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New Mexicans Declare an Attack on One National Monument an Attack on All *Call on President Trump to Leave New Mexico Monuments Alone*

Las Cruces and Taos, New Mexico – Following President Trump’s actions yesterday in Utah to shrink Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments, and the public release of Interior Secretary Zinke’s national monument report recommendations today, New Mexicans are reasserting their support for Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Río Grande del Norte National Monuments, and imploring President Trump to leave the Land of Enchantment’s national monuments alone.

New Mexicans worked together for decades to preserve Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Río Grande del Norte for future generations to enjoy. And since the designations, the national monuments have proven to be popular assets for the Land of Enchantment. This support was on full display when President Trump first ordered Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to conduct a “review” of certain national monuments.

Of the over 2.8 million comments submitted to the department during the “review,” 99 percent expressed support for maintaining/expanding national monuments. Of those that specifically mentioned Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Rio Grande del Norte, 93 and 98 percent of them, respectively, requested that those monuments not be altered. Statements from New Mexicans today in response to released report:

U.S. Senator Tom Udall, lead Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees funding for the Interior Department: “Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Rio Grande del Norte help drive New Mexico’s outdoor recreation and tourism economy; they sustain hundreds good jobs, and they are part of what makes our state a wonderful place to visit and live. I will continue reviewing this report carefully, but Senator Heinrich and I identified a number of errors in Secretary Zinke’s draft report in September — which were based on hearsay and bad data — and it appears that he’s still relying on that wrong information. While Secretary Zinke has assured me that he doesn’t plan major changes, the question of New Mexico’s monuments is now in President Trump’s hands. Until we see what the president will sign, this fight is not over, and New Mexicans should keep calling and writing and making their voices heard.

“The president doesn’t have the legal authority to unilaterally revoke or shrink the boundaries. And when it comes to decisions about the future of public lands, Americans deserve an open and above-board approach – not the sham process the Trump administration has used to try to

justify loosening protections. President Trump and Secretary Zinke withheld information from Congress and the public, declined public meetings about their plans, made recommendations in secret, announced part of their decision, and — only then — released a report attempting to legitimize their conclusions. New Mexicans, and the American people were right to be suspicious of the administration's motives. And after President Trump's proclamation drastically cutting and re-shaping Utah's Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments, New Mexicans and the American people are right to be outraged."

U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich, a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee: "The Department of Interior's report is based on hearsay and erroneous data. There's no question that it threatens both of New Mexico's community-driven monuments that permanently protected iconic landscapes, increased recreational access, and have proven to be major drivers for our local economies.

"For months, thousands of New Mexicans have told the Trump Administration to keep their hands off our public lands, but it appears they aren't listening. New Mexico's national monuments are vitally important to our tribes, the economy, and our way of life as Westerners—and Secretary Zinke should know that if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

"I am deeply disappointed Secretary Zinke and President Trump have turned a deaf ear to the overwhelming consensus to protect New Mexico's conservation legacy, but it comes as no surprise given their track record of declining public meetings, making decisions behind closed doors, and never even stepping foot in the Rio Grande del Norte.

"This has been a deeply flawed process and any decision by President Trump to weaken protections for these special places is illegal and will be met with fierce opposition.

"Since Theodore Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act into law more than a century ago, presidents from both political parties have used it to protect the places we all treasure. Places like Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, Rio Grande del Norte, and Bears Ears are exactly the types of places that the Antiquities Act was intended to protect for future generations. Dismantling protections for these landscapes sets a dangerous precedent and will rightly face the same types of legal challenges as others pushed through by a White House hell-bent on appeasing a few extreme interests at the expense of the values of the American people.

"I urge New Mexicans and all Americans to continue making their voices heard to oppose these actions by the Trump Administration. We have a moral responsibility as a nation to our children and all future generations of Americans to protect and conserve our natural and cultural heritage."

Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham: "President Trump's decision to dramatically reduce the protected lands surrounding Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments is a short-sighted corporate giveaway that undermines two of our nation's greatest national treasures. These lands play an irreplaceable role in our nation's culture, environment, and

economy; they are a haven for wildlife and home to archaeological artifacts and recreational opportunities. I will continue to fight to protect America's public lands and national monuments, including the Rio Grande del Norte and the Organ Mountains in New Mexico, for the benefit of our children and grandchildren."

Congressman Ben Ray Luján: "The Río Grande del Norte leaves a lasting impression on all those who visit and all those who benefit from the land. The decision to designate the Río Grande del Norte a National Monument was strongly supported by the local community and members of the New Mexico Congressional delegation. I oppose any attempt to undermine the Río Grande del Norte National Monument – this treasure of northern New Mexico must be protected and preserved for future generations."

New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas: "President Trump simply has no legal authority to alter monument designations under the Antiquities Act. His drastic reduction of the Utah monuments is a direct attack on the proud natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Southwest, and it ignores critical voices of tribal leaders and local stakeholders on these lands. If the President chooses to continue these attacks and comes after either Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks or Rio Grande del Norte, I will fight him every step of the way."

Chairman E. Paul Torres, All Pueblo Council of Governors: "Our Organ Mountains Desert Peaks (OMDP), Rio Grande del Norte (RGDN), Bears Ears and Canyons of the Ancients National Monuments represent landmarks in the deeply rooted history of our shared Puebloan ancestral ties to our cultural way of life, and in the American public lands system. These lands are our homeland. They always have been and will always be. Our culture and stories are everywhere in the canyons, rivers, mountains and in the desert peaks. We are the ancestors of our future generations, and maintain remnants of our adobe and stone dwellings, sacred petroglyph sites and trails, testaments to our elders, to teach our youth our past. Our ancestors are buried there, and we can hear their songs and prayers on every mesa and in every canyon. For us the very landscape is part of all that is sacred. Any reduction of OMDP, RGDN, Bears Ears or Canyons of the Ancients through executive action would be illegal and undermine our tribal sovereignty. This review and potential for any change, is a slap in the face to the members of our Tribes and an affront to Indian people all across the country."

Mayor of Questa and Taos County Commissioner, Mark Gallegos: "Nearly every local elected official, including myself, supported the designations of our national monuments. That's because Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Río Grande del Norte are good for business, enhance our quality of life, and provide a place for our residents to hike, camp, bike, hunt, fish, and more. President Trump should think twice before illegally changing our national monuments that are supported by the majority of New Mexican."

Billy G. Garrett, Commissioner, District 1, Doña Ana County: "Dona Ana County and the rest of New Mexico has been steadfast in its support for OMDP and RGDN. President Trump's actions in Utah yesterday show he is willing to ignore the will of Americans when it comes to public lands, and that we must remain vigilant in our defense of our Monuments."

Rev. Virginia Bairby, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church Taos: “As a Christian and as a citizen of Taos, I am deeply troubled by Secretary Zinke’s recommended changes to the Río Grande del Norte National Monument. These changes are bad news for the earth, for Native People, and for the well-being of our entire community.

When Secretary Zinke visited New Mexico to conduct his ‘review’ of the Monuments, he did not once step foot in the Río Grande del Norte National Monument. He declined invitations from local business owners, public officials, and tribal groups to meet and talk about the monument. If he had, they would have told him what I’ve heard them say time and time again in public forums: This land is sacred, and we need to protect it. The many faith and cultural traditions represented in Taos share a common commitment to caring for God’s creation and honoring the land. We come to spaces like the Río Grande del Norte National Monument to be closer to our God and Creator. Members of the Pueblo gather sacred herbs, Christians gather to worship Jesus Christ at sunrise on Easter morning, and people who are not part of organized religious communities find a place to stand in the presence of that which is holy and awe-inspiring. This is what our monument means for us: an opportunity to connect to the Source of All Life.

The Río Grande del Norte National Monument also supports our livelihood. The Taos economy is fueled largely by tourism, and the town has seen economic growth since the monument was established in 2013. Lifting vital protections on the monument will serve the interest of out-of-state energy companies, not average citizens. If the monument is degraded and tourism declines, that will hit our town hard – not just the ‘outdoor industries’ (fishing, rafting, mountain biking, etc.), but also restaurants, shops, and all businesses. Less tourism means less business, and less business means fewer jobs. Our community is already faced with high levels of poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. As a Christian pastor to this community, I cannot abide Secretary Zinke’s decision, which will only increase those struggles.”

Alamogordo public lands sportsman Rod Sims:“Sportsmen have been on the front lines of conserving wildlife habitat like Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Río Grande del Norte. Hunting and fishing is a time-tested tradition in the United States, and we need vast backcountry to support healthy wildlife populations. Shrinking, breaking apart, or changing the management of national monuments can fragment habitat and harm wildlife migrations and populations.”

U.S. Marine Combat Veteran, Jeff Swanson: “Our national monuments, including Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, are an important part our country’s identity, and we are known the world over for our protected lands and waters. Veterans return from war find strength and resilience from our lands and waters, and are able to heal and grow. Attacking any of our national monuments is an attack on our country’s values and natural heritage.”

Carrie Hamblen, CEO/President of the Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce: "Our locally owned businesses continue to benefit from the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. The Las Cruces community has embraced OMDP as it stands prior to the recommended changes by creating new products, opening new businesses, and hosting events

that celebrate the diverse uses on it. Changing the language of the proclamation, as suggested by Secretary Zinke's report, would negatively impact the nationwide appeal of OMDP to visitors to our area and thus affect our local economy."

Steve Harris, Far Flung Adventures: "I have a small outfitting business on the Rio Grande in northern New Mexico. The Secretary of Interior's report is extremely frustrating because we'd counted on the new National Monument to lift up our recreational tourism business. This is also a gratuitous slap in the face for the local folks who worked so hard to assure traditional users that they'd continue to be able to practice their activities."

Michael Casaus, New Mexico State Director, The Wilderness Society: "More than 100,000 New Mexicans sent comments to Interior Secretary Zinke about the future of our national monuments and 99% of them said we want to keep our lands protected and unchanged. Yet some of the management changes recommended in the Secretary's report, such as opening up OMDP and RGDN to mining and logging, would reduce these places to 'monuments in name only.' While President Trump and his radical allies like Congressman Pearce are paying back special interests by selling out our natural and cultural wonders, New Mexicans will continue to speak loud and clear—keep your hands off our public lands!"

Jay Foley, Mountain Skills Climbing School: "The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is an integral part of our business. Our mountain skills rock climbing guides have been operating in Taos for 20 years and the designation of the national monument has made a significant improvement in our business. The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument hosts some of the best basalt cliffs in the Southwest and his home to world class rock climbing. The monument draws people to this remote location helping with our struggling local economy."

Nick Streit, Taos Fly Shop: "Zinke's 'review' of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, was poorly executed, with no input from the local community, or the local managing agency. If the Secretary had done his job, he would come to our community and learned from people like me who make a living in the National Monument that we want ZERO changes to the monument physically, or the way it is used."

Stuart Wilde, Wild Earth Llama Adventures: "Any changes to the Rio Grande del Norte could lessen protections for sensitive cultural sites, have an impact on critical wildlife corridors, and a negative effect local tourism businesses like mine. The monument review process has ignored the years overwhelming community support and participation, both before and after National Monument designation."

Carl Colonius, Enchanted Circle Trails Association: "The report recently released by the Department of the Interior recommending 'altering the management plan' for the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is laughable. Secretary Zinke used cookie cutter language across the board in his report, justifying a pre-determined agenda to reduce and compromise public lands.

Specific to the RGDNNM, the Secretary's report references grazing permittees' reduced access to their pastures as a rationale for adapting or changing the management plan. No travel restrictions have been put into place that reduce access for grazing permittees. I am the Director of the Enchanted Circle Trails Association, an organization that is contracted for services by the Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency responsible for management of the RGDNNM. ECTA and the BLM are partnering in the development of trail systems and recreational infrastructure for these public lands. So, let me say again: no access to this national monument has been closed, or hampered, at all, so the allegation that grazing permittees have been inconvenienced and are not renewing their permits is false."

Mark Allison, Executive Director, New Mexico Wild: "The President's actions yesterday were a travesty of historic proportions. Regardless of what he decides with the other national monuments in the upcoming days, his 'burn the house down' behavior will be viewed by future Americans as shameful. New Mexicans stated loudly and clearly to leave our national monuments alone and that is what we now call on him to do."

Fernando Clemente, sportsman and president of the Friends of the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks: "Sportsmen and women don't want or need modifications to the existing monument proclamation of the Organ Mountain Desert Peaks National Monument. We worked within our own community, with local stakeholders, and with the Department of Interior to get the proclamation right the first time. The Organ Mountain Desert Peaks National Monument, as currently managed, already protects our ability to hunt here for generations to come."

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