

Bears Ears National Monument Resource Management Plan

Letter Template for Public Comments

Plan website: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2020347/510>

Public comment deadline: June 11, 2024

Go to “plan website” shown above, click on the green “Participate Now” button to submit your comment

- *Utah Public Land Alliance’s Natural Resources Consultant, Rose Winn, is tracking comments for this Resource Management Plan. Please send Rose a copy of your comment letter after you have submitted it through the Plan Website. Email your letter to: rose@utahpla.com.*

(Sample comment letter noted on page 3 below...)

Key Talking Points:

- Note that closures and restrictions of public access in Bears Ears National Monument (BENM) will:
 - Rob all American citizens from fully accessing and enjoying this unique, beautiful landscape.
 - Through elimination of OHV access, create harmful bias towards disabled persons who are physically unable to hike or walk off of the designated road system to enjoy the many spectacular views and experiences that BENM offers.
 - Set a harmful and dangerous policy of biased access to public lands, wherein select groups such as Native American Tribes maintain full access, while the general public are disallowed. Additionally, permitted access as proposed for specific uses (including rock climbing, camping, flying drones, and other uses) creates bias wherein individuals who can afford the financial burden of purchasing permits maintain access, while individuals who cannot afford to do so are banned from entry and enjoyment of BENM.
- Urge the planning team to create a “Recreation Alternative” that will truly balance public access and outdoor recreation with conservation and protection of monument objects. A Recreation Alternative would include:
 - Open status for all designated OHV routes
 - Open (not permit-dependent) status for all rock-climbing routes
 - Continued access and use of dispersed campsites throughout BENM
 - Continued access for the public to gather wood
 - Continued access for recreational target shooting in designated shooting areas
 - Open status for all designated hiking and equestrian trails
 - No further consideration for designation of additional Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
- Ask the planning team to provide evidence of where and when user saturation has exceeded a reasonable level for OHV riding, camping, hiking, wood gathering, rock climbing, and other uses (name each use specifically when asking for evidence). Ask what methodology is currently being used to track volume of public access for each use. Ask for detailed descriptions on how definitions for reasonable versus excessive saturation of users were determined for specific areas, or specific OHV / hiking / climbing routes. Request details for justification of how closure was determined as the only viable solution to protect specific areas, or specific OHV / hiking / climbing routes.

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- Ask where concerns or evidence of damage to cultural and natural resources have been addressed through mitigation instead of closure. Provide evidence of effective mitigation, as often as you can. Ask the planning team to provide evidence of where mitigation has and has not been attempted, and the evidence of efficacy of mitigations that are currently in place.
 - One example of effective existing mitigation for potential damage to wildlife habitat from rock climbing: some routes are closed on a seasonal basis to protect birds of prey from human intrusion near their nesting sites during nesting season.
 - A source of mitigation that could be suggested to address concerns over potential damage to cultural resources, is to have staff or volunteers available onsite at locations of significant cultural value (IE: petroglyphs, cliff dwellings, ancient burial sites, etc.) to serve as cultural interpreters and inform visitors of their significance, history, and cultural values.
- Name all OHV routes, campsites, and other recreational routes / areas that you have, or would like to in the future, recreate at in BENM. Wherever possible, itemize the features that make that route or area unique and of high-value to your experience. Note how closure or restriction to access of that route or area would negatively impact you, your family, your community, the local economy, or other stakeholders who have historically enjoyed that form of access in BENM.
- Note your personal, spiritual, cultural, or historical connection to the land at BENM. Provide examples of how the land in BENM is sacred or of unique value to you, your family, or your community.
- Closures and restrictions to public access at BENM will displace OHV riders, other recreationists, and the general public who currently utilize BENM. This will create a higher concentration of people in other public land areas, which will create new negative impact on natural and cultural resources in other areas, thus jeopardizing the long-term viability of other public lands, and thereby inflicting harm directly on the outdoor recreation community and the general public. For this reason, the BENM Resource Management Plan should maintain open access for all existing uses and recreation.
- Outdoor recreation contributes over \$1.1 trillion to the US economy, a huge percentage of the Utah state economy, and a significant percentage of the San Juan County economy. For this reason, the BENM Resource Management Plan should prioritize continued open access for the public and outdoor recreationists.
 - There is some info that may be of interest to cite from [this article](#) on the value of the outdoor recreation economy

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Sample Comment Letter (Template):

Date: [insert date]

Monument Planning
BLM Monticello Field Office
365 North Main, Monticello, UT 84535

RE: Bears Ears National Monument Resource Management Plan & Draft EIS (Document #DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2022-0030-RMP-EIS)

Dear Monument Planning Team,

I am writing to provide public comment on the Bears Ears National Monument Resource Management Plan & Draft EIS (Document #DOI-BLM-UT-Y020-2022-0030-RMP-EIS). I recreate at Bears Ears National Monument (BENM), and I have concrete plans to continue visiting BENM on a regular, recurring basis in the future.

[Note something about you or your family's history and love for recreation at BENM, your favorite sites to visit in BENM, your favorite activities to engage in there, how OHV and/or outdoor recreation benefit your physical, mental, and spiritual health, how OHV and/or outdoor recreation allow you to have meaningful connections with your family and friends and build your sense of community with others.]

[If you live near BENM or in the State of Utah, note how closures to public access at BENM may negatively impact your community and local economy. IE: drive outdoor recreation to other areas and cause businesses that support outdoor recreation (such as OHV dealers and repair shops, outdoor recreation supply stores, hotels, restaurants, guide services, etc.) to decline or go out of business.]

[Use the talking points above to cite your concerns here, or add in other points from your own research and perspective.]

In closing, I urge the Monument Planning Team to create a new "Access" or "Recreation" alternative for the public to consider and comment on for the BENM Resource Management Plan. This new alternative would truly balance protection of public access for enjoyment of the landscape and outdoor recreation, with protection of monument objects, and active stewardship of natural and cultural resources. I urge the Monument Planning Team to:

- Cite a short summary of the points in your letter as bullet points here...
- Point #2...
- Point #3...
- Etc...

Thank you for reviewing my concerns and recommendations.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your email]