



## Utah Diné Bikéyah

- a non-profit supporting Native Tribes working together to **Protect Bears Ears** -

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### **Utah Diné Bikéyah Responds to Confirmation of Ryan Zinke as Secretary of the Department of Interior**

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Utah Diné Bikéyah congratulates Ryan Zinke on his appointment as the newest Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. On behalf of an overwhelming majority of Native American people who live in and around San Juan County, Utah, UDB extends a warm welcome to Zinke to come visit Bears Ears National Monument and meet on reservation with tribal leaders regarding the necessity of maintaining protection for Bears Ears National Monument.

UDB Chairman Willie Grayeyes remarked, “We look forward to working with Secretary Zinke and sharing with him the healing power of Bears Ears National Monument. Bears Ears must remain protected. As local Native people and San Juan County residents, we fully expect Secretary Zinke to honor the government-to-government relationship by meeting with our elected leaders and listening to Native peoples. Our sovereign tribal nations unanimously embrace and support Bears Ears National Monument.”

Albert Holiday, UDB Board member and Vice President of the Oljato Chapter of the Navajo Nation, stated, “The Secretary of the Interior is the chief trustee of the trust obligation owed by the federal government to all Tribes across the United States. We pray that Secretary Zinke will fulfill this sacred duty by upholding the boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument. We pray that he will help facilitate the Bears Ears Commission, the first inter-tribal commission appointed to collaboratively manage America’s public lands. We pray for Secretary Zinke’s success.”

Letters of invitation to meet with Tribes regarding Bears Ears have been sent to Secretary Zinke by the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, the Oljato Chapter of the Navajo Nation, Mexican Water Chapter of the Navajo Nation, and Utah Diné Bikéyah. Additionally, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council passed [legislation](#) in January reiterating the Nation’s formal support for the presidential proclamation establishing Bears Ears National Monument. All five Tribes represented on the Bears Ears Commission—Ute Mountain Ute, Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, and Uinta Ouray Ute—have expressed unanimous support for the Monument as designated.

During confirmation hearings, Secretary Zinke was pressed by members of the Utah delegation to take a stance on Bears Ears. Secretary Zinke clearly stated, “I have great respect for Indian Nations, and we need to listen to that voice.... Sovereignty should mean something.”

UDB Chairman Grayeyes noted, “We fully expect Secretary Zinke to stand by his word.”

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