

For immediate release

December 5, 2017

Contacts:

Mark Allison, Executive Director, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, mark@nmwild.org, 505-239-0906

**National Monument Review Report Released; Fate of New Mexico National Monuments
Now in Hands of President Trump
Actions on Utah's Monuments Largest Attack on Protected Public Lands in History**

Albuquerque, NM—New Mexico Wild condemns President Trump's actions yesterday to eviscerate the Grand Staircase-Escalante by nearly 50% and Bears Ears National Monument by almost 85%, totaling a reduction of nearly 2 million acres. This represents the largest roll-back of public lands protections ever – so far. We view an attack on one national monument as an attack on all. We stand in solidarity with New Mexico's All Pueblo Council of Governors, the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and the overwhelming majority of Americans who opposed this. New Mexico Wild will file a friend of the court amicus brief on their behalf.

Today, Interior Secretary Zinke released his recommendations to the President on the national monument review. While Secretary Zinke did not recommend shrinking the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks (OMDP) or Rio Grande del Norte (RGDN) National Monuments, he did recommend amending the Monuments' proclamations. While we are cautiously satisfied to see no changes to the boundaries recommended, our position all along has been that this review should never have been ordered by President Trump. Similarly, we believe any changes to the presidential proclamations creating these monuments are unwarranted, unwelcome, and illegal.

The justifications cited for recommending changes to the proclamations – to preserve public access, grazing, tribal cultural use, hunting and fishing rights, as examples, are not only already allowed, but were specifically highlighted in the Presidential Proclamations that created these national monuments. Indeed, preserving public access and traditional uses for current and future generations was a primary reason for protecting these public lands in the first place.

Concerns about border security, an issue referenced in the report justifying recommended amendments to the OMDP proclamation, were also thoroughly considered and addressed in the original Proclamation, which actually enhanced border security by including a five-mile buffer to the international border. More detailed protocols about how to address these types of issues are more appropriately addressed through the monument management planning process – a public process with extensive opportunities for stakeholder engagement.

Moreover, the areas of concern noted in Secretary Zinke's report were based on factual inaccuracies. For example, Zinke wrote that "I heard from local stakeholders that a lack of access to roads due to monument restrictions has left many grazing permittees choosing not to renew permits." New Mexico Wild investigated this claim and found no evidence that any grazing permits in either of New Mexico's national monuments have been altered due to Monument designation. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has confirmed that no permit

changes have occurred on BLM land since designation. The State Land Office has confirmed that the only change to a state grazing permit in OMDP since designation has been an increase on one permit, and cannot provide any information on changes to grazing permits inside RGDN. Senator Heinrich questioned BLM on this issue during a Senate hearing several months ago. The agency stated it had not been consulted during Secretary Zinke's monument review or requested to provide information. While we do not believe that any changes to Presidential Proclamations are legal, actions should certainly not be based on sloppy and error-ridden reports or hearsay.

Most importantly, the report released today contains only recommendations. The fate of our national monuments is now in the hands of President Trump. Until he takes action, it is impossible to know whether they will be harmed, or to what extent. New Mexico Wild will remain vigilant.

“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,” said Mark Allison, executive director of New Mexico Wild, “and that is what we now call on him to do.”

New Mexico Wild announced this summer that any Presidential action that reduced or removed protections for the numerous historic, cultural, and ecological objects and resources within the monuments will be met with immediate legal action.

###

ABOUT THE NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE: New Mexico Wild is a non-profit 501 (C)(3), grassroots, statewide, conservation organization dedicated to the protection, restoration and continued respect of New Mexico’s wildlands and Wilderness areas. Founded 20 years ago, the organization is aligned with our nation’s landmark Wilderness Act of 1964 and is dedicated to the rights and the value of citizen involvement in protecting increasingly rare wild places within public lands. Just as freedom is every American’s birthright so too is Wilderness. We know they are inseparable. We hold this truth dearly as we preserve Wilderness from generation to generation for us, for all species and for its own sake.