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“Political soccer”? Biden wants Bears Years, Grand Staircase review

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Salt Lake City — As expected, President Joe Biden said he would have the US Home Office review the boundaries between Bears Years and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Both were created in the midst of controversy and then reduced. In an equal protest.

Former President Donald Trump, by executive order, reduced Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument from 500,000 acres to nearly 1 million acres in December 2017, splitting Bears Year into two separate units for a total of 228,700 acres. did.

The demarcation occurred at the request of Utah's top political leaders, including parliamentary delegations and the governor, and after a resolution passed by the Utah State Legislature.

At the time, Trump said it was former Senator Orrin Hatch, Republican pressure and tenacity, that helped convince him to finally change boundaries.

Bears Ears was created during the Obama administration's decline after sending then Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to a remote location in San Juan County. San Juan County is a sacred area.

The 1.35 million acre monument designation resulted in a cry of protest from Utah's conservative leaders who accused Obama of abusing his authority under ancient law.

The act empowers the president to create a monument for resource conservation, but critics say it has been widely abused to confine vast lands and other resources beyond the scope of the law.

Trump reduced both monuments and visited the Great Staircase area after Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke took a helicopter and horse-riding tour of the Bears Ears.

After the size of these monuments was reduced, several groups filed proceedings in federal court, challenging Trump's authority to make these reductions. Those proceedings are still pending.

Josh Ewing, Secretary-General of the Friends of Cedar Mesa, the organization that supports the monument, said that ideally there should be a legislative solution to Bears Ears' questions.

"My hope is the global importance of this area, how important these resources are, and how we have lasting protection so that this is not the political football thrown back. A careful review of what can be done is to be done four times every four years," he said.

"There will be some kind of parliamentary compromise for a permanent solution. I don't speculate on what that compromise will be This is very controversial. It's certainly not easy to do that because it's a problem. "

Bruce Adams, a San Juan County Commissioner who opposed the creation of the monument, said he was afraid that the Biden administration would expand the monument to 1.9 million acres beyond the designation of former President Barack Obama.

He said such a move would hurt San Juan County.

“Expanding the Bears Ears beyond its original size has a negative impact on county spending, and it’s all about addressing all the impacts on sheriff offices, emergency medical services, roads, and increasing visitors. Will increase. “

Adams said the change should bring some income to the county, at least if the Biden administration scales up the Bears Ears.

“The federal government has never paid the county the full amount in lieu of taxes.”

According to Adams, the money to indemnify the county for federal land bans to generate property taxes would be about \$ 1.2 million in San Juan County, and an additional \$ 5 million shortage.

“It helps our income, so we can provide the services we expect and demand when they actually visit,” he said.

Like Bears Ears, Utah’s conservative leaders opposed the 1996 designation of the Grand Staircase by then-President Bill Clinton.

The astonishing designation was seen by critics as a slap primarily in the face of Utah, and Clinton announced the designation from neighboring Arizona rather than stepping into the state.

The Biden Transition Team has been in contact with monumental supporters for the past two months.

Mountain Pact, a group of elected officials representing 80 western communities focused on promoting the outdoor recreation economy, called on Biden this month to restore the boundaries of both monuments in Utah. I did.

Signatories included representatives of Park City and Moab.