January 12, 2021

Re: Bears Ears National Monument

Dear President-Elect Biden,

Utah’s Moab City Council respectfully requests your administration prioritize taking immediate action to restore the Bears Ears National Monument to its original size as directed in President Obama’s Proclamation 9558.

When President Obama designated the Bears Ears National Monument in 2016, it was an historic act that recognized the voices of the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Ute Mountain and the Ute Indian Tribes – the five members of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition – that were united in calling for the protection of this unique cultural landscape in southeastern Utah.

This designation was the culmination of extensive public engagement and debate. The Bears Ears area had been proposed for protection by Congress, Interior Secretaries, state and tribal leaders, local conservationists, and other interested stakeholders for at least 80 years. Prior to the designation, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell spent considerable time in southeastern Utah with elected officials, tribal representatives, and others to survey the Bears Ears area by foot and vehicle. On July 16, 2016, Secretary Jewell held a public hearing on the Bears Ears National Monument in Bluff, Utah that was attended by close to 2,000 local residents and officials – a clear majority of who supported the monument.

On December 4, 2017, President Donald Trump reduced the size of the Monument by 85%. This illegal reduction was done without the involvement of Coalition members and was in disregard of their cultural interests.

The City of Moab is home to many for whom the monument lands have deep cultural significance, and who find solace and renewal in the quiet beauty of this area. Moab businesses depend on these lands being managed in a way that preserves their archaeological riches, natural beauty, recreational value, and ecological integrity.

The Moab City Council supports immediate action to fully restore the Bears Ears National Monument as it was originally designated by President Obama. In addition, the Council urges your administration to take all necessary steps in managing the monument to ensure preservation of both the rich cultural history of Native Americans and the diverse array of natural and scientific resources that lie within the monument.

Sincerely,

Emily Niehaus, Mayor
Moab City Council, approved on January 12, 2021