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MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Navajo Nation Council urges Trump administration to uphold the Bears Ears National Monument designation

WINDOW ROCK – The Navajo Nation Council strongly opposes today’s Executive Order issued by President Trump, which directs the U.S. Department of the Interior to review recent national monument designations and to recommend changes to the designations including the Bears Ears National Monument.

On Dec. 28, former President Barack Obama proclaimed Bears Ears as a national monument under the Antiquities Act of 1906. Since then, several Utah congressional leaders have challenged the national monument designation.

Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tóíikan, Red Mesa), who serves as a commissioner on the Bears Ears Tribal Commission, said today’s action by President Trump threatens the status of the monument designation that is supported by numerous tribes in the southwest.

“We are asking the Trump administration and Secretary Ryan Zinke to respect the position of the tribes including the Navajo Nation, by upholding the national monument designation of Bears Ears and we ask that they consult with us and address the concerns of the Bears Ears Tribal Commission as this issue moves forward,” said Delegate Filfred.

Delegate Filfred said the Antiquities Act clearly provides the authority for U.S. presidents to designate areas as national monuments. However, the Act does not provide for a president to reverse or undo a designation, added Delegate Filfred.

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

“This is not only the Navajo Nation that supports the Bears Ears National Monument, but it is a coalition of tribes that have come together to protect our homelands and we want leadership at the federal level to meet with us to discuss the Executive Order,” said Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland).

The Bears Ears Tribal Commission includes representatives from the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Zuni Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute, and the Ute Indian Tribes who have met on several occasions to begin the process of assisting in management of the monument alongside federal land managers.

“We do not want our efforts to be diminished by the federal government. The status of the Bears Ears National Monument must remain intact for the benefit of the tribes and the state of Utah,” added Delegate Filfred.

The Navajo Nation has reached out to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to meet and discuss these concerns and to demonstrate the overwhelming support of the Bears Ears National Monument designation.

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