



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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Navajo Nation renews call for the protection of 1.9 million acres of land under the Bears Ears National Monument

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez with the support of Utah chapters, San Juan County, Utah Commissions, and other advocates is calling for the full restoration and expansion of the Bears Ears National Monument once the Biden-Harris Administration takes office on Jan. 20, 2021.

The Navajo Nation was one of five tribes that also included the Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute, Hopi Tribe, and Zuni Tribe that led a coalition to advocate for the protection of the 1.9 million areas known as Bears Ears, located in southeastern Utah, from the threats of looting, vandalism, and energy development. The landscape is the ancestral home of many southwestern tribes and the birthplace of Navajo Headman Manuelito. Tribal nations depend on the land within the region to sustain their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices, such as hunting, gathering, and ceremonies.

On Dec. 28 2016, former President Obama designated 1.35 million acres of land under the Bears Ears National Monument, in accordance with the Antiquities Act of 1906. President Trump later reduced the size of the designation by 85-percent, or 202,000 acres, which continue to be contested in court by several tribes including the Navajo Nation.

“When the Obama Administration designated the Bears Ears National Monument, it involved years of careful and thoughtful discussions and consultations with various tribes and other stakeholders. However, the actions of the Trump Administration to reduce the size of the national monument were politically-driven and completely sidestepped the years of work and support of tribes and other supporters. This landscape is home to many historical and cultural sites, plants, water, traditional medicines, and teachings for our people. I wholeheartedly support the restoration of the Bears Ears National Monument and the expansion of it to 1.9 million acres. We look forward to working with the incoming Biden-Harris Administration to accomplish that,” said President Nez.

Navajo Nation Attorney General Doreen N. McPaul also voiced her support for the Bears Ears National Monument and added that she looks forward to working with the incoming Biden-Harris Administration once they take office.

“After years of litigation, the Department of Justice looks forward to the Navajo Nation having the opportunity to work with the other tribal parties and the Biden-Harris Administration in a collaboration of sovereigns to permanently restore protections to the lands and sites in Bears Ears, which have great significance to our culture, history, and way of life,” stated Attorney General McPaul.

In 2015, the Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved a resolution supporting the designation. On Nov. 10, 2020, the Navajo Utah Commission also passed a resolution supporting the full protection of 1.9 million acres of land under the Bears Ears National Monument.

“My support for the restoration and expansion of the Bears Ears National Monument is stronger than ever and it is also supported through resolutions passed by several of the communities that I present including Oljato and Navajo Mountain. We need to work with the Biden-Harris Administration to move forward on this matter to provide much-needed protections for the Bears Ears landscape that many of our medicine people and elders hold close to their heart and rely on for our traditional teachings and ceremonies,” Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr., who represents several Utah and Navajo communities as a member of the 24th Navajo Nation Council.

President Nez said he will continue to support the local communities and officials and looks forward to discussing the Bears Ears National Monument with the Biden-Harris transition team.

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