

January 9, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President Elect of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Elect Trump:

The designation of lands as national monuments or similar designation without input from communities impacted by the decision can lead, and in fact has led to devastating reductions in economic activity and the loss of jobs in resource-dependent communities. Over the last eight years, the Obama Administration has used the authority provided by the Antiquities Act to lock up millions of acres of land from multiple-use by designating land as national monuments. In fact, President Obama has proclaimed more new national monuments than any other president in U.S. history.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 was enacted as a response to concerns over theft from and destruction of archaeological sites and was designed to provide an expeditious means to protect federal lands and resources. The Act requires the President to reserve “the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected.” The size and magnitude of recent monument designations grossly fail to meet the intent of Congress and objective of the law.

Landowners, grazing permittees, loggers, forest products companies, miners, and local governments should be fully involved as affected partners in any process to execute federal land use designations which restrict public use and access. The lack of local or congressional input and approval of a president’s monument designation often generates significant controversy and economic hardship at the local level. Unfortunately, the law does not provide explicit requirements for the president to consult with local and state authorities. The detrimental effects of a monument designation frequently cause residents, elected state and county officials, and local stakeholders who have major interests in the lands to push Congress for reform.

The undersigned organizations support congressional revisions of the Antiquities Act to require that any Presidential national monument proclamation be subject to congressional approval and limited to no more than 5,000 acres, per the original intent of the Antiquities Act. The Obama Administration has already locked up more than 5.6 million acres of (non-aquatic) land through use of the Antiquities Act to designate or expand additional monuments.

We support the enactment of legislation that improves accountability and transparency in the designation of any proposed national monument by requiring an open public process to include consideration by landowners and local governments affected by the decision. Recent use of the Antiquities Act for large tract designation has not provided reasonable notice to the public, and has gone well beyond Congress’ original intent to designate the smallest portion of land needed to represent certain objects of historic and scientific interest.

The designation of federal land as national monuments without input from local communities can lead to devastating reductions in economic activity and the loss of jobs in rural communities. We strongly oppose the ongoing misuse of the Antiquities Act by the Executive branch and request your administration to work swiftly to resolve these conflicts and work with Congress to pass legislation to improve accountability and transparency in the designation of national monuments. Such reform will ensure that the will of local communities are respected and true American antiquities can be protected.

Sincerely,

American Exploration & Mining Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Legislative Exchange Council
American Sheep Industry Association
Association of National Grasslands
Black Hills Forest Resource Association
Colorado Timber Industry Association
Family Farm Alliance
Federal Forest Resource Coalition
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
Independent Petroleum Association of America
Intermountain Forest Association
Montana Wood Products Association
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Cattleman's Beef Association
New Mexico Forest Industries Association
Public Lands Council
Utah Shared Access Alliance
Western Energy Alliance

CC The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairwoman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee