

## BEARS EARS TALKING POINTS 2/7/2017

--**In the very first paragraph of his Bears Ears proclamation**, President Obama acknowledges the extraordinary archaeological and cultural record here that's important to us all, and he goes on to say "*most notably* the land is *profoundly sacred*" to countless tribes. He acknowledges the five tribes of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition by name in this opening paragraph of the proclamation.

--**And so it's no exaggeration to say that the purpose of this national monument is to honor the tribes**, their traditional knowledge, and their relationship to this land. This is a historic gesture of reconciliation.

--**The opponents accuse "well funded special interest groups outside Utah" of being the force behind the Inter-Tribal Coalition**. This insults the tribes, who have led this movement with grace, dignity, and patience.

--**This is not a "midnight monument."** Nothing like Grand Staircase.

The monument has its origins in a cultural mapping project that began in 2010, seven years ago. At that time, all seven Utah chapter houses voted to support Mark Maryboy in his work with scholars and planning experts to interview Navajo elders and document and map cultural ties to sacred lands in southeast Utah. In hundreds of interviews over 2 ½ years, these elders created the foundation for the proclamation.

--**"Official Utah" foregrounds a single Navajo opponent of the monument, Rebecca Benally**. She is a San Juan County commissioner, but she is not an elected representative of the Navajo people nor does she speak for them. When Benally complains about potential negative impacts of the monument, she is consistently misinformed.

More than half of the population of San Juan County is Navajo. All but one of the Navajo chapter houses in Utah voted to support the monument. According to Utah Dine Bikeyah, 90 percent of Utah Navajos support the monument. The Navajo Nation tribal council voted unanimously to support the monument. And the dozens of Native nations in the National Congress of American Indians support the monument.

Monument opponents ignore these facts. By doing so, they insult Native people. By failing to address tribal co-management of Bears Ears, they demonstrate a lack of understanding of Native sovereignty.

**--Surrounding tribes with ties to sacred lands within the monument signed on in support of Utah Dine Bikeyah.** To acknowledge these tribal interests beyond the Navajo, five tribes created the Inter-Tribal Council. In hundreds of meetings, these five tribes found common ground and purpose—a remarkable historic event. The Inter-Tribal Coalition made *healing* the central theme of their proposal—healing between people and the land, healing between tribes, healing between cultures.

**--Here's the way I summarized this info in the question I wanted to ask Chaffetz at his 2/9 town hall:**

*In your January op-ed that you wrote with the rest of our congressional delegation to call for rescinding the Bears Ears National Monument, you quote only County Commissioner Rebecca Benally, who has no elected position within the Navajo Nation. On this issue, she speaks only for herself.*

*Why won't you acknowledge and honor the five tribes of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, who based their proposal on seven years of grassroots work and went to the president only after the PLI failed to address their concerns? Why do you give more credence to one individual and her family when the monument has rousing support from 90 percent of Utah Navajo people (according to Utah Dine Bikeyah, who have*

*been on the ground in San Juan County since 2010), the Navajo Nation council in a unanimous vote, 30 tribal governments with ties to the Bears Ears, and the National Congress of American Indians—the oldest and largest national organization of tribal governments?*

**--The Coalition tried to work in good faith with Congressmen Bishop and Chaffetz on the PLI**, but their non-Indian counterparts repeatedly ignored their concerns. From 2013 to 2015, the congressional offices provided no substantive response to Tribal proposals. The Coalition had no choice but to withdraw from the PLI and ask the Obama administration for executive action to protect Bears Ears.

**--The Obama Administration gave the PLI every chance to succeed.** They waited until the last possible moment for legislation to protect Bears Ears. When the PLI died in December 2016 (never making it to the floor of the House, never introduced in the Senate), the administration decided that only an Antiquities Act proclamation would protect this extraordinary land.

The administration continued to show great deference to the efforts of Bishop and Chaffetz by protecting 1.35 million acres—boundaries much closer to those of the PLI’s conservation area than the full 1.9-million-acre monument proposal of the Coalition.

**--Comparing Bears Ears to Natural Bridges is misleading.** Natural Bridges is managed by the National Park Service under the guidance of the NPS Organic Act. Bears Ears is not part of the NPS system; the monument has a unique management structure, with BLM and Forest Service officials working in collaboration with representatives of each of the five tribes. The proclamation specifically protects traditional uses like wood-cutting and medicinal herb-gathering.

**--This is not a “land grab.”** The land within the boundaries is public land. There is virtually no private land within the boundaries, and those private property rights will all continue intact. The monument proclamation is simply a redesignation of

these lands, adding protection and visionary management. SITLA lands scattered across the monument can be traded out for BLM land elsewhere, just as Governor Mike Leavitt and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt did at Grand Staircase-Escalante.

**--There's nothing unusual about using the Antiquities Act to declare national monuments.** Every president but three has done so since the passage of the Act in 1906. Four of the Mighty Five national parks were originally established by presidential proclamation under the Act. (only Canyonlands began with an act of Congress)

**--There's a long history of opposition to national monuments in the West, and a long history of regret.** When Wyoming governors Cliff Hansen and Alan Simpson opposed Jackson Hole National Monument in the 1950s—and even managed to pressure Congress to ban further Antiquities Act national monuments in the state—they later admitted they regretted their position. (Jackson Hole NM was absorbed into Grand Teton NP—an obvious economic bonanza for the state.)

After LBJ expanded Capitol Reef by sixfold in 1969, Boulder, Utah, briefly renamed itself “Johnson’s Folly” in protest. With the businesses in town today completely reliant on GS-E and Capitol Reef-bound tourists (as you well know!), they wouldn’t see that designation as folly now!

**-- We've acknowledged the importance of protecting these lands for 80 years.** Bears Ears is part of the Escalante National Monument proposed by FDR Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes in the 1930s. That monument didn't make it to a proclamation, but the original Capitol Reef National Monument did so, along with portions of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Capitol Reef National Park, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Canyonlands National Park, and, now, Bears Ears.

**--There is strong regional support for national monuments.** In the 2017

Colorado College State of the Rockies poll, registered voters in each of seven Mountain West states, including all the Four Corners states said they want to keep existing national monument designations, by a margin of 80 percent to 13 percent. Voters in Utah were asked specifically whether the recent designation of Bears Ears National Monument was a good thing. Forty-seven percent said yes, 32 percent no.

**--some of my favorite recent quotes from the Coalition:**

--“There’s so much we want to protect—the past and the future.” *Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk, Ute Mountain Ute*

--“This has never been about exclusion. It’s about education and acceptance.”  
*Carleton Bowekaty, Zuni*

--“It makes me feel good to see this monument protected—because now *everyone* knows it’s sacred.” *Rupert Steele, Goshute*