

## Northern New Mexicans urged to challenge BLM Utah monuments plans

Written by By Pamela Avery AveryMassey LLC  
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National Monuments belong to all Americans. And, if the Trump administration's plans to illegally slash two national monuments in Utah go unchallenged, then no public lands are safe, and especially those in New Mexico. April 11 and April 13—after just four public meetings in rural Utah held late last month—mark the last days for public comment on fast-tracked management plans for Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments, respectively. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is rushing forward with this land-planning process despite the support of millions of Americans—including New Mexicans—to keep national monuments intact, and in defiance of lawsuits filed by 30 Tribal Nations, conservationists, paleontologists, local businesses, and outdoor companies to block this action.

### ***Background***

On Dec. 4, 2017, President Donald Trump signed proclamations illegally slashing the boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument by 85 percent and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by nearly half—a combined loss of more than 2 million acres of national public lands considered sacred by Native Nations. Within days, five lawsuits opposing cuts to Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante were filed in federal court by Native Americans; conservation groups, including The Wilderness Society; Patagonia Works; and scientific organizations, such as the Western Association of Vertebrate Paleontologists.

**Northern New Mexicans are being left out of the public process and four short-notice meetings are not sufficient.**

In defiance of pending court actions challenging the legality of these proclamations, and despite the announcement of a major paleontological/fossil discovery in an area of Bears Ears National Monument removed from monument status, the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has fast-tracked its land-use planning process for the acreage stricken from the monuments.

In a late night, weekend announcement, the BLM scheduled just four public meetings in rural Utah, showing clear intent to shut out millions Americans who want Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante protected. The meetings did not allow for oral comments and were located in isolated areas of Utah, despite the fact that these monuments belong to all Americans. By comparison, when the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument management plan was

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originally developed, the Clinton Administration held 15 meetings in six states plus, Washington, D.C., over the course of two months. This so-called planning process for Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante minimizes public input and ignores the overwhelming sentiment that the entirety of these monuments deserve protections. Furthermore, this outrageous action to open these lands to new mining, oil and gas leasing—is just the tip of the iceberg of Trump’s plans to sell out America’s public lands and heritage, as agency documents show.

Nearly 3 million people, including many New Mexicans, objected to efforts to open these nationally treasured monument lands to drilling, mining, or irresponsible development, but once again the administration is turning its back on voters, including those in New Mexico.

Comments can be sent via:

· Email: [blm\\_ut\\_monticello\\_monuments@blm.gov](mailto:blm_ut_monticello_monuments@blm.gov)

· ePlanning: <https://goo.gl/uLrEae>

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