

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We write to you in support of your April 26, 2017, Executive Order reviewing national monuments created under the 1906 Antiquities Act. The goal of the Antiquities Act, to protect “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest” is one that is shared by all of us.¹

Land use decisions are never easy as they directly affect neighborhoods, their citizens’ livelihoods, environments, and the economic future of communities. They can upend local economies or promote significant growth; they can limit recreational access or ensure widespread sustainable enjoyment of the land. These policies can protect the environment, support effective land management, and safeguard native land use. The complexity and lasting effect of these decisions is why they are best made collaboratively, through local consultation. Yet, the Antiquities Act requires no such coordination prior to the creation of a national monument. The broad discretion the Antiquities Act grants presidents has led to its abuse.

The Antiquities Act calls for national monuments to be created using the “smallest area necessary.”² Ignoring this limitation, President Obama used the Antiquities Act to establish or expand 34 monuments affecting 550 million acres, an area almost twice as large as the state of Texas.

No president has seriously revisited the modern, expansive use of the Antiquities Act. We urge you to keep all remedies on the table as you consider how to correct past abuses of the Antiquities Act and work with Congress to ensure a more measured approach is taken and required in the future.

Such a review is long overdue and welcomed.

Sincerely,



Cc: Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior

¹ 54 U.S.C. § 320301.

² Ibid.

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