May 23, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We, the undersigned county commissioners, write to formally state our opposition to the presidential administration’s review of the protections afforded our national monuments. These monuments are our heritage, our future and our template for preservation. The review is both illegal and in opposition to the wishes of those we represent as commissioners – the arm of government closest to the people of Colorado and the American West.

Colorado is blessed with spectacular public lands that span the state. Among the most cherished are national monuments, including Colorado National Monument, Browns Canyon, Canyons of the Ancients, Chimney Rock, Florissant Fossil Beds, Dinosaur, Hovenweep and Yucca House. These treasures must be protected and preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Public lands, and national monuments in particular, are major drivers behind our robust outdoor recreation economy. Outdoor recreation generates $887 billion in direct consumer spending each year across the nation and supports more than 7.5 million American jobs. Including indirect impact, the industry has a $2.1 trillion overall economic impact, supports 14.1 million jobs and generates $80 billion in national, state and local tax revenue each year. That revenue funds schools, health care, public safety and transportation infrastructure – priorities of the current administration.

In Colorado, leaders and citizens have done the hard work of long-range planning, community outreach and development of partnerships necessary to protect our unique lands through national monument designation. To suggest that this work – in which states and local communities invested years – can be reviewed thoroughly and changed in 45 days is an insult to those who live where these national treasures exist. The willingness to compromise the Antiquities Act, which has served the nation well since 1906, leads us to question if any public land is safe from the threat of destruction under the present administration. We believe that Congress, through the legislative process, is the only proper venue to consider changing boundaries or management of national monuments.
National monuments are one of the great American ideas, created in the spirit of conservation and cultural preservation. They are the property of the American people, and a strong majority of western citizens – our constituents – support their creation and preservation. To rescind or alter them will cultivate an environment of mistrust and threaten any positive working relationship between the federal government and local communities. We urge you to consider the consequences of these actions and the precedent this review sets for the future of our nation and generations to come.

Sincerely,

Eva Henry, Commissioner, Adams County
Steve O’Dorisio, Commissioner, Adams County
Nancy Jackson, Commissioner, Arapahoe County
Deb Gardner, Commissioner, Boulder County
Elise Jones, Commissioner, Boulder County
Keith Baker, Commissioner, Chaffee County
Tim Mauck, Commissioner, Clear Creek County
Randy Wheelock, Commissioner, Clear Creek County
Kathy Chandler Henry, Commissioner, Eagle County
Jill Ryan, Commissioner, Eagle County
Linda Isenhart, Commissioner, Gilpin County
Gail Watson, Commissioner, Gilpin County
Jonathan Houck, Commissioner, Gunnison County
John Messner, Commissioner, Gunnison County
Gwen Lachelt, Commissioner, La Plata County
Ben Tisdel, Commissioner, Ouray County
Steve Childs, Commissioner, Pitkin County
Patti Clapper, Commissioner, Pitkin County
George Newman, Commissioner, Pitkin County
Greg Poschman, Commissioner, Pitkin County
Rachel Richards, Commissioner, Pitkin County
Timothy Corrigan, Commissioner, Routt County
Jason Anderson, Commissioner, Saguache County
Hilary Cooper, Commissioner, San Miguel County
Kris Holstrom, San Miguel County
Joan May, Commissioner, San Miguel County
Thomas Davidson, Commissioner, Summit County
Dan Gibbs, Commissioner, Summit County
Karn Stiegelmeier, Commissioner, Summit County