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News / Politics

Environmental, outdoor groups vow to fight national monument reductions

The sun sets over Valley of the Gods in Bears Ears National Monument. Bears Ears is one of the national monuments that President Donald Trump's Interior Secretary has recommended be altered. (Katherine Frey / The Washington Post)

By **Juliet Eilperin**
Washington Post

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SEPTEMBER 18, 2017, 7:48 PM

Environmental and outdoor recreation groups threatened Monday to sue if President **Donald Trump** adopts Interior Secretary **Ryan Zinke's** leaked proposal to alter nearly a dozen national monuments, while grazing, fishing and other groups welcomed the recommendations.

Zinke's plan to reduce the size of at least four federally protected areas in the West, while altering management practices at another half-dozen, was obtained and published by The Washington Post on Sunday night. The White House is still reviewing the memorandum, which Zinke submitted in late August after conducting a four-month review of how presidents of both parties have applied the 1906 Antiquities Act since 1996.

The secretary urged Trump to shrink four large monuments on federal land — Utah's Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, Nevada's Gold Butte, and Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou — as well as possibly two Pacific Ocean marine monuments, the Pacific Remote Islands and Rose Atoll. He proposed amending the proclamations for 10 monuments, largely to allow for commercial activities restricted in these areas, such as logging, grazing and mining.

Zinke endorsed allowing commercial fishing operators in three marine monuments — the two in the central Pacific Ocean, and one, Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Marine Monument, in the Atlantic.

Eric Reid, general manager of Seafreeze Shoreside in Narragansett, Rhode Island, said in a statement that the recommendations "make us hopeful that we can recover the areas we have fished sustainably for decades. We are grateful that the voices of fishermen and shore side businesses have finally been heard."

But Mystic Aquarium senior research scientist Peter Auster, whose institution pushed for heightened protections for an area 130 miles off the southeast coast of Connecticut, noted that federal catch data shows that landings of mackerel and butterfish, the main species targeted by local fisherman near the monument — have risen this year compared with 2016, when the monument was established.

Auster said that to allow trawlers, pots and pot gear in the monument, which spans 4,913 square miles, "will have significant effects on conservation of marine wildlife in the monument."

Former Interior secretary **Sally Jewell**, who oversaw several of the monument designations Zinke is proposing to alter, said in an interview Monday that, "the protections that are written into the proclamations are in many cases what he's trying to undo, in his recommendations to Trump.

"It's a monument in name only if all the activities that are identified by Secretary Zinke are allowed to occur," she added.

Grazing advocates also welcomed the idea of providing ranchers with more access on five different monuments, including not only Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante and Gold Butte but also the New Mexico monuments Rio Grande Del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks.

Ethan Lane, who directs the Public Lands Council at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, said in an email that, "It sounds like the voices of western communities are finally being heard and the promise to preserve grazing inside monuments might finally be kept by the federal government. This action would be a win for any western community that depends on ranching to stay afloat."

Utah politicians, who have lobbied Trump since he was elected to revisit several Antiquities Act designations, praised his administration's push to scale back these areas. Utah Gov. **Gary Herbert**, a Republican, said Thursday that after having talked with Zinke about Grand Staircase-Escalante, which Bill Clinton established in 1996, "I think there's the possibility of carving it up into smaller monuments, you know, two or three that actually protects the area that needs protection."

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Utah Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch's spokesman Matt Whitlock said his boss "is grateful for Secretary Zinke's thorough, fair review that has given Utahns on all sides of the issue a voice in the protection of Utah lands."

But a broad array of monument supporters, including environmental and outdoor recreation activists, pledged to fight any changes to existing protections in court.

"Trump, Zinke and Herbert are going to come out on the wrong side of history," said Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance Legal Director Steve Bloch.

University of Colorado law professor Mark Squillace, an expert in the Antiquities Act, said in an email that Zinke's proposal raises a host of legal issues given that no president has considered making so many changes to previous designations.

"Decisions to protect certain objects (and not others) involve judgment call that courts have shown an inclination to respect," he said. "The significant legal issues aside, if we allow presidents to second guess the judgments of their predecessor there would no end to the mischief that would create."

Although Zinke has proposed amending all 10 monuments' proclamations to shift the way they are managed, the majority of the management plans for these monuments have not been finalized because they take between five and six years to complete.

Randi Spivak, public lands program director for the advocacy group Center for Biological Diversity, said any proclamation change "would be subject to challenge" and "any proposed management plan changes will need to formally go through the same legal and administrative processes again, subject to the same administrative appeal and litigation requirements."

"This process will be very legally vulnerable because it will have to deal with all the scientific, environmental and social conclusions produced during the first round of management plan creation," she said. "This would be a massive hurdle for the administration."

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By **Stephen Ruiz and Krista Torralva**
Orlando Sentinel

SEPTEMBER 18, 2017, 11:00 PM

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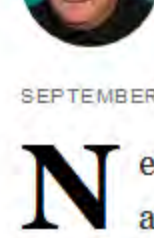
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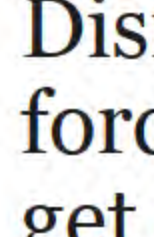
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 By **Stephen Hudak**
Orlando Sentinel

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By **Michael Williams**

SEPTEMBER 18, 2017, 3:40 PM | ORLANDO

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 By **Gabrielle Russon**
Orlando Sentinel

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DeLand man, 70, arrested after machete fight in bank parking lot

By **Michael Williams**

SEPTEMBER 18, 2017, 3:55 PM | ORLANDO

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