



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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President Biden signs historic proclamation to restore and expand the Bears Ears National Monument



PHOTO: – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, along with tribal, state, and federal leaders, as U.S. President Joe Biden signed a proclamation that restores the Bears Ears National Monument at the White House in Washington D.C., on October 8, 2021.

WASHINGTON – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was at the White House in Washington D.C. on Friday, along with tribal, state, and federal leaders, as U.S. President Joe Biden signed a proclamation that restores the Bears Ears National Monument to the boundaries established by President Obama in 2016, totaling 1.36 million acres. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell were also present for the signing ceremony.

“The Navajo Nation, along with a coalition of tribes, wholeheartedly supports today’s action by the Biden-Harris Administration. This historic signing of the proclamation and restoration of the Bears Ears National Monument is a victory for our people, our ancestors, and future generations. Bears Ears is home to many of our historical and cultural sites, plants, water, traditional medicines, and teachings for our people. On behalf of the Navajo Nation, we thank President Biden, Vice President Harris, Secretary Haaland, all of the tribal nations that stood together and never gave up. We are here today through the strength of our ancestors and our prayers,” said President Nez.

In April, President Nez was among several tribal leaders who met with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland to call for the restoration and expansion of the national monument. President Biden tasked Secretary Haaland with providing a report and recommendations for several national monuments based on the findings and meetings with stakeholders.

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 the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to advocate for the protection of Bears Ears, located in southeastern Utah, from the threats of looting, vandalism, and energy development. Zuni Tribal Gov. Val R. Panteah, Sr., Ute Mountain Ute Chairman Manuel Heart, Hopi Chairman Timothy Nuvangyaoma and Vice Chairman Clark Tenakhongva were among the tribal leaders in attendance.

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.

“The restoration of Bears Ears honors the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to tribes and reaffirms our seat at the table as the first people of this land. This was a combined effort among



PHOTO: U.S. President Joe Biden and Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez at the White House in Washington, D.C., on October 8, 2021.

past and present leaders and advocates including members of the Navajo Nation Council,” added President Nez.

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.

Immediately after the signing of the Bears Ears proclamation, President Biden handed the signature pen to President Nez. In an expression of appreciation and honor, President Nez later took off his turquoise necklace and presented it to President Biden to signify the blessing and protection of Bears Ears National Monument and other sacred sites.

President Biden also signed proclamations for the Grand Staircase-Escalante, and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monuments. On Friday, President Biden also signed a proclamation recognizing Oct. 11, 2021 as Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

The Navajo Nation thanks the Biden-Harris Administration, Secretary Haaland, Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, and all who supported the restoration and expansion of the Bears Ears National Monument. The ceremony is available online at: <https://youtu.be/vqdohiEuvWY>.

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