

News Release



Contact: Josh Ewing, Executive Director
(801) 410-0773, josh@cedarmesafriends.org

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, December 28, 2016

BLUFF LOCALS AND ARCHAEOLOGY COMMUNITY WELCOME BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT DESIGNATION

*Friends of Cedar Mesa urges all who care for Bears Ears landscape
to find common ground in stewardship*

Bluff, UT – Many local residents in San Juan County and across the Four Corners, as well as the overwhelming majority of archaeologists, welcome today’s news that President Obama designated a Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah. The President’s action protects tens of thousands of archaeological sites – exactly the “objects” the Antiquities Act was created to protect – that make the public lands near Bluff so unique. In fact, the Bears Ears Monument contains **more cultural sites than any other National Monument or National Park** in the United States.

Friends of Cedar Mesa (FCM) always favored a legislative solution that would have provided a less contentious route to recognizing the almost *unanimous* local support for protecting the Bears Ears area. However, after the Public Lands Initiative legislation was introduced in Congress with many “poison pills” that would have reduced existing protections for Cedar Mesa and the archaeology of San Juan County, FCM recognized that the only practical way to protect this landscape in the foreseeable future was a National Monument designation.

“Four of Utah’s ‘Mighty 5’ National Parks were first protected as National Monuments via presidential action – despite some vocal local opposition at the time they were designated,” said **Josh Ewing, FCM’s Executive Director**. “There’s no place more deserving or needing of protection than the Bears Ears. This landscape surely would have been protected many years ago if it were located anywhere but Utah. We hope time and cooler minds will prevail as we find common ground in working together to steward this place and preserve it as close as possible to what it is like today.”

The Bluff community had vocally supported the Monument in the months leading up to the designation, providing “neutral ground” for the large and peaceful public meeting hosted by Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell in July. [Elected leaders](#) and [business owners](#) of Bluff wrote the Secretary to document their support for the monument in October.

Likewise, the archaeological community has long been a vocal advocate for the Bears Ears landscape, dating back 115 years to when archaeologist T. Mitchel Prudden called for protection of southeastern Utah’s antiquities. More recently, groups representing almost every archaeologist in America [voiced their support for presidential action](#) to declare a National Monument proposed by the [Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition](#).

The next page contains reactions from Bluff business leaders and archaeologists

"Our new Bears Ears National Monument is unquestionably deserving of protection, and I am grateful President Obama looked beyond congressional gridlock to preserve this internationally significant landscape. With more archaeological sites than Utah's Mighty 5 Parks combined, Bears Ears is exactly the kind of place the Antiquities Act was designed to protect. Now the question is this: Will we all work together to steward this remarkable place or will political infighting result in continued neglect and lack of management while visitation levels increase and fragile cultural resources remain vulnerable."

- **Vaughn Hadenfeldt, owner of [Far Out Expeditions](#) & FCM Board Chair**

"As an individual born and raised in southern San Juan County and someone who has chosen to raise my family and establish businesses here, I long ago recognized the need to adequately and appropriately safeguard the cultural resources and natural beauty of my home. Having watched this debate rage over the last four decades, I am convinced a Bears Ears National Monument designation is the best vehicle for protecting the land and enhancing our local economy. Every year people from around the globe visit San Juan County to enjoy its scenic landscape and diverse cultures, I believe this monument will preserve and strengthen those resources for us all."

- **Steve Simpson, Owner of [Twin Rocks Cafe and Trading Post](#) in Bluff, UT**

"The Business Owners of Bluff applauds the protection of public lands in southeastern Utah as the new Bears Ears National Monument. Bluff has long served as the gateway for responsible visitation to this world-class landscape, and we're excited and proud to become the official 'Gateway to Bears Ears.'"

- **Jen Davilla, Chairwoman for Business Owners of Bluff & owner of [La Posada Pintada](#)**

"Archaeologists recognized the remarkable sites of the Bears Ears area in the 1890s, and in the early 1900s protested the rampant looting there, helping to pave the way for the 1906 Antiquities Act. It is fitting that the President has now used this act to establish the Bears Ears National Monument. Its archaeological, cultural, scientific, and geological resources make it truly a national treasure. I hope monument status will deliver the increased protection this area has long deserved."

- **William Lipe, Professor Emeritus, Archaeology, Washington State University and Former President of the Society for American Archaeology**

"We celebrate the president's designation of Bears Ears National Monument under the authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906, which was established to protect places of national cultural significance. Bears Ears far exceeds that standard - the region's well-preserved archaeological sites and cultural landscapes have limitless scientific value, of course, but they also tell essential stories about being human that are meaningful to all people. With this proclamation, President Obama profoundly conveys our shared respect for the lives of those who came before, their descendants, and ourselves as Americans."

- **Bill Doelle, [Archaeology Southwest](#) Executive Director**

"The Bears Ears National Monument is home to the highest density of exceptionally preserved archaeological sites anywhere in America. They include structures, rock art panels, and artifacts left behind by a variety of cultures including Pueblo, Navajo, and Ute peoples. It was also one of the last areas of the United States settled by people of European ancestry, and their sites are present as well. These irreplaceable treasures were threatened with destruction, but the designation of the Bears Ears National Monument ensures their protection for all Americans and for people from throughout the world in perpetuity."

- **Mark Varien, Executive VP, [Crow Canyon Archaeological Center](#)**