

September 18, 2018

Dear Member of Congress,

As religious leaders in the Catholic community, we know that many people meet God in the great outdoors. Parks and public lands foster healthy communities and nurtured souls. Local, state and federal parks are where we, as a nation, pray and play. National parks and monuments not only provide recreation opportunities, but also embody our unique cultural heritage. National monuments like Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad, Cesar Chavez, Soldiers Home, and Bears Ears give voice to the stories of our collective national fabric.

All major faith traditions lift up care for creation as a religious imperative. Good stewardship of our natural, spiritual, historical, and cultural heritage is an important part of our role as caretakers of God's creation and co-creators of a collective national memory that reflects dignity and respect for all.

We are dismayed that President Trump, in an unprecedented action, eliminated more than two million acres of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. This was the largest elimination of protections for public lands in U.S. history. As defenders of religious liberty, we are concerned that the religious practices of Hopi, Navajo, Zuni and Ute tribes, who all hold the land in Bear Ears as sacred and requested the national monument designation, as well as the voices of leaders from dozens of additional tribes, have been ignored.

The Antiquities Act of 1906, used to originally designate Bears Ears and other national monuments, does not grant the power to eliminate protections. It only grants the power to designate national monuments. This important tool has been used by both Republican and Democrat presidents to designate such iconic places as the Statue of Liberty and the Grand Canyon.

As we celebrate the 22nd anniversary of the designation of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, we urge you to support our parks and public lands by opposing efforts to undermine the Antiquities Act or diminish national monuments.

Sincerely,

Tim Hall, Franciscan, Arizona
Sister Marilyn Moore, Catholic, Arkansas
Sherrill Futrell, Methodist, California
Joanne Tenney, Catholic, California
Sister Marion Bill, Daughter of Charity, California
Rev. Arlene Flaherty, JPIC Office SSND, Connecticut
Sister Michele Gothro FCM, Franciscan Community, Florida

Sister Margaret Scally, Roman Catholic, Illinois
Sister Genarsoe Buechler, Adorers of the Blood of Christ, Illinois
Sister Georgene L. Wilson, Wheaton Franciscans, Illinois
Sister Kathryn Mulcahy, Dominican Sister, Illinois
Rev. Mary Heenan, Daughter of Charity, Indiana
Sister Sister Jane Burger , Daughter of Charity, Indiana
Rev. Anna Marie Broxterman, Sisters of St. Joseph, Kansas
Sister Anne Lamoureux, Daughters of Charity, Lamoureux
Sister Juanita Robichaud, Little Franciscans, Maine
Sister Ann Mary Dougherty, Daughters of Charity, Maryland
Nancy Corrigan, Catholic, Maryland
Sister Judith Rojas, Catholic, Maryland
Sister Lani Manseaaau, Catholic, Maryland
Sister Nancy Dunn, Catholic, Maryland
Sister Sharon Richardt, Daughters of Charity, Maryland
Sister Patricia Endres, Roman Catholic, Maryland
Sister Diane Bardol, Catholic, Maryland
Sister Marie Lucey, Catholic, Maryland
Sister Ann Scholz, SSND, Roman Catholic, Maryland
Sister Cas Carr , Maryland
Rev. Sr. Lawrence Marie Callahan , Catholic , Maryland
Sister Ann Lynch, Roman Catholic, Massachusetts
Sister Denise Granger, Sisters of St. Joseph, Massachusetts
Sister Mary Louise Stubbs, Roman Catholic, Michigan
Sister Nancy Jamroz, Catholic, Michigan
Sister RM Krebs, Catholic, Minnesota
Sister Paulissa Jirik, Catholic, Minnesota
Sister Gladys Schmitz, Roman Catholic, Minnesota
Sister Mary Walz, Catholic, Mississippi
Kathy Sandknop, Roman Catholic, Missouri
Sister Honora Remes, Catholic, Missouri
Sister Rita Huebner, Roman Catholic, Missouri
Sister Francis Voivedich, Catholic, Missouri
Sister Elizabeth Ahrens, Sisters of St. Joseph, Missouri
Sister Danielle Bonetti, Sisters of St. Joseph, Missouri
Sister Judith Hebert, Daughter of Charity, Missouri
Sister Helen Brewer, Catholic, Missouri
Sister Mary O'Gorman, Roman Catholic, Missouri
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Sister Diane Louttit, Daughters of Charity, New York
Sister Faith Colligan, Daughter of Charity, New York

Sister Nora Sweeney, Daughters of Charity, New York
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Sister Mary Ann Smith, Catholic, New York
Janice Davin, Catholic, North Carolina
Sister Marie Edrich, Roman Catholic, Ohio
Sister Geraldine Nowak, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis, Ohio
Sister Dorothy Jean Beyer, Benedictine Sisters, Oregon
Mary Kreider, Roman Catholic, Pennsylvania
Sister Mary McMahan, Catholic, Pennsylvania
Sister Kari Pohl, Roman Catholic, Pennsylvania
Sister Rose Gansle, Catholic, Texas
Jason Miller, Catholic, Virginia
Rev. Les Schmidt, Roman Catholic, Virginia
Annette Roy, OFS, Catholic, WA
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Rev. William Petro, Catholic, West Virginia
Sister Judith Miller, Roman Catholic, Wisconsin
Sister Sr. Margaret Ann Arnold, School Sisters, Wisconsin
Sister Suzanne Moynihan, Roman Catholic, Wisconsin
Sister Regina McKillip, Catholic, Wisconsin
Sister Ruth Battaglia, Sister, Wisconsin