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# Interior Secretary set to tour Bears Ears, Grand Staircase

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BY JOHN WOJCIK | APRIL 8, 2021 AT 10:16 AM

UPDATED: APRIL 8, 2021 AT 10:41 AM



Local leaders are reacting to the arrival of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, who's scheduled to visit Bears Ears National Monument on Thursday. (PHOTO: Graeme Jennings/Pool via AP)

KANAB, Utah — Local leaders are reacting to the arrival of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, who plans to visit Bears Ears National Monument on Thursday.

## Interior Secretary spends the week in Southern Utah

The Interior Secretary reportedly met privately with sovereign Native American and state leaders on Wednesday. Following the tour of Bears Ears on Thursday, she will visit Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Friday.

The trip to Southern Utah comes after President Joe Biden ordered a review into the 2017 reduction of the monuments by 2 million acres.



The image is a screenshot of a tweet from Secretary Deb Haaland (@SecDebHaaland). The tweet text reads: "Tonight I heard directly from Tribal leaders from the five Tribes in the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition tonight. I appreciate the important connection they and their people have to this land." Below the text are two side-by-side photographs showing a group of people seated at tables covered with blue cloths under a large, open-sided pavilion structure. The setting appears to be outdoors in a desert-like environment. The tweet is dated 6:30 PM on April 7, 2021, and has 7.4K likes and 76 replies. There are icons for liking, replying, and copying the link to the tweet.

**Secretary Deb Haaland**   
@SecDebHaaland 

Tonight I heard directly from Tribal leaders from the five Tribes in the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition tonight. I appreciate the important connection they and their people have to this land.




6:30 PM · Apr 7, 2021 

 7.4K  76  Copy link to Tweet

Originally established by President Barack Obama at 1.3 million acres, [Bears Ears monument](#) currently covers 200,000 acres.



Secretary Deb Haaland   
@SecDebHaaland



Huge thanks to the Governor, Lt. Gov and Utah congressional delegation for meeting with me to discuss a path forward for the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.



7:48 AM · Apr 8, 2021



 2.4K  33  Copy link to Tweet

Similarly, President Bill Clinton established Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument at 1.9 million acres; it shrank to just over 1 million acres under President Donald Trump.

## A heated issue for locals

For those in the area, they believe they know better than anyone [how contentious the issue has become.](#)

“I think we’re once again at a point where talking about public lands will probably become a rather heated topic for the next six months or a year,” said Ann Leppanen, the mayor of Bluff.

According to her, most people in the community welcome the visit by Haaland. They also appreciate the opportunity to again rethink the borders of the two monuments.

“This community, the majority of people, really would like to see the Bears Ears National Monument at least at 1.3 [million acres], if not at 1.9 [million acres] and protect the resources,” she said.

Whether for expanded borders or limited government control, she says both sides agree we need consistency, not a political issue every four years.

“It certainly has caused a lot of passion and a lot of discord,” Leppanen said. “If you’re going to limit the protection to these two tiny units, you’re ignoring all the rest of the area.”