

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

November 30, 2017

Dear President Trump:

We are faith leaders of many traditions, yet we all share a profound bond through the spiritual, cultural, and natural heritage conserved through our U.S. public lands and waters. This heritage needs our collective care, so it may be passed on as a sacred inheritance for future generations.

We write to you with deep concern for this shared heritage. Secretary Zinke has made national monument recommendations that would inflict the most-significant-ever loss of conservation protections for public lands. This loss of protections could potentially result in irreversible harm to sacred sites, petroglyphs, ancient cliff dwellings, grave sites, threatened and endangered wildlife, geological wonders, and delicate watersheds.

We pray you will reject any proposals to diminish the size and protections for any national monuments, including Bears Ears, Cascade-Siskiyou, Gold Butte, Grand Staircase-Escalante, Katahdin Woods and Waters, Northeast Canyons and Seamounts, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, Pacific Remote Islands, Rio Grande Del Norte, and Rose Atoll National Monuments.

Many of us experience a strong connection to divine presence through these special places. When we walk on hallowed grounds, we feel wonder and awe at the majestic natural world, delight in the glorious diversity of wildlife, and marvel at the legacies of our ancestors.

During Native American heritage month, we call special attention to the fact that every American lives in the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples. The presence of Indigenous peoples is imbued in the lands and waters around us.

To honor both the historic and current spiritual ties of Indigenous peoples to U.S. lands and waters, it is a moral imperative to listen to the unique wisdom Indigenous peoples offer to our country. In particular, the tribal leaders in the Bears Ears Commission of Tribes, a leadership body meant to be the primary official advisors on management of the Bears Ears National Monument, has consistently called on the Trump Administration to uphold the protections for the monument. We grieve the lack of attention that has been paid by the Department of Interior to the Bears Ears Commission of Tribes, and we call on you to truly listen to these wise leaders before moving forward with any decision about Bears Ears or any of our national monuments.

In Hope,

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