

August 22, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

The Escalante & Boulder Chamber of Commerce joined over 1 million people and organizations in submitting public comments to response to Executive Order 13792. These comments overwhelmingly asked that the national monuments under scrutiny be left alone and remain fully protected. In light of this groundswell of support for our national monuments, we urgently ask you to end your review of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and all other sites that remain on your list.

We applaud your recent decision to allow the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument located in our neighboring state of Arizona to remain in its current protected state. In the remaining days before your review must be completed, we have hope that you will take similar action in regard to the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

As part of your analysis, we recognize that you are paying particular attention to how the private sector and related economies were affected following monument designations. Since the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was designated 21 years ago, local residents have built and invested in businesses to capitalize on increased tourism to the area. Tourism represents 44% of total private employment in Escalante and the surrounding communities. At the same time, traditional economies such as livestock grazing, continue to be protected in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Families have literally invested in the continuance of our local National Monument. As we emphasized in our public comments, shrinking the size of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument will hurt our businesses and destroy what our community has built over two decades.

Secretary Zinke, you pledged at the beginning of this process to keep an open mind, and during your May visit to Utah you said you were "an optimist" in regard to the monument review. Until we hear your decision, we too will remain open minded and optimistic about how you decide to proceed with Grand Staircase-Escalante and the other national monuments still being evaluated.

We are prepared to applaud your foresight should you rightfully conclude that our National Monument remain fully protected for generations today and tomorrow. At the same time, we stand ready to decry any decision that erodes the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument -- and with it, our local economic opportunities.

Sincerely,

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