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August 17, 2018

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released draft management plans on August 17, 2018, for the revised Bears Ears (83 FR 41111) and Grand Staircase-Escalante (83 FR 41108) National Monuments that aim to provide more flexibility for the use and management of these public lands. The draft plans utilize a less restrictive management strategy and generally focus on maximizing resource development, recreation, and other uses, while still providing for resource protection. These plans were developed following President Donald Trump's removal of more than 2 million acres from the two Utah monuments in December 2017—the largest reversal of federal monument protections in U.S. history. For Grand Staircase-Escalante, the plans also evaluate lands now excluded from the monument boundaries after its reduction.

According to BLM, the purpose of this planning effort is to provide proper protection and care of the scientific, cultural, and historic resources identified in the original proclamations establishing these two monuments, as modified by President Trump. The draft plans provide alternatives to address issues that were identified through a public scoping process. Those issues include management of paleontological and cultural resources, recreation and access, livestock grazing, and natural resources such as water, vegetation, soil, and minerals.

BLM is accepting public comments on the Bears Ears management plans through November 15, 2018 (documents available at <https://goo.gl/uLrEae>) and the Grand Staircase-Escalante management plans through November 30, 2018 (documents available at <https://goo.gl/EHvhbc>). The agency particularly seeks feedback concerning the management alternatives described in the draft plans, the analysis of their respective management strategies, and any new information that would help to produce the Proposed Resource Management Plans and Final Environmental Impact Statements.

Sources: Bureau of Land Management; E&E News; Federal Register; Grand Canyon Trust; National Park Service.
