On December 4, 2017, President Trump traveled to Utah to announce that he would cut Bears Ears National Monument by 85% and Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument by half—the largest reductions to federal land protections in history. The President’s announcement followed months of uncertainty regarding what executive action would be taken on the recommendations from Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke’s national monument review. With the White House’s first action following the Secretary’s report being major reductions in public land protections, it is reasonable to believe that the President will continue to act on Secretary Zinke’s recommendations and dramatically reduce national public lands protections nationwide.

**National Monuments Reductions**

In April of this year President Trump signed an executive order requiring Secretary Zinke to undertake a review of many of America’s national monuments. While the Secretary undertook his months long review roughly 2.7 million Americans, including 14 Mountain Pact constituent communities, submitted comment in favor of leaving national monuments as they are. Secretary Zinke’s recommendations were to shrink four land national monuments and two sea monuments as well as to alter the uses allowed in 10 other national monuments. However, without official word from President Trump it has been unclear how these recommendations had been received...until now.

Much of the controversy over the reductions of these monuments is related to the potential for development in the areas that will now have reduced protections. The reductions would open up culturally and archaeologically important lands to potential mining and energy developments, backtracking on the work of the Bears Ears Inter–Tribal Coalition that has been advocating for the protection of Bears Ears for years.
Following President Trump's December 4th announcement, the five tribes that form the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and prominent outdoor recreation company Patagonia, along with others, filed lawsuits to block the reductions. Their claim, as many legal scholars have also stated, is that only Congress has the power to reduce national monuments by this degree. Many are arguing that under the Antiquities Act presidents do not have the power to reduce national monuments, only to create them, and so an extended legal battle is expected to ensue.

Leading up to the announcement, The Mountain Pact has worked closely with our constituent communities to advocate for good conservation and public lands management practices. In May we published a report describing the importance of the Antiquities Act to America’s public lands system.

**What This Means For Mountain Communities**

The Administration’s willingness to remove protections for such vast swaths of land in the name of potential development puts these areas and all public lands at risk as well as the economies that rely on them. Public lands are the infrastructure the outdoor recreation economy depends on, and thus the are the main economic drivers of many of our towns.

In addition, Zinke has recommended that Trump reduces Gold Butte in Nevada and Cascade-Siskiyou in Oregon. It is unclear at this time whether President Trump will act on these recommendations, particularly in the wake of the lawsuits filed after his first monuments reduction announcement. The Mountain Pact is following this issue and is committed to keeping you up to date on all relevant public lands and conservation policies.

www.themountainpact.org | info@themountainpact.org