

Secretary Zinke recommends reduction of Bears Ears

June 12, 2017

An interim report by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke released on June 12 provides preliminary recommendations regarding the review of the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. In the report, Secretary Zinke calls for a reduction of the 1.35-million-acre site. Secretary Zinke will release a final report on August 24 with details specifying the amount by which he suggests reducing the boundaries of Bears Ears, along with additional recommendations for the other 26 monuments under review by the Department of the Interior (DOI).

Following an executive order from President Donald Trump, DOI is conducting a review of certain national monuments created or expanded since 1996 that cover over 100,000 acres or may have been designated without adequate public outreach..

Bears Ears National Monument was designated by President Barack Obama during the final weeks of his presidency, in large part due to its outstanding vertebrate fossil resources. Bears Ears contains sedimentary units from the middle Triassic to early Jurassic that are rife with fossils, making it a hotspot for paleontological research. Additionally, the land holds deep cultural significance for many Native American Tribes, and the area contains numerous archaeological sites and other relics of the Ancestral Pueblo people.

The DOI's recommendations for Bears Ears are strongly supported by House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT-1) as well as several other Utah lawmakers. Representative Bishop agrees with Secretary Zinke's recommendation that the lands removed from the Bears Ears Monument should be redesignated as Conservation or Recreational Areas. The National Monument status of Bears Ears prevents the creation of new mines or fossil fuel development on the land, while the Conservation or Recreational Area designations do not.

Sources: Department of the Interior
