**The Conservation for Economic Growth Coalition**

**www.conserve4jobs.org**

May 22, 2017

Monument Review

MS-1530

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke, Ladies & Gentlemen:

In recent years, several national parks and monuments have been conserved by the President or the U.S. Congress, including: Boulder-White Clouds in Idaho; Basin and Range in Nevada; the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks in New Mexico; Browns Canyon in Colorado; and most recently, Gold Butte in Nevada, and Bears Ears in Utah.

As co-founder of Beartooth Capital, a Montana-based investment firm that deals with sporting, agricultural and environmental assets across the American west, I have seen firsthand how these public lands help drive innovation and economic growth. Access to these lands helps me and other entrepreneurs recruit and keep the people we need to grow our companies. Our employees work hard, and they play hard, and spectacular landscapes provide the inspiration they value so much when they take time off for family recreation.

I am pleased that the President has selected a Montanan as Secretary of the Interior, and I am especially pleased because he has taken some courageous stands in the U.S. Congress to protect our public lands, including supporting the Land & Water Conservation Fund.

Now I urge the Secretary to continue down this path and work to preserve the integrity of the Bears Ears National Monument. Both the Secretary and the President have an opportunity to protect from partisan, political attack one of the most spectacular landscapes in the American West; to help ensure that it will be managed in a way that, for the first time, elevates the role of Native American tribes alongside local residents in the management of public lands. In fact, the Bears Ears National Monument is the first monument in the history of our country to honor Native American tribes.

The Bears Ears are two prominent buttes that rise high above Cedar Mesa in southeastern Utah. They are surrounded by a living cultural landscape of mountain peaks, verdant high plateaus and rough-hewn canyon country that is home to cliff dwellings, prehistoric villages, graves and rock art panels of ancestral Puebloan peoples, as well as Ice Age hunting camps. Located just south and east of Canyonlands National Park, this landscape is significant to all Americans and indispensable to tribal peoples of the Colorado Plateau who continue to rely on these sacred lands as a place of subsistence, spirituality, healing, and contemplation.

Led by the Hopi, Zuni, Ute Mountain Ute, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray, and Navajo, and supported by over 25 tribes across the Southwest, the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition was the dominant force in the designation of these 1.35 million acres of public lands as a national monument. The designation of the Bears Ears as a national monument now protects these sacred lands from: the looting of cultural treasures and sites; inappropriate oil and gas development; the mining of potash, uranium, and tar sands; and unrestricted off-road vehicle use that can permanently damage the land.

But the Bears Ears region isn’t just celebrated for its cultural resources; it also has a wealth of recreational opportunities, which are so important to our entrepreneurial culture. By preserving Bears Ears as a national monument, we also protect the $646-billion recreation economy, including access to great hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, river running, climbing, and responsible off-road vehicle use.

If we have the opportunity, why not make money in a way that feels better? Through my work, I see the direct impacts of investments in the environment. The lands are cleaner, the species that once thrived there make triumphant returns, and people flock to the region, upping the local economic benefits. We’re not only turning a profit, we're also helping wildlife and local communities by hiring local people; a practice that if done more regularly has a great deal of potential. And my company does this on a small scale; if this Administration were to protect these lands on a larger scale, the return on investment would be endless.

Rescinding a designation for Bears Ears would also set a dangerous precedent: If President Trump and Secretary Zinke can’t stand up to protect Bears Ears, how can we count on them to ensure protection for protected lands elsewhere?

The President and the Secretary should reject partisan political attacks on the integrity of the Bears Ears National Monument that would undo the preservation of beautiful landscapes for our posterity, unravel the protection of lands important to the very identity of Native American tribes, and undercut the health and growth of our innovative companies in the American West. On behalf of my fellow venture capitalists and entrepreneurs who are members of the Conservation for Economic Growth Coalition (CEGC), I urge the Secretary to use the national monument review to convince the President that yielding to those partisan attacks would forever deny his administration a legacy whereby they could otherwise be known as responsible stewards of our national public lands for American jobs, and for all posterity.

Sincerely,

Robert Keith

On behalf of the Conservation for Economic Growth Coalition