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Tribal Leaders Outraged over Zinke's Effort to Eliminate Protections for Bears Ears National Monument

Monument Valley, UT (August 24, 2017) Leaders of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition expressed outrage over reports that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has recommended to President Trump that he make dramatic reductions to Bears Ears National Monument.

"Secretary Zinke's recommendation is an insult to Tribes. He has shown complete disregard for Sovereign Tribes with ancestral connections to the region, as well as to the hundreds of thousands of people who have expressed support for Bears Ears National Monument," stated Carleton Bowekaty, Zuni councilman and Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition Co-Chair.

"The designation of Bears Ears National Monument was a celebratory moment where our voice was finally heard, and our cultural and spiritual heritage was respected," said Davis Filfred, Navajo Nation Council Delegate. "Our Tribes stand together and are willing to go into battle in terms of litigation and we are here to fight for our monument," said Davis Filfred, a council delegate for the Navajo Nation council.

"As Tribes, we are firm in our dedication to protect Bears Ears National Monument," said Shaun Chapoose, member of the Ute Indian Tribe Business Committee. "We had hoped that Secretary Zinke would listen to tribal voices and preserve Bears Ears National Monument. Instead, he has chosen a fight, and we have no choice but to continue the fight for our ancestors and for contemporary uses of the lands by our Tribal members."

Bears Ears has been home to Hopi, Navajo, Uintah & Ouray Ute, Ute Mountain Ute and Zuni for countless generations. The national monument took more than 80 years to designate. The proclamation acknowledges a cultural landscape rich in antiquities, with hundreds of thousands of archaeological and cultural sites sacred to dozens of tribes. Zinke's recommendation today would leave tens of thousands of sacred sites without protection.

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The Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition is a partnership of the Hopi, Navajo, Uintah & Ouray Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and Zuni Governments. <http://bearsearscoalition.org/>