



July 10, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

**Re: DOI-2017-0002; Review of Certain National Monuments Established Since 1996;
Notice of Opportunity for Public Comment**

Dear Secretary Zinke:

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Review of Certain National Monuments Established Since 1996, and add the voices of more than 15,000 landscape architects urging you to continue the rich legacy of preserving our historical, cultural, and natural spaces.

Landscape architects work on lands designated and protected as national monuments. By designing creative and interactive ways to engage people with these valued places, landscape architects promote stewardship and develop conservation strategies so that future generations will enjoy America's national treasures as much as we do today. I hope the following comments will help you and the administration make careful and informed decisions related to our public lands, and reconsider further actions to reshape the 27 national monuments under review.

The Antiquities Act Is America's Most Critical Conservation Tool

ASLA is concerned about the administration's attempt to undermine the Antiquities Act and roll back protections for our national monuments. For 112 years, nearly every president has used the Antiquities Act to exercise the authority to create national monuments from existing federal lands to protect significant natural, cultural, or scientific features. The act has been used more than 150 times to protect hundreds of millions of acres for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. Five of the nation's 10 most-visited national parks—Acadia, Grand Canyon, Olympic, Teton, and, Zion, each attracting millions of people a year—were first protected by presidents using the Antiquities Act. Undermining or weakening the Antiquities Act could threaten the 27 national monuments listed for review as well as other natural and cultural landscapes and spaces and could make them vulnerable to commercial development. ASLA urges you and the administration to support the Antiquities Act in its current form and interpretation to continue our nation's legacy of safeguarding our national treasures.

National Monuments Are Economic Engines

National monuments are direct contributors to the outdoor recreation economy. According to a recent report by the Outdoor Industry Association, the outdoor economy generates \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports nearly 7.6 million jobs. Businesses located near national monuments, parks, and other federally designated spaces rely on the permanency of our federal lands when making critical decisions about local investments. The national monuments under review have a proven track record of economic success. A recent study by Headwaters Economics concluded that protected public lands in the West are important economic assets that extend beyond tourism and recreation to attract people and businesses. ASLA urges you and the administration to recognize the economic impact the

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national monuments, parks, and other spaces have on local economies and our national economy and maintain them as they are currently designated.

Local Communities Are Key to National Monument Designations

The process to establish a national monument often takes years. It involves an array of stakeholders engaging in public meetings and forums with their elected officials at every level. During these comprehensive discussions, a diverse, local coalition studies the area of the proposed monument, including its cultural, economic, archaeological, and recreation value. For example, community stakeholders in Southwestern Utah conducted a series of public meetings to discuss the designation of the Bears Ears National Monument, which involved years of public input gathered by the Obama administration. The community input process also included substantial engagement with the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, which represents tribal nations for whom the land is sacred and contains Native American archaeological artifacts with massive cultural and historical value. Further, according to a recent poll conducted by Colorado College, 80 percent of western voters support existing monument designations, demonstrating widespread popular support for these special places. Shrinking the acreage or eliminating the designation of Bears Ears and other designated monuments undermines years of community planning, input, collaboration, and support. ASLA urges you and the administration to support the years of community efforts to designate these national monuments and maintain these treasures in their current form.

America's public lands, waters, and shores are national treasures. These special spaces create thousands of jobs, generate billions of dollars in economic activity, and provide visitors an opportunity to connect with nature and our nation's cultural history. ASLA urges you to honor and respect past presidential designations of national monuments and recommend to the administration their continued protection. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important issue. If you have questions related to these comments, please contact Mark Cason, ASLA's Manager of Government Affairs, at 202-216-2370 or mcason@asla.org.

Sincerely,



Nancy C. Somerville, Hon. ASLA
Executive Vice President/CEO