



The Mountain Pact

The Trump Administration's Newest Attacks on Conservation

To add to the already insurmountable list of disastrous conservation news, the Department of Interior (DOI), under Secretary Bernhardt's leadership, has recently taken more steps to reverse conservation efforts on public lands. In July, [DOI announced](#) that they would be moving the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) headquarters to Grand Junction, Colorado, a move



that will greatly reduce the agency's connection to Washington, D.C. and will result in the loss of many career BLM employees. Then, last week, DOI [released revisions](#) to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that guts the key wildlife conservation law. This all comes while the Trump administration continues to rush forward with new management plans for the illegally reduced Bears Ears National Monument. On July 26 BLM released a proposed Monument Management Plan (MMP) that provides for even less land protection than before it was designated a national monument.

BLM Relocation and Reorganization

The Trump administration has let go and re-assigned thousands of employees since 2017, with a particular focus on public lands and environmental agencies. Now, the administration is working to dissolve an entire agency within DOI. Masked with the reasoning that most of the lands managed by the BLM are West of the Mississippi, DOI will be relocating roughly 300 employees from Washington, D.C. offices to state offices in the West. The director, deputy director, and related managerial level staff will be relocated to the BLM's new proposed headquarters in Grand Junction, CO. Here is a [rough breakdown](#) of where employees will end up:

- 27 positions will relocate to Grand Junction, including the director, deputy director, and their attendant staff.
- 222 employees will move to BLM state offices.
- 85 total employees will relocate to Colorado. 54 positions will be divided between the state office and the National Operations Center in Lakewood and 4 additional positions go to the state office.
- 74 positions will be reallocated to state offices and report to state directors.
- 61 will remain in Washington D.C. at the headquarters of DOI.

Many former BLM employees, including former BLM deputy director Steve Ellis, say that moving BLM headquarters West is a sure way to dismantle the agency's power. Although much of BLM land is in the Western states, the agency still needs a presence in Washington to communicate the needs of the agency to policymakers. For example, all of the BLM's fire personnel were relocated to Boise, Idaho in the 1990s but were later brought back to Washington D.C. because lawmakers required briefings following fires that had broken out.

Other concerns related to the move are the effect that it will have on BLM employment. Not all employees that are slated to make the move will do so, resulting in the loss of a large number of employees, as well as the loss of significant institutional knowledge. For the BLM to function as a manager of public lands, it must have adequate skilled staff and a foot in Washington, D.C. This move will ensure that neither of those things remain true which threatens the future of the BLM.



Endangered Species Act Revisions

Just months after the U.N. [released a report](#) describing the risk of extinction for 1 million of the Earth's 8 million plant and animal species, the Trump administration has [announced revisions](#) to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ESA was originally passed with

bipartisan support in 1973 and has kept 99% of the listed animals from extinction.

However, the new revisions will [reduce protections](#) from species listed as 'threatened,' the listing classification just one step below endangered, and narrow the habitat protections to cover only currently occupied habitat. This could be detrimental as many species have already experienced greater shrinking of habitat due to climate change and development.

Developers and fossil fuel companies have long lobbied Republican lawmakers to revise the ESA. Although many agree that the Act is in need of modernization, many disagree about how to best do that. One thing is clear about these revisions--they will undermine the strength of the U.S.'s premier wildlife conservation law.

COMMENT NOW: DEADLINE AUGUST 26

The Trump administration has released a proposed Monument Management Plan (MMP) for the 15 percent of the protected area that remains of the original Bears Ears National Monument. The plan is woefully inadequate and will allow more (potentially detrimental) uses on the land than were allowed before the national monument designation. **August 26 marks the end of a 30-day protest period.** This period gives those who submitted comment earlier in the process the chance to protest the new MMP for not adequately addressing concerns previously expressed. For more information on what the MMP proposes and what you can do click [here](#). If you previously submitted comment regarding

management of Bears Ears National Monument you can file a protest [here](#).

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