

January 30, 2018

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, a widely-representative group of American Jewish leaders, are alarmed by your announcement on December 4th of your plans to reduce Bear Ears National Monument by 85% and cut the land protected by Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in half. We urge you to reconsider, and if not, we pledge to work with Congressional Leaders to restore protections to sacred sites, important artifacts, and critical habitat.

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, as well as the voices of leaders from dozens of additional tribes, have been ignored. Given both the ancient and modern history of the Jewish people, we understand both the power of traditions holding a particular piece of land as sacred and the devastation a people may feel when that sacred trust has been violated.

We also hold dear our moral responsibility *l'dor vador*, to future generations. Beginning with Genesis 2, we have been called to be *Shomrei Adamah*, guardians of the earth. The rich cultural, historical paleontological, and biological heritage that has been protected since 1996 at Grand Staircase-Escalante and is now protected at Bear Ears, should belong to all of America, now and for generations to come. From the more than 100,000 archeological sites in Bear Ears to the pristine wilderness habitats it contains, this parcel of land is precious as it is and should not be given over to those who only seek to extract a short-term profit.

Lastly, we are greatly distressed at the precedent that is being set. With the slashing of protection to these precious lands, what is to stop your Administration or those to come from dismantling the many other sites that National Monuments now protect? Should Fort McHenry be sold to the highest bidder? What would be the cost to our American heritage and history were sites like the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument or Ellis Island, through which so many of our ancestors arrived at this great nation, were lost?

Without the foresight of your predecessors to establish initial protections as National Monuments, Bryce, Zion and even the Grand Canyon would not have survived intact to become

such treasured National Parks. We pray that you will find such foresight yourself and reverse your decision, thus leaving a wonderful heritage for generations of Americans to come.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Steve Gutow
Chair, National Religious Partnership for the Environment

Rabbi Fred Dobb
Chair, Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life

Rabbi Daniel Swartz
Director, Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life

Rabbi Dr. David Seidenberg
Author, Kabbalah and Ecology

Rabbi Ellen Bernstein
Chaplain, Hampshire College

Rabbi Nahum Lev-Ward
Beit Midrash of Santa Fe

Rabbi Diane Elliot
Wholly Present

Rabbi Olivier BenHaim
Congregation Bet Alef

Rabbi Marjorie Berman
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Rabbi Rosalin Mandelberg
Temple Ohel Sholom

Rabbi Jennifer Clayman
Congregation Beth Am

Rabbi Shefa Gold
CDEEP

Rabbi Bonnie Sharfman
Congregation Kehillah

Rabbi Steven Booth-Nadav
Denver Wisdom House

Rabbi Donald Rossoff
Barnert Temple

Rabbi Shosh Dworksy
Associate Chaplain, Carleton College