

# Comments on Bears Ears National Monument

By  
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I have lived in Utah since 1949 and have been a public lands access-for-all activist since 1987. I was president of the Utah Trail Machine Association for 10 years and founder and president of the Utah Shared Access Alliance for 7 years. Since 1990, I have traveled approximately 10,000 miles of back country roads and trails each year, giving me an unmatched personal insight into just what is at stake due to the special interest land management practices that have devastated public land access for the vast majority of our people.

Access to and use of Utah Public lands has been under attack since the formation of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance in 1985. This greatly intensified in 1994 with the passage of the California Desert Closure Act which created over 8 million acres of Wilderness in formerly multiple use BLM

lands. This allowed the Sierra Club to focus its effort outside California, specifically Utah, where they pumped up SUWA with millions of 501(c)3 tax free dollars. With this new found wealth, SUWA was able to squeeze out all competing “environmental” groups and gain dominance in the business of converting multiple use public lands into single use Wilderness.

Because I have been an advocate for motor assisted access to our public lands, I will confine my comments to just this aspect of the current review process. The Bears Ears National Monument is just the latest example of the relentless drive by the political environmentalists to eliminate people who either require or desire to use motor transport for access from the public lands.

In this enterprise their success has been nothing short of prodigious. In 1985 over 95% of Utah’s BLM lands were available for travel by motor vehicle. Now, over 95% is closed to such use. This has occurred because the political

environmentalists (SUWA, Sierra Club, and others) have taken complete control of the land management agencies and the courts. They are aided in this endeavor by so called main stream media which will always supports their unsubstantiated claims of damage caused by vehicle users as a pretext for closure and they never acknowledge competing views or offer balanced coverage. Many of their stories are shameless propaganda.

The political environmentalists acting through the Agencies and the Courts have created endless means of restricting travel on public lands with the primary purpose of preparing these lands for future Wilderness designation. They demand this, the most restrictive of all possible options, because it is irreversible and removes the land from any future discussion or changes in management. Once land is so designated, only an Act of Congress signed by the President can restore multiple use. Thus, Wilderness designation is analogous to a

cosmic black hole: Whatever enters can never escape.

Many Utah politicians, including the majority of the Congressional Delegation, have recognized the harm Wilderness will bring to Utah's economic future and have mostly resisted the demands of the political environmentalists. As a result, they have resorted to a number of other methods to circumvent the will of the people of Utah to determine the management of their public lands. The illicit designation of national monuments under the pretext of the Antiquities Act is just one of these.

SUWA was the driving force behind the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument designated by President Bill Clinton in 1996 to stop the Kaiparowits coal mine which would have provided vast amounts of low Sulphur coal at a low cost and revitalized the economy in Kane County. Because they have failed in their efforts to gain additional Wilderness designations, they have resorted to an end-run around Congress by persuading an agenda

driven President Obama to do their work. They like national monuments because they always upgrade to national parks eventually which are almost as good as Wilderness in their eyes.

While the esoteric values of Wilderness and National Monuments reside mostly in the realms of philosophy or religion, one outcome of their designation directly and negatively impacts legally protected populations: The elderly, the disabled, and the mobility impaired. In this way, these kind of public land management violates numerous constitutional and statutory protections.

The primary impact of these designations is the elimination or vast reduction of access through motor powered vehicles. This means that all persons who lack the strength, stamina, or health to hike or walk for long distances, often under difficult conditions, are effectively **BANNED** from these formerly public lands.

It is interesting to note that under the Americans with Disabilities Act, our government has forced

the expenditure of Hundreds of billions of dollars by private property owners to insure access to all persons. Yet, this same government has spent billions of dollars to actively deny access to our most vulnerable populations to public lands.

The Bears Ears National Monument is just the most recent example of this process of removing the public lands from the public and gifting them to the political environmentalists. There is no “damage” being done to this land (if that where even possible) and no purpose is being served other than the creation of a new and expensive bureaucracy.

I would ask that you recommend the complete rescission of not only the Bears Ears National Monument, but also the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument. These BLM lands should be managed according to the congressional mandate of Multiple Use and not be set aside as a private playground of the elite environmentalists.

Many thanks for your consideration,

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