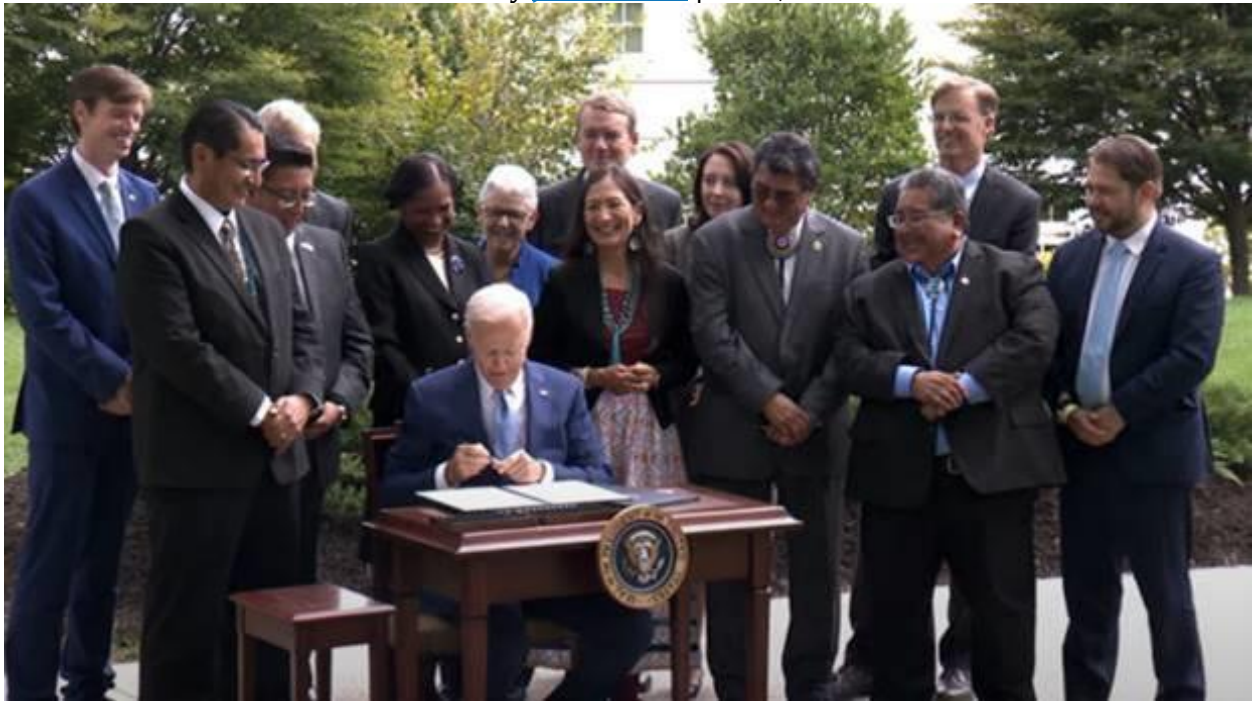


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PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN RESTORES BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT

Posted by [Jan Wondra](#) | Oct 8, 2021



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Today, President Joe Biden at the White House signed a proclamation to restore Bears Ears National Monument. Among the many Western state dignitaries present were Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet and newly-appointed U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland.

In 2016, President Obama made a national monument proclamation for Bears Ears, which is home to ancestral lands and cultural sites that are sacred to the region, including to the Ute Mountain, Ute, and Southern Ute Tribes of Colorado,

both of whom strongly supported this designation. But in 2017 during the Trump administration, the president considered abolishing or significantly reducing the size of Bears Ears.

In April 2017, nine Western Democratic senators sent a letter to former President Trump urging him to uphold existing protections for all 157 national monuments under review, including Bears Ears. He ignored them and followed his decision to shrink Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument.

“Restoring protections for Bears Ears reaffirms our nation’s commitment to our tribes and to our kids and grandkids so that they can experience these public lands,” said Bennet. “I deeply appreciate President Biden’s proclamation because it will preserve our nation’s cultural heritage, and protect this sacred place for generations to come. We must now ensure that our nation’s tribes, including the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, are closely involved in the management of Bears Ears National Monument and I will continue to push for the resources needed to fully protect this landscape.

Bennet has fought for protecting public land throughout his time in the Senate, including advocating for the establishment of Bears Ears National Monument. In May 2017, Bennet sent a letter with then-Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper to then-U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke urging him to refrain from modifying any national monument designations in Colorado and warning him against taking unprecedented steps to diminish the size of Bears Ears.

In January 2018, several western senators introduced the America’s Natural Treasures of Immeasurable Quality Unite, Inspire, and Together Improve the Economies of States (ANTIQUITIES) Act of 2018 in response to the Trump Administration’s unprecedented attacks on national monuments. The legislation reinforces that only Congress has the authority to reduce the size of a national monument. In April 2018, Bennet called on Zinke to halt the development of management plans for Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments until legal challenges related to former President Trump’s illegal attempt to shrink these monuments have been resolved.

In July 2021, Bennet wrote to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland urging her to meet with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe to hear directly about Tribal members' priorities and to support their request to restore the size of Bears Ears National Monument.

The Mountain Pact strongly supported the move. "Over 140 local elected officials in the Mountain Pact network across the West, including Utah mayors, council members, and county commissioners, are overjoyed that President Biden has finally restored protections for Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments," said Executive Director of The Mountain Pact Anna Peterson.

"It is past time to finally start real collaborative management with Tribes at Bears Ears and for restored protections for these irreplaceable cultural, historic, and natural treasures," she added. "If we are going to accomplish the administration's 'America the Beautiful' goal, we must rapidly accelerate efforts to restore and conserve more public lands and waters."

Featured image: President Joe Biden signs the executive order which restored the original boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument. Courtesy image.