Ears National Monument and opposes any congressional action that seeks to reverse the designation that created the national monument.

"Navajo people have advocated for protection of the Bears Ears for decades, and continue to use and value the land for their livelihoods and cultural practices. Navajo Nation has been consistent in our message – we support the 1.35 million acre monument designation," said Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa), who represents several Navajo communities in the state of Utah and has been a strong and outspoken advocate for Bears Ears.

Delegate Filfred also stated that President Trump did not seek input from Navajo Nation, or the coalition of tribes that worked with the Nation to designate Bears Ears as a national monument.

"Bears Ears has protected Navajo people in the past, and now we must protect it. Navajo Nation will continue to work with the Hopi, Zuni, Ute Indian, and Ute Mountain Ute Tribes to fight for our ancestral lands and permanently protect this landscape. This decision disrespects Native Americans across the country by acting against the Antiquities Act, which has been used countless times since 1906 to protect Native American heritage. Navajo Nation will be filing a legal challenge to President Trump's decision and we will not back down," added Delegate Filfred.

The Navajo Nation has previously indicated that the Nation will seek legal action to address the reduction of the Bears Ears National Monument.