

Native American Rights Fund

Indigenous Peoples' Rights

<https://www.narf.org/tribal-leaders-express-dismay-zinke-remarks/>

Campaign and Advocacy



Leaders from the five tribes that built a coalition to protect and advocate for the continued integrity of Bears Ears National Monument in southeast Utah (Navajo, Hopi, Ute, Ute Mountain Ute and Zuni) expressed their dismay over Secretary Zinke's unfortunate recent remarks regarding the fate of the Monument.

On Monday, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke told the Salt Lake Tribune that Bears Ears National Monument represents: an overreach by past presidents and an abuse of the Antiquities Act to preserve areas not because of actual cultural, historic or scientific needs but because there might be such sites not yet identified in the area. In explaining, Zinke said sarcastically: If there's a potential for an arrowhead over here, you should protect from Manhattan, west.

If Secretary Zinke had really consulted with us, he would know better than to address our culture with sarcasm, said Shaun Chapoose, member of the Ute Indian Tribe Business Committee. We're talking about tens of thousands of cultural sites, everything from historic Ute camps, to the graves of our ancestors, to villages, rock art, and cliff dwellings. We've told him the entire Monument should be left alone for the preservation of our cultural identity.

Secretary Zinke also claimed that once Bears Ears is shrunk by the President, it will still be larger than Bryce Canyon and Zion National Park combined.

Comparing Bryce and Zion canyons to Bears Ears is comparing apples to oranges, said David Filfred, 23rd Navajo Nation Council Representative. Those canyons were protected for their scenic beauty which exists in a relatively confined area, but Bears Ears is a cultural landscape filled with sacred sites important to all of our tribal members. Wouldn't it be better to work with us to help steward these lands for the benefit of all people instead of working to threaten our sovereignty by undermining this Monument?

On October 27, 2017, President Trump phoned Senators Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee, Representative Rob Bishop, and Utah Governor Gary Herbert to announce his plans to shrink Bears Ears National Monument. Representatives of the Trump administration and the Utah delegation continue to assert that tribes have been consulted in the review of Bears Ears National Monument, but to date, not a single elected or appointed official of the five coalition tribes has been contacted by the President to discuss his plans to shrink Bears Ears National Monument.

The Native American Rights Fund represent three of the five members of the Inter-Tribal Coalition: the Hopi Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. [Read more about NARF's work on the Bears Ears National Monument at NARF's case page.](#)

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