

March 26, 2019

Honorable Representative Napolitano,

When Ryan Zinke was confirmed as Secretary of Interior in early March of 2017, the communities surrounding Grand Staircase-Escalante wasted no time trying to reach out to him. It was clear our elected officials would not listen to our voices, and had passed resolutions imploring President Trump to shrink Grand Staircase-Escalante, which for so many of us, is the cornerstone of our economic livelihood and quality of life.

The Utah resolutions had incorrectly stated that Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument had harmed the economic growth of our communities. Grand Staircase Escalante Partners and concerned citizens worked with the Boulder-Escalante Chamber of Commerce and collected over 140 letters from local business owners and residents, inviting Secretary Zinke to visit Grand Staircase-Escalante, and see for himself the vitality the National Monument had brought to some of the most rural communities in the lower 48. These were promptly mailed to the Department of Interior, with no response.

Quickly, rumors of an anticipated visit by the Secretary began to circulate, and both the Chamber of Commerce and Partners began to reach out to BLM and Department of Interior officials, through phone calls and written invitations. We eagerly awaited a response, but none was received. On the eve of Secretary Zinke's visit to Utah, a Board Member of the Chamber of Commerce was finally told that the Secretary would not be meeting with any members of the Boulder-Escalante Chamber of Commerce. We were shocked and puzzled that the economic engines of our communities were patently discounted.

In addition to our letters, we collected dozens of articles, economic reports and studies discussing the importance of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument to the local economies and scientific discovery in the 20 years since it was established. Our stories are important, but they are also reinforced in the literature time and time again. Our experiences were not a fluke.

In April 2017, when the Administration's Monument Review was announced, even though we found the parameters curious, with Grand Staircase-Escalante on one end and Bears Ears National Monument at the other, we were delighted that Secretary Zinke had called for public input in the review process. Our communities mobilized and once again submitted our passionate letters, hoping that this would surely be impactful. In the end, more than 2.8 million people submitted comments, with 99% in favor of keeping or expanding our National Monuments. In Utah, the public comment breakdown was nearly 9:1 in favor of protecting Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears.

We continued to be hopeful that the Secretary was interested in what thriving small business and concerned conservationist had to say. We were not successful through regular bureaucratic channels, so we decided to try direct democracy. We organized a rally in Kanab, Utah on May 10, 2017 to give the local business owners actively being shut out of the review process a voice. On an unseasonably cold day, over 300 people from all over Southwestern Utah, some driving over three hours to be in attendance poured in to support our economy and America's national treasure- Grand Staircase-

Escalante National Monument. Susan Hand, owner of Willow Canyon Outdoor of Kanab, Utah was the Master of Ceremony, and speakers included:

- Victor Cooper, owner of Rocking V Café, Kanab, Utah
- Byron Ellis, resident of Escalante, Utah
- Cyrus Mejia Best Friends Founder, Owner of Raven's Heart Gallery Kanab, Utah
- Megan Smith, educator, Kanab, Utah
- Christa Sadler, author and paleontologist working in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument
- Scott Berry, co-owner Boulder Mountain Lodge, Boulder, Utah
- Josh Baird, artist, designer and business owner in Kanab, Utah
- Nathan Waggoner, Escalante Outfitters, Escalante Utah
- Blake Spalding, owner Hell's Backbone Grill, Boulder, Utah

All of these speakers shared how the Grand Staircase-Escalante is the genesis and life blood to their businesses. Two of the largest employers in Garfield and Kane counties spoke about their employees, and how our unique way of life draws families and entrepreneurs to the area. Attendees of this rally were very hopeful that the Secretary would attend and listen to voices that were excluded in his planned "listening tour."

As the rally wound down, we realized the Secretary would not be stopping by. We went to the Kanab airport to wait to see if we could at least impress upon him how many perspectives he was overlooking in his quick tour, which did not include visits to Boulder, Escalante or Tropic. We waited for over two hours in the cold, and when the Secretary arrived, he waived his black cowboy hat at the crowd and boarded his plane. It was then we realized that there was a deliberate strategy to ignore the Monument positive community and that decisions were likely already underway, though the review had only begun.



May 10, 2017



May 10, 2017



December 7, 2017 Kanab Utah. After President Trump's December 4th Proclamation gutting Grand Staircase, Grand Staircase Escalante Partners conducted community meetings in Kanab, Boulder and Escalante to talk about how this would impact our lives and how we could continue to fight it. The "Thank You" banners were held to thank all of the supporters of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument who were prepared to continue to challenge this unprecedented land grab and assault to all Americans public lands.



December 8, 2017

Boulder Utah



December 8, 2017

Escalante, Utah

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Croft

Nicole Croft
Executive Director
Grand Staircase Escalante Partners