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**Chambers of Commerce Tell Trump Administration to Leave National Monuments Alone**

*Nearly 600 businesses and chambers of commerce say their future is uncertain with attacks on national monuments*

**Escalante, Utah (November 16, 2017)** – Just days before [Small Business Saturday](#), nearly 600 rural businesses, aquariums, and chambers of commerce sent a [letter](#) to Gary Cohn, Director of the National Economic Council, urging the Trump administration to help protect their bottom lines by maintaining boundaries and safeguards for America’s national monuments.

The letter comes after the [recent news](#) that President Donald J. Trump plans to shrink the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments in Utah. The letter from chambers of commerce, aquariums, and businesses across the country expresses “serious concerns” over the unprecedented assault on America’s public lands and waters.

The chambers of commerce represent businesses including “mom and pop” shops across the country that would be negatively impacted should protections for nearby national monuments be weakened or removed. This letter comes after 360 outdoor recreation businesses [sent a separate letter](#) to President Trump highlighting the economic benefits of national monuments to livelihoods and local communities. Together, the signers represent a broad spectrum of businesses that rely on national monuments for their bottom line.

The chambers of commerce, aquariums, and business owners are concerned that protections might be reduced not just for the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments in Utah, but for those named in [a leaked report](#) from Interior Secretary Zinke: Gold Butte (NV), Cascade-Siskiyou (OR), Río Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks (NM), Katahdin Woods and Waters (ME), Northeast Canyons and Seamounts off the coast of New England, and the Pacific Remote Islands and Rose Atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

*“As head of a chamber representing 49 businesses, I can tell you that since the protection of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, our local tourism industry in Escalante has grown and is thriving,” said **Suzanne Catlett, Board President of the Escalante & Boulder Chamber of Commerce.** “Thanks to our national monuments, people want to live here, and new home construction is at an all-time high. We have no doubt that Bears Ears National Monument*

*will bring the same economic opportunities to the area. There is no doubt that shrinking these national monuments would harm our local businesses.”*

*“Our local businesses supported national monument designation for Gold Butte because we knew it would provide a much-needed economic boost for our Southern Nevada community,” said **Peter Guzman, President of the Latin Chamber of Commerce**. “From casinos to grocery stores, local businesses understand what Gold Butte is worth, and it has helped Nevada’s star shine brighter. We urge President Donald Trump to stand with local business leaders and leave our national monument the way it is today.”*

***Cindy Bernard, past president of the Ashland, Oregon Chamber of Commerce** said, “Residents and local businesses within and adjacent to the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument have come to enjoy the high quality of life afforded by the monument. Shrinking Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument would take away the asset that we have come to rely upon. As a community, we have felt the positive impact created by recognizing this unique resource, which is why we supported the expansion. Clearly monument designation has helped put us on the map. Why would the president knowingly harm our small businesses?”*

***Zack Klyver, Head Naturalist for Bar Harbor Whale Watch Company** added, “I have taken over a half million passengers to see the northwest Atlantic Ocean’s whales, dolphins, and seabirds like Atlantic puffins. Whale-watching generates over \$125 million in New England. Our industry can only thrive when we’re able to see these animals in the wild consistently. The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts marine monument provides a refuge for whales, in a sea that is increasingly industrialized. The vast majority of Americans want healthy, abundant oceans – opening up our monuments to commercial activities would mean the opposite.”*

The letter from business leaders notes, “decisions regarding where to locate a business are not taken lightly. For many of us, the decision to locate and invest in our communities was based on the promise that national monuments are permanently protected.”

*“The Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument has brought hope to our region at a time when it is desperately needed. The monument has brought businesses and communities together with a sense of optimism that we haven’t seen in some time. Good things are happening. The monument is bringing national attention to the Katahdin region. We urge President Trump to stand with local businesses and leave our national monument intact,” added **Gail Fanjoy, past president of the Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce in Millinocket, Maine**.*

***Carrie Hamblen, CEO/President of the Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce** said, “New Mexico businesses have benefitted directly from increased visitation to Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Río Grande del Norte National Monuments. In Doña Ana County, we just hosted our second annual, month-long ‘Monuments to Main Street’ celebration that featured tours and*

*other events at Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. People love it and are coming to southern New Mexico specifically because of our monument.”*

*“New Mexico broke record tourism numbers again in 2016, with the state’s public lands, like our national monuments, being one of the largest draws. Visitation to Río Grande del Norte has increased by 45 percent compared to before the monument’s designation. Local businesses including rafting companies, hotels, and restaurants are directly benefitting from this. Simply put, removing or altering protections would undermine our bottom line,” added **Glenn Schiffbauer, Executive Director of the Santa Fe Green Chamber of Commerce.***

*“The State of Hawai’i has long recognized the important connection between protecting its natural resources as a means to ensuring a sustainable economy and way of life for its people while honoring its unique history and culture. At the Maui Ocean Center, we are proud to be a part of a community that advocates for the continued preservation and conservation of its natural and national environmental treasures including the Pacific Remote Islands, Rose Atoll, and Papahānaumokuākea National Monuments,” said **Tapani Vuori, General Manager of the Maui Ocean Center and President of Maui Ocean Center Marine Institute.** “We strongly encourage the Trump administration to maintain the protections established for these precious spaces and uphold its national responsibility to honor the legacy of its people and lands for future generations.”*

The letter closes:

*“We the undersigned 572 businesses, aquariums, and chambers of commerce urge you to stand up for our national monuments by helping to end the job-killing efforts to roll back our national monuments or the Antiquities Act which first made these beneficial protections possible.”*

The hundreds of businesses, aquariums, and chambers of commerce that signed the letter represent a vital component of the American public who support the country’s national monuments. During the national monument review, roughly three million comments were submitted; with an overwhelming [99 percent](#) in support of keeping national monument protections in place.

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