

Statement for the Record

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**House Natural Resources Committee
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Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in the record and to share my concerns with the way the Trump Administration's review of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was conducted.

I am a sixth-generation Utahn, and my family moved from Salt Lake City to Escalante in 2007, excited to live and work at the doorstep of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Escalante is a town of roughly 800 people, and is one of the most rural communities in the lower 48. My husband and I brought our two young children--and our General Contracting business--with us.

I am the Executive Director for Grand Staircase Escalante Partners, the only non-profit conservation organization serving the communities of the Grand Staircase-Escalante. Founded in 2004 by local citizens eager to support the new monument, our mission is to preserve and protect the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. We actualize this mission through on-the-ground projects in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management and our communities as well as through education and advocacy.

We train archaeological stewards to monitor sensitive cultural sites and support the Monument's paleontology program. Our education program, Frontier Science School, provides opportunities for all ages to share the exciting discoveries of the Monument, teach good land stewardship, and experience the Monument first-hand. Our largest program is the restoration of the Escalante river- the largest riparian restoration effort on BLM lands in history.

This project is in its 10th year and has been conducted with the support of over 700 youth corps members, and in collaboration with federal and state government agencies, private land owners, businesses and other nonprofit organizations. To date we have raised over \$10 million dollars for this effort alone. In 2018, local volunteers accrued over 9,000 hours in service of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument through our various programs.

Secretary Zinke and President Trump, along with politicians from Utah, claimed that gutting the Grand Staircase-Escalante was necessary in order to give *local* people more input. Yet, in May of 2017, Secretary Zinke suspended the very committee designed to do just that. He suspended the Monument Advisory Committee, which was comprised of locals, stakeholders and BLM leadership, and stopped the committee from discussing issues, addressing management

concerns or new approaches, along with BLM management updates. This was *exactly* the venue for local stakeholder involvement. It has yet to be re-convened.

In light of President Trump's proclamation that reduced Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by nearly half, people in our communities are concerned about the negative impacts to the health of the landscape, the loss of scientific research, and the decline of the quality of life that living in close proximity of public land that are subject to such radical change. How would changes impact our businesses and our lives over the long term? Would people, like I had done over ten years earlier, bring their families and businesses to our communities?

In the midst of the Monument Review, Grand Staircase Escalante Partners recognized that we needed to watch for expedited industrial development or illegal activity on the Monument, and to do that we developed a citizen monitoring app for use on mobile phones. Since its launch, we have received over 145 reports of vandalism, the most egregious being a fire set inside a Native American archaeological site, dumping of trash, and rampant illegal off-road vehicle use. The monument review signaled to some people that the critical protections given to the Grand Staircase-Escalante in the 1996 presidential proclamation, and refined over the last twenty years, had been removed.

However, the American people *continued to voice outrage* at even the consideration of the largest rollback of public land protections ever proposed. 2.8 million people submitted comments during the Monument Review, 99% of them in favor of keeping or expanding our National Monuments. In my great state of Utah, these comments were 9:1 in favor of keeping Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument intact.

Why was overwhelming public support to protect our National Monuments simply ignored?

600 businesses and chambers of commerce across the nation joined with the Escalante-Boulder Chamber of Commerce in a letter of support. Nearly 1,000 veterans; 200 faith leaders; and 200 scientists, researchers and academic organizations have signed letters of support for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, noting the value of this majestic place and the importance of protecting it for future generations.

I thank the Committee, on behalf of the members and supporters of Grand Staircase Escalante Partners and our communities, for providing this opportunity for our voices to be heard and to examine how and why these decisions were made to plunder America's most special natural, scientific and cultural places.