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Delegate Davis Filfred accepts award for Bears Ears advocacy

Photo: Council Delegate Davis Filfred accepted an award on behalf of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition at the annual "Rebel With A Cause" Fundraising Gala in Denver, Colo. on May 31, 2018. ***(Photo courtesy of Conservation Colorado.)***

DENVER, Colo. – During the annual Conservation Colorado's "Rebel With A Cause" Fundraising Gala last week, the organization bestowed two awards to honorees Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tółikan, Red Mesa) on behalf of the Bears Inter-Tribal Coalition, and Willie Greyeyes on behalf of Utah Diné Bikeyah, for their work and advocacy for the Bears Ears National Monument.

Conservation Colorado is the state of Colorado's largest conservation group that advocates for land conservation, provides technical support and expertise to policy makers, and has more than 38,000 individual members. The conservation organization operates out of Craig, Denver, Durango, and Grand Junction.

U.S. Senator Michael Bennet (D – CO) introduced the honorees and presented the conservation award to Delegate Filfred, a member of the Bears Inter-Tribal Coalition, and Greyeyes, the chair for Utah Diné Bikeyah.

"I have the privilege of introducing our two honorees this evening—Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and Utah Diné Bikeyah. We do not only recognize their contributions to conservation, [but] celebrate them as rebels for a cause! That designation feels especially fitting this year because now more than ever is a time to rebel," said Sen. Bennet.

Sen. Bennet added that over several years, both advocacy groups carried out the hard work of organizing communities, bridging differences, building coalitions, and finding partners in conservation and outdoor recreation that led to President Obama designating Bears Ears as a National Monument in Dec. 2016.

Delegate Filfred said he was honored to accept the award on behalf of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and stressed that land conservation does not only affect Bears Ears, but all other public lands throughout the United States.

"I do stand for quality air, quality water, and I do love public lands. There are over 100 historical land sites, structures, and historical significant objects that were identified within the [Bears Ears] boundaries," said Delegate Filfred.

He added that there were traditional homes, sweat lodges, and ruins within the original designated Monument Area, which spanned nearly 1.3 million acres, however the cultural sites are no longer protected since President Trump reduced the monument in Dec. 2017.

Delegate Filfred thanked the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and Utah Diné Bikeyah for their endeavors for the establishment of the national monument, and said conservation groups will need to continue to fight for the protection and preservation of the land areas.

"I accept this award on behalf of the five tribes that make up the coalition. There are a lot of people on the coalition who put in their maximum effort, as well as Utah Diné Bikeyah. I cannot thank them enough," stated Delegate Filfred. "I would also like to thank Conservation Colorado."

In 2015, five tribes comprised the Bears Ear Inter-Tribal Coalition that represent a historic consortium of sovereign nations united in the effort to conserve the Bears Ears cultural landscape. Members of the coalition include the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ute Indian Tribe.

Utah Diné Bikeyah provides technical support for the five tribes, specifically traditional ecological knowledge research and mapping, public lands policy analysis, Native American grassroots community organizing, and public education. The organization was established in 2010.

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