



## PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Lori Weigel  
Public Opinion Strategies

RE: Utah Voters Support Keeping Bears Ears as a National Monument; Perceive Many Benefits of Retaining National Monuments Designation as Very Important

DATE: May 22, 2017

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Public Opinion Strategies recently completed a statistically valid and representative survey of voters throughout Utah.<sup>1</sup> The survey results show that **more than two-thirds of Utah voters support keeping the current number and size of National Monuments overall, with similarly strong support for doing so at the Bears Ears National Monument as well.** Support is significant throughout the state. Even after hearing viewpoints on both sides, voters side with supporters of retaining the current National Monument designation. Support may be grounded in the fact that Utah voters report visiting national public lands frequently, and engage in many outdoor recreation activities. They also rate a number of potential benefits of retaining the National Monument designation as extremely or very important.

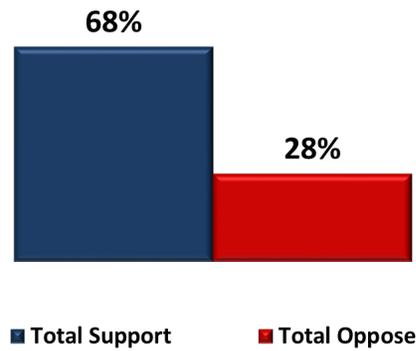
Among the key specific findings of the survey are the following:

- **More than two-thirds of Utah voters support keeping the current number and size of National Monuments in the state, including majorities of most key sub-groups.** Fully 68 percent of Utah voters say we should keep “the number and current size of national monuments created by presidents over the past thirty years that ensure stronger protections for these existing public lands.” Just 28 percent oppose the status quo. The intensity of support for retaining the current number and size of national monuments far exceeds the intensity of those opposed to them (45 percent definitely support retaining these National Monument, while only 18 percent definitely oppose the existing number and size of these lands.

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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From May 13-16, 2017, Public Opinion Strategies completed 500 telephone interviews with registered voters throughout Utah, with the sample approximating the demographic and partisan representation of those who voted in the November 2016 presidential election. The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample is +/-4.38%. Margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

*Support for Keeping the Current  
Number of National Monuments*



Majorities of key voter sub-groups statewide – partisan, demographic and geographic – express support for retaining these public lands as they are, including:

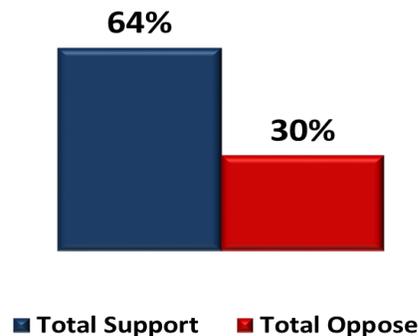
- 69 percent of women and 67 percent of men;
  - 86 percent of voters under age 35, 81 percent of 35-44 year olds, 70 percent of 45-64 year olds, and 64 percent of seniors;
  - 65 percent of hunters or anglers, and 70 percent of those who do not hunt or fish;
  - 95 percent of Democrats, 78 percent of independents, and 52 percent of GOP voters; and
  - 76 percent in Salt Lake county, 66 percent in the Wasatch Front counties and 59 percent in the rest of the state.
- **More specifically, voters are far more likely to say Bears Ears designation as a National Monument has been a good thing rather than a bad thing for the state.** Given that not all voters have seen, read or heard about this area of public lands, we provided a brief neutral explanation of the location of these lands and what its designation implies for use: *“As you may know, a proposal by five Native American tribes resulted in the federal government increasing protections for one point three million acres of existing public lands in southeastern Utah, south of Canyonlands National Park, known as the Bears Ears area. This resulted in a new national monument in Utah with protections for natural areas and water similar to those in national parks. The public can go there to camp, fish, hike, hunt, view wildlife, or ride ATVs. It would not allow new mining or oil and gas development, but existing claims and leases and grazing rights are not affected.”*

By nearly a two-to-one margin, voters say the designation has been a good thing for the state (53 percent good thing, 26 percent bad thing), although a sizeable number of voters say they don't know enough to say (18 percent). Those who feel strongly this has been a positive for Utah exceed the proportion which intensely feels the opposite by a twenty point margin (37 percent strongly good thing; 17 percent strongly bad thing). When given the opportunity to explain why they feel it has been a good thing, these voters focused in on protecting these lands from

industrial activities and instead promoting recreation and tourism, as well as the desire to help the tribes seeking this designation.

- **Fully 64% support keeping Bears Ears as a National Monument and at its current size.** Voters were asked to express their views about the issue after hearing that “the Interior Secretary has been tasked with reviewing Bears Ears as well as dozens of other national monuments throughout the country to determine if the designation should be eliminated or the size reduced, removing protections for all or some of these lands.” As the following graph illustrates, nearly two-thirds support keeping Bears Ears as a National Monument.

*Support Bears Ears National Monument*



No matter whether one visits national public lands or not, nor the type of outdoor recreation, Utah voters register support for this designation and its scope. That said, there are partisan distinctions, with Republicans divided on the issue (44 percent support, 48 percent oppose) and independents (77 percent support, 16 percent oppose) and Democrats (95 percent support, 3 percent oppose) overwhelmingly in support.

It is worth keeping in mind that 88 percent of all Utah voters indicate having visited national public lands, such as National Parks, National Forests, National Monuments or other areas in the past year. In fact, one-in-ten voters say they have visited national public lands more than 20 times. That should not be a surprise given the proportions who indicate taking part regularly in outdoor recreation from hiking (58 percent) and camping (54 percent) to bird watching or viewing wildlife (26 percent).

- **Voters continue to side with supporters even after hearing statements both opposed and in support of keeping the designation of Bears Ears as a National Monument in place.** When provided with arguments mimicking the public debate over this issue, Utah voters side with supporters over critics by a two-to-one margin.

Supporters say that the increased protection for these existing national public lands is helping to safeguard historic, recreational and wildlife areas from industrial development and for future generations. It will better protect the sites that are sacred to many Native American tribes in the region, some of which are subjected to ongoing grave robbing and vandalism. Plus, this provides opportunities for economic development in San Juan county as people visit the monument for hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, and other recreation.

64%

Opponents say that this proposal is really just a federal land grab, and these lands are not really threatened. It will restrict public access, end ranching in these areas, create burdensome regulations on recreation, and ban responsible energy development such as oil and gas drilling and uranium mining. That negatively affects Utah’s economy, hurts local jobs, and restricts our energy future.

32%

- **Utah voters perceive a great number of benefits of National Monument designation, especially protecting Native American and cultural sites.** Given a number of different features of designating these public lands as a National Monument, respondents were asked to indicate how important a benefit they found each one – extremely important, very important, somewhat important or not important. Even when just examining the proportions who rate these as extremely or very important, we see that most items have a majority viewing it as very important. In addition, protection of the Native American and historic sites, along with wildlife habitat, tend to rank highest:

Benefit	% Extremely/ Very Important
Better protect petroglyphs, cliff dwellings, Mormon pioneer artifacts, and other unique historic sites from looters and vandals	84%
Protect more than one hundred thousand Native American archaeological and cultural sites including cliff dwellings and ancient sites, considered sacred by many tribes.	82%
Provide opportunities for children to get outside and explore nature	78%
Protect habitat for threatened animals, such as bighorn sheep, eagles and dozens of other types of birds	75%
Conserve natural areas and wildlife habitat	75%
Provide families with affordable places to vacation, recreate and spend time together	71%
Sustain small businesses that create jobs in nearby communities	70%
Continue to allow recreational opportunities for those who come to hike, camp, hunt, ride off-road vehicles and recreate here	66%

Preserve opportunities for local ranchers to graze livestock on these lands	50%
Provide access for off-road vehicle users, horseback riders, cyclists, and hikers	48%
Increase the number of rangers and enhance services for visitors	45%
Preserve opportunities for hunting	34%

*In conclusion, this survey reveals that Utah voters support keeping the Bears Ears area as a National Monument. They are far more likely to view the designation as having been a positive than a negative, despite the controversy. This is likely due to the fact that they perceive so many benefits of designation as important to have. This overall support for keeping Bears Ears a National Monument withstands a simulation of the dialogue taking place on this issue, as well.*