

August 31, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the millions of members and supporters we collectively represent, we urge you to immediately take action to restore national monument protections to Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante, and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monuments in keeping with your campaign promise. Over 200 days ago, you signed Executive Order 13990 which directed a review of the Trump Administration's unprecedented and illegal rollbacks of national monument protections. By all accounts, Secretary Haaland completed the review over two months ago and transmitted recommendations to the White House that include fully restoring protections.

Every day that passes, the threat of irreversible damage to these special places increases. For Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in particular, the threats from oil and gas leasing and toxic uranium mining have been heightened in recent days with troubling steps that your own Administration has taken to both incentivize uranium mining and resume oil and gas leasing on public lands.

Uranium Mining

A number of [new mining claims have been staked](#) on land then-President Trump unlawfully cut from Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments, including uranium claims that, if developed, could threaten the health and environment of frontline Indigenous and local communities. Several of these claims have been staked during your Administration while we've awaited action on restoring protections.

Recent steps by your Administration to examine the [creation of a strategic uranium reserve](#) threaten to amplify these risks to Bears Ears and other sacred sites and public lands. This reserve would effectively subsidize the U.S. uranium industry at taxpayer expense, putting even greater pressure to develop new mining claims, potentially re-start operations at the Daneros uranium mine on the western border of the original monument, and increase production at the White Mesa Mill. Encouraging the use of only newly-mined uranium for the strategic uranium reserve raises the prospect of ore from the Daneros Mine and other new claims being transported through Bears Ears National Monument to the White Mesa Mill. The mill sits on private land just one mile east of the original boundaries of Bears Ears and is just 2.5 miles from the nearest home in the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal community of White Mesa. Additional mining and processing pose an increased radioactive threat to water, air, land and to nearby communities, both Native and non-Native alike.

Not only is the creation of a strategic uranium reserve a bad idea that is out of step with your Administration's commitment to environmental justice, it could also directly threaten the ability for you and your Administration to follow through on your commitment to Tribes and the public to restore protections to Bears Ears and other national monuments.

Oil & Gas Development

Since January, oil and gas companies have nominated tens of thousands of acres of parcels for new oil and gas leasing in the Bears Ears region, [including over 40,000 acres](#) within the original boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument.

The Department of the Interior's [August 16th announcement](#) that it will resume oil and gas leasing on public lands while awaiting appeal of ongoing litigation, makes the threat of oil and gas leasing and development in Bears Ears even more real. Even the slimmest possibility of fossil fuel leasing within the boundaries of Bears Ears or Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments should be unthinkable, as leasing these nominated parcels or any other parcels within these monuments would create imminent threats to the cultural, historic, and natural treasures in the area.

Act Now

The decisions to consider subsidizing toxic uranium mining and production and resume oil and gas leasing on public lands, particularly absent needed reforms, are both problematic on their own and underscore the need to immediately follow through on your promise to restore protections to these national monuments. Your decision to restore and expand the monuments will result in a national and international groundswell of support for you and your administration. National monuments are popular, and [recent polling](#) indicates that 77 percent of Westerners and 74 percent of Utahns support the restoration of protections for Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante. We urge you Mr. President, and your Administration, to both reconsider and rectify these policy decisions writ large and to act immediately to restore protection to Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monuments.

Sincerely,

The Wilderness Society
Grand Canyon Trust
League of Conservation Voters
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Earthjustice
Azul
Bold Alliance
California League of Conservation Voters
Californians for Western Wilderness
Center for Biological Diversity
Coalition to Protect America's National Parks
Colorado Wildlands Project
Conservation Lands Foundation
Conservation Law Foundation
Conservation Northwest
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship
Continental Divide Trail Coalition
Corazon Latino
Creation Justice Ministries
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthworks
Endangered Species Coalition

Environment America
Friends of Plumas Wilderness
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Kalmiopsis
Grand Staircase Escalante Partners
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Greenpeace
Healthy Ocean Coalition
Hispanic Access Foundation
Inland Ocean Coalition
Kids for Saving Earth
Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Marine Conservation Institute
Mountain Mamas
National Ocean Protection Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness
Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project
Ocean Conservancy
Oceana
Oregon Wild
Patagonia
Poder Latinx
Presbyterian Church Earth Care
Sachamama
Sierra Club
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
The Chaparral Lands Conservancy
The Mountain Pact
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Montana
Wildlands Network