



Utah Diné Bikéyah

- a non-profit supporting Native Tribes working together to **Protect Bears Ears** -

www.utahdinebikyah.org

FB @UtahDineBikeyah | Twitter @UtahDineBikeyah | Instagram @ProtectBearsEars

Secretary Zinke Advises Trump to Leave a Legacy of Broken Promises with Tribes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 19, 2017

Contact – Gavin Noyes: (801) 521-7398, Nizhone Meza: (435) 659-0656

Native American communities in San Juan County, Utah, feel shut out of the process they have worked in good faith with now that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has issued an insensitive report recommending reducing Bears Ears National Monument. In his final report to President Trump, called the National Monuments “review,” he has silenced the voices of Native Americans in Utah and across the country by dismissing our deep ties to the Bears Ears landscape. Even though Americans emphatically support National Monuments, Secretary Zinke seems to unfairly discount the concerns of NGO’s without a basis for doing so. Astoundingly, he ignored the 2.6 million American voices, 98% of whom commented in favor of protecting national monuments.

If Secretary Zinke had met with “local stakeholders,” he would have learned that Navajo and Ute residents (who are the county majority) have been greatly impacted by uranium and oil and gas pollution since the 1930’s which is in part why we worked so hard to protect our traditional cultural uses and sacred sites. Even as he recommends exclusions, he does not comment on the future roles of the grazing, timber, fishing and mining industries. Furthermore, by eliminating protections for everything outside any new boundary, Secretary Zinke failed to explain how these important traditional cultural resources and uses can still be preserved.

In fact, five out of seven Utah Navajo Chapter Houses as well as Secretary Zinke’s adopted Tribe in Montana, the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, all passed resolutions defending Bears Ears this past month. Among Native American residents living adjacent to Bears Ears, 97% of these Chapter members voted in favor of leaving Bears Ears alone, and not a single Tribe in the entire United States has stepped forward to ask the Secretary to shrink or eliminate Bears Ears National Monument. We now understand why this report, which is an insult to Tribes, was held so tightly by this administration.

"Any and all recommendations by Secretary Zinke regarding Bears Ears National Monument are fundamentally flawed because the Secretary failed to take the time to meet with and listen to local Native Americans, despite numerous invitations. Tribal people, whose ancestors have dwelled in and around Bears Ears for millennia, are keepers of traditional knowledge. We have a vision for our future that includes both land protection and building a sustainable economy for our children and grandchildren. It is frustrating that the State of Utah and the U.S. Department of Interior refuse to include us in policy making." Willie Grayeyes, Board Chairman, Utah Diné Bikéyah