

The national monuments slashed by Trump will officially be open to mining on Friday

Trump's unprecedented attack on public lands is already benefiting extractive industry.

[Jenny Rowland](#) Feb 1, 2018, 12:46 pm



President Trump with Bruce Adams, Chairman of the San Juan County Commission, after signing the proclamation shrinking Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. CREDIT: SAUL LOEB/AFP/Getty Images

At 9 a.m. EST Friday, the extractive industry will gain drilling and mining access to previously protected American land, according to an order issued by President Donald Trump late last year.

Trump [took an unprecedented step](#) for a U.S. president in December — signing a proclamation

that dramatically reduced the size of two national monuments. Bears Ears National Monument was cut by more than 85 percent and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was reduced by half. This resulted in the largest elimination of protected areas in U.S. history. The move put tens of thousands of Native American sacred sites at risk, along with key wildlife habitat, and areas used for outdoor recreation.

While the longer-term fate of Trump's [likely illegal](#) action will play out [in the courts](#), also buried in his December proclamation was a provision that on February 2, 2018, the areas excluded from the monuments would become open to private mineral companies to begin staking mining and drilling claims.

“We’re working on getting information and new monument maps ready for people interested in claims,” Utah Bureau of Land Management (BLM) spokesman Michael Richardson [confirmed to Reuters](#).



[Uranium firm lobbied Trump administration to scale back Bears Ears National Monument](#)

[Trump recently announced his decision to shrink the national monument by more than 1 million acres.](#)

Staking a mining claim on public lands gives an individual or company the exclusive right to extract minerals from a specific area of that land. Under the nearly 150-year-old 1872 Mining Law, [staking a claim](#) still involves literally putting

stakes into the ground at the four corners of the boundary of your claim. This is then followed up within 90 days by recording the claim with the local BLM office and paying a modest annual [fee](#).

Though Secretary of the Interior [Ryan Zinke](#) and some supporters of Trump's cuts, like Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT), have [denied](#) that the goal of the reductions was for mineral development, both monuments sit above known coal and mineral deposits.

Bears Ears in particular, has [proven deposits](#) of uranium and other minerals within its original boundaries. One company, [Energy Fuels Resources](#), owns and operates a uranium mine just outside the boundaries of the original monument. In May, the company submitted [a letter](#) to Interior requesting reductions to the monument and noted "there are also many other known uranium and vanadium deposits located within the [original boundaries] that could provide valuable energy and mineral resources in the future."

House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), along with 11 other Democrats on the committee, sent a letter to Zinke on Wednesday [asking him](#) to prevent mining and development claims inside the original borders of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. [The letter](#) requested that the secretary issue an "emergency withdrawal" under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) due to the clear threat that "eager" mining companies pose.

The potential destruction to Bears Ears is also gaining attention from conservation observers outside of the U.S.; earlier this week an arm of the United Nations asked the president to reverse his action, writing that the reduction to Bears Ears could cause irreparable damage to historical artifacts.

"The decision to reduce the area included in the national monument by 85 percent is a huge setback for the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples," said Victoria Tauli-Corpuz,

Jenny Rowland is a senior policy analyst on the Public Lands team at the Center for American Progress. ThinkProgress is an editorially independent news site housed within CAP.

a special rapporteur for the United Nation's Human Rights Council. "It exposes thousands of acres of sacred lands and archaeological sites to the threats of desecration, contamination and permanent destruction. I urge President Trump to reverse this decision and ensure the protection of sacred lands and archaeological sites for the benefit of future generations."



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Victoria Tauli-Corpuz
UN Human Rights Expert



UN Human Rights
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#USA: The decision to reduce the area included in **#BearsEarsNationalMonument** in Utah by 85 percent is a huge setback for the protection of the rights of **#indigenouspeoples**.
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While the national monuments in Utah face imminent harm, they are not the only public lands currently at risk. The Trump administration's [national monument report](#) includes plans to alter at least eight additional monuments that range from allowing logging in Maine's Katahdin Woods and Waters, to allowing commercial fishing in the Pacific Remote Islands.