



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
THE HONORABLE RYAN ZINKE**

“Monument Review, MS-1530”

**Statement of the
UTAH FARM BUREAU FEDERATION**

The Utah Farm Bureau Federation represents more than 30,000 member families scattered across our state’s diverse and beautiful landscape. Our members are located in all 29 counties living in both urban and rural communities. Farm Bureau is the largest farm and ranch organization in Utah as well as in the United States. Farm Bureau’s comments are generally related to misuse of the Antiquities Act, but more specifically today, to express concerns with the potential designation of a Bears Ears National Monument.

The Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities, or the Antiquities Act, was passed by Congress in 1906 to address a particular parcel of public land. It was intended to allow Presidential “protection of objects of historic and scientific interest.” The Act states that the areas to be set aside as monuments “are to be confined to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected.”

Mega-Monuments like the 1.9 million acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument seem to ignore what Congress originally intended. A 1.35 million acre Bears Ears National Monument circumvents what Congress intended too!.

The American Farm Bureau Federation, representing nearly 6 million members across the nation, is concerned that the original intent of protecting “the smallest portion of land needed” is not being considered. Today’s politicized and polarized process sidesteps needed evaluation important in determining the real impacts of these Presidential designations on communities, economies, jobs and the critical resources our nation depends on.

Utahns remember well when in 1996, without consultation with our Governor, our Congressional Delegation or our citizens, then President Bill Clinton stood in Arizona on the rim of the Grand Canyon and designated the 1.9 million acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Many in Southern Utah and across the state of Utah continue to believe this action, which dramatically changed the Congressional multiple use mandate and is still hurting rural communities and businesses, was an abuse of federal power.

Pointing out that Utah has 67 percent of the lands within its borders owned and controlled by the national government, Utah Farm Bureau members are concerned that there is a potential for abuse of the original, limited, intent of the Antiquities Act.

Delegates to the November 2015 annual convention of the Utah Farm Bureau Federation adopted policy addressing concerns and making recommendation related to the Antiquities Act and the resulting national monuments:

Utah Farm Bureau policy calls for:

- 1) Amending the Antiquities Act to require legislative approval from any state where a national monument is established.
- 2) A Congressional review and evaluation of any national monuments including a NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) assessment.
- 3) Require continuation of multiple use management principles within national monuments including livestock grazing, hunting, fishing, recreation, energy and mining.
- 4) Protect the sovereign water rights of the state of Utah and honor privately held and perfected livestock water rights.
- 5) Withdrawal of lands or change in boundaries of monuments to facilitate extraction and utilization of our abundant natural resources including oil, gas and coal.
- 6) Timely completion of agency Resource Management Plans (RPMs) within national monuments that includes grazing to address the historic, cultural and economic contributions in the surrounding area.

It is no secret that America's rural communities, and more specifically those across Southern Utah, suffer from lackluster economic growth and opportunity. Many of these problems can be attributed to a growing Washington D.C. regulatory philosophy, federal overreach and onerous land management policies. Some continue to argue national monuments like the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument are an economic boon. The locals certainly appreciate all the dollars tourists bring to the local economy, but sustainable rural economies cannot exist on seasonal service industry jobs alone.

Those who come to rural Utah for the magnificent beauty and recreational opportunities generally get outfitted somewhere upstate before making their way to Utah's backcountry. Locals have a saying about tourists; "They come in a pair of khaki shorts and with a \$50 bill in their pocket and don't change either!" Right or wrong, the reality is, recreation and tourism will not build and sustain rural economies, provide living wages and sustainable opportunities for local residents.

Congress in the Taylor Grazing Act and the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act mandated that the resources being managed by the federal agencies are to be managed for the benefit of all Americans. Judicious use and development of our natural resources like coal, oil, natural gas and mining meets America's most basic needs and provides jobs and economic opportunity. Harvesting the annually renewing forage

through livestock grazing provides affordable meat protein to Utahns and Americans, helps build sustainable rural communities, and reduces the potential for catastrophic wild fires.

Since the pioneers first settled Utah, the natural resources of our state dictated that we are primarily an animal agriculture state. The heritage of ranching families grazing sheep and cattle was based on community needs and on the lands they held in common. It's hard to overstate the very real disadvantage Utah has to other American states in determining our future and the use of the natural resources within our border with the federal overlords. There are 45 million acres of rangeland suitable for livestock grazing in Utah. Of that, 33 million acres or 75 percent is controlled by the BLM and Forest Service. The Director of the BLM manages more land in Utah than the Governor elected by the people of Utah. Our future in Southern Utah, in most of Utah and across the American West is being dictated by a distant, disconnected central government. And that distance is not just based on geography.

This growing divide and mounting differences are certainly reflected in the increasing tensions and obviously is the catalyst for state and regional movements like Utah's "Transfer of the Federal Lands."

Using the Antiquities Act to impose the will of the central government while ignoring state and local elected officials and thwarting the will of the people, will only fan the flames of distrust and disassociation in Utah and in the West. Utah's Governor, Utah's Congressional Delegation, Utah's Legislature, local county commissioners and recent polls showing nearly 60 percent of Utahns oppose a Bears Ears designation underscores the depth of our opposition.

Agriculture is a fundamental piece of Utah's economic puzzle. It is the economic foundation of our rural communities. According to the 2016 Economic Report to the Governor, food and agriculture contribute more than \$17 billion to Utah's economy, or more than 14 percent of the total Utah Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Livestock production drives our agriculture economy. The cattle sector, a major player in San Juan County and Southern Utah, contributes about 40 percent of the state agricultural total. Food and agriculture provides more than 80,000 jobs statewide and is the engine for more than \$2.7 billion in wages.

We all understand and appreciate the uniqueness of the Bears Ears area and the beauty of Southern Utah. But it is equally important to understand and appreciate the unique character of the ranching families of San Juan County and Southern Utah who have for generations cared for the land and harvested the renewable forage producing beef and lamb for American dinner tables. These ranching families are the first environmentalists who love the land respected the unique character of their area before

there was a Forest Service or BLM, and long before today's debate of a Bears Ears National Monument.

Harvesting the renewable forage provides many more benefits than just beef or lamb production. Instead of dead and dying grasses, forage is utilized, allowing the plant ecosystem to thrive. Livestock grazing, like good gardening, allows new plant growth that is preferred by wildlife. Lastly, livestock grazing and harvesting the tinder dry grasses dramatically reduces the chances of catastrophic wildfires.

Investments by ranchers, sportsmen and the state of Utah in partnerships like the Grazing Improvement Program (GIP) are available and are aimed at improving rangelands statewide, including private, state and federal. These efforts not only improve forage for livestock, they help control the spread of noxious weeds and monocultures of invasive trees beneficial to the entire ecosystem. Proactive range management improves watersheds that are critical to precious water supplies in this high desert region.

Many do not recognize San Juan County has only eight percent of the lands within its borders privately owned. Or that neighboring Kane County has 11 percent and Garfield County a paltry five percent private ownership. These counties with such limited tax base struggle to fund local government and provide opportunities for private businesses to establish and thrive. Family livestock ranching has historically been the foundation of rural economic opportunity and the tax base of these federal land dominated counties. Under the Taylor Grazing Act, grazing rights and access to public lands for livestock grazing was established based on local private land ownership and water rights. Uncertainty is having a dramatic impact on these generations old agri-businesses and the designation of the Bears Ears National Monument would exacerbate the situation.

These ranching businesses that harvest the annually renewing forage provide jobs, health care, roads, public schools and services like emergency services, search and rescue and hospitals – important to locals and to visiting tourists.

Uncertainty and ramped up federal regulatory actions that suspend or terminate livestock grazing Animal Unit Months (AUMs) on federal lands are displacing or ending historic family ranching in Southern Utah. These are ranching families heavily dependent on federal grazing permits. In the three counties that would surround a Bears Ears National Monument, the economic impacts could be dramatic.

In Utah, we have seen more than 70 percent of historic grazing AUMs cut or suspended through federal agency management actions. The establishment of a new national monument provides one more tool to the federal agencies to reduce livestock grazing. Let's consider what the impact of displacing or terminating even a single average sized family cattle ranching operation would be:

Utah is a cow-calf cattle production state with cattle and calves contributing more than one-third of the state's agricultural commodity sales. According to the Salina Livestock Auction, feeder cattle arriving from across Southern Utah for auction generally averaged between 450 - 550 pounds and were valued at about \$1.75 per pound or \$875 per head. An average cow-calf ranching operation with 500 mother cows and a 95-percent calf survival rate adds more than \$415,000 in direct cattle sales to the local economy.

Based on a conservative economic multiplier effect, as feeder cattle sales dollars are spent in the local economy, that single family ranching business is the catalyst for more than \$750,000 in rural Southeast Utah!

If you take a regional look at the number of mother cattle, in Southeast Utah's San Juan (14,300), Garfield (17,700) and Kane (8,200) Counties, there were 40,200 mother cows that spent time grazing on federally managed lands in 2015. Those family cattle ranches generated more than \$33 million in direct feeder cattle sales and contributed in excess of \$50 million to the rural communities they support year round. And this is a contribution that renews itself every year with the new calf crop.

Livestock ranching families spend their money right at home in rural Utah. Dollars from feeder calf sales turn over in Southern Utah creating jobs, paying taxes, supporting public schools and hospitals and creating sustainable opportunities for a new generation. They don't take their money with them after a short vacation in Southern Utah, or put their money in some foreign bank account – they put their money to work in rural Utah!

We urge the Secretary of the Interior to recommend the Bears Ears National Monument Presidential Order established under the Antiquities Act be rescinded. Rescinding the Presidential Order would return greater decision making to local people and remove the uncertainty of federal overreach. There needs to be a Congressional or Judicial determination of what the limits of the Executive Branch are related to the Act. Ranching families who are making a living by combining private lands and water with public land grazing need greater certainty so they can continue to contribute to the culture and economy of rural Utah.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact:

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