BEARS EARS INTER-TRIBAL COALITION

A Partnership of the Hopi, Navajo, Uintah & Ouray Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and Zuni Governments

January 26, 2017

Ryan Zinke
Secretary-Designate
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary-Designate Zinke;

We send our congratulations for your nomination as Secretary of the Interior. We will look forward to working with you in the years to come.

We understand that you will be visiting Utah in February to discuss a number of matters, including the Bears Ears National Monument. We are anxious to meet with you to discuss the situation, and your upcoming visit would seem to be a good opportunity. We will come over to Salt Lake City or other locale at any time convenient to you. This is an urgent matter and if a February meeting in Utah is not possible, we will be pleased to meet with you in Washington DC at any time you purpose.

We are, of course, aware that members of the Utah Delegation raise concerns about the monument. There is, however, definitely another side.

Large numbers of traditional Native people have sacrificed for many years to make this monument a reality. Ever since our ancestors were forcibly marched from the Bears Ears region in the mid-1800s, our tribes have grieved and continued to return to the area even though we were often forced away by local citizens. We began intensive work on protecting Bears Ears in 2008. We conducted a prodigious amount of research and data gathering through formal interviews with elders, ethnographic mapping, and archeological research. We explored all the ways that our Traditional Knowledge was created and enriched by our relationship with this land area. In time, we settled upon proper boundaries for the Bears Ears cultural landscape.

In the summer of 2015, we convened at a large meeting of Indian people and decided to submit a formal proposal to President Obama and the Congress. Our much-praised, comprehensive proposal, based upon many meetings and further research, explained the many reasons for protection. At the heart of it is our profound connection to this land dating back to time immemorial. We go there for many reason, including gathering of herbs and medicines, but perhaps the most critical reason is for healing in that serene remote landscape that holds so many memories. You will hear our people say that "we can hear the voices of our ancestors in every canyon and on every mesa top."

Our commitment was respected in many quarters. Even though this was the first time in history that tribes had ever brought forth a national monument proposal, the conservation groups agreed that we should take the lead with the President and in the Congress. Many tribes all across the country passed resolutions supporting our proposal. So did the National Congress of American Indians.

The presidential proclamation explains in detail why this monument was created to honor our tribes. The provisions for collaborative management between our tribes and federal agencies are historic in every sense. This commitment to embedding tribal culture, values, and Traditional Knowledge in this fashion will lead to a unique and exciting kind of federal land management. Bears Ears can become one of the most distinctive and cherished of all federal public land units. We know we can do this. We have worked so hard, and put aside so many other obligations. We will carry that effort into cooperating with federal agencies by infusing the management of this great monument with authentic Indian voices, cultures, and Traditional Knowledge.

Thank you very much for considering this request. We will surely look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Alfred Lomahquahu
Hopi Vice-Chair
Co-Chair Bears Ears
Inter-tribal Coalition

Carleton Bowekaty
Zuni Tribal Councilman
Co-Chair Bears Ears
Inter-tribal Coalition

Cc: U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator Tom Udall