

UTAH PUBLIC LANDS ALLIANCE

*Together We Will Win,
But We Can't Do It Without You*

January 28, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20500

The Honorable JD Vance
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Walter Cruickshank
Acting Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Subject: Restoring Access for All Americans to our Public Lands

Dear President Trump, Vice President Vance, and Acting Secretary Cruickshank:

Nearly 3,000 miles of Utah motorized off highway routes have been closed or severely limited in just the last two years in Utah by the BLM and Forest Service Actions. While there are multiple actions that have resulted in this cumulative impact, one of the most egregious is the closure of the entire 1.3 million acres of Bears Ears National Monument to OHV use.

We need your leadership to take immediate steps to restore balanced land use policies in the Department of Interior and US Department of Agriculture to reverse the devastating actions taken by the BLM and Forest Service over the past four years. The policies of the prior Administration have significantly negatively impacted responsible motorized recreation, outdoor tourism, hiking, camping, hunting, canyoneering, and access to inholdings on public lands in Utah. The actions have also significantly reduced grazing, resource extraction, and mining; these are direct threats to our National Security and your Energy Dominance policies.

The past 4 years of the BLM and Forest Service land management decisions resulted in sweeping restrictions on public access to public lands with overreaching and unbalanced actions. Key strategies used by the BLM and Forest Service during this timeframe included creation of new expansion of existing National Monuments, Areas of Critical Environmental

(ACECs), National Conservation Areas (NCAs), as well as implementation of overly restrictive Travel Management Plans.

Another key strategy utilized by the Department of Interior, providing further demonstration of glaring overreach of agency authority, is the BLM's Landscape Health and Conservation Rule. This Rule added "Conservation" as an additional mandated use to the detailed list established by Congress in the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA.) Conservation has always been a critical consideration in every Land Management Decision, however, adding it as an additional mandated use is beyond the scope of what Congress defined with passage of FLPMA. The Conservation Rule wholly fails to consider the needs of responsible OHV users and other multiple-use stakeholders; additionally, it undermines collaborative efforts to balance conservation with recreation and other uses.

A selection of just few specific examples of the impacts noted above include:

1. **National Monument Designations:** In Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments, you had the wisdom during your first term to issue a Proclamation on December 4, 2017 that reduced the size to the "smallest area compatible with the protection of the objects of scientific or historic interest" to conform with the requirements of the Antiquities Act.

In 2021, President Biden reversed your proclamation and restored the original boundaries of both monuments. The finalization of the Bears Ears NM Resource Management Plan (RMP) on January 13, 2025 resulted in more widespread road closures, cutting off access to historically used routes for recreation, grazing, and resource extraction. The Bears Ears RMP eliminated OHV access to over 800 miles of routes previously designated for motorized use, significantly impacting recreation opportunities and local economies reliant on outdoor tourism. The RMP failed the multiple use mandate as it did not even consider a true recreation Alternative; every Alternative prioritized conservation over all other uses. These closures not only undermine public enjoyment but also violate the Congressional mandate for balanced multiple-use management established by law under FLPMA.

2. **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs):** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has designated or expanded ACECs across millions of acres in Utah. While these designations aim to protect sensitive resources, they often come with sweeping restrictions that close roads and trails without sufficient stakeholder input. For instance, the San Rafael Desert ACEC added over 300,000 acres with restrictions that led to the closure of more than 300 miles of motorized routes and elimination of countless dispersed campsites. The BLM blatantly disregarded local community concerns and the economic reliance of these areas on OHV tourism. Their decisions were also made in defiance of promises made during passage of the Dingell Act, which agreed to establishment of additional Wilderness Areas in exchange for protecting multiple use in other areas.

The newly designated Bears Ears Aquifer Protection ACEC (See Attached Aquifer Protection ACEC Map) placed restrictions across a huge swath of land making it off-limits to OHV access and development under the guise of protecting water resources, despite the lack of evidence that current uses pose any credible threat to water quality or

conveyance. This approach not only sets a troubling precedent but also fails to consider viable management alternatives that would allow for continued access while safeguarding critical resources.

3. **National Conservation Areas (NCAs):** Recent designations of NCAs, such as the John Wesley Powell NCA proposal, will impose additional layers of restrictive management. These designations invariably result in road and trail closures that disproportionately impact responsible users while failing to account for balanced resource use, including sustainable grazing and energy development.
4. **BLM Landscape Health and Conservation Rule:** the BLM's Landscape Health and Conservation Rule represents another giant overreach in public lands management by expanding their authority well beyond that authorized by Congress. The Rule's emphasis on prioritizing conservation over other multiple-use activities undermines the long-standing multiple-use mandate. The BLM justification for the Rule was based on President Biden's Executive Order 14008 that established his 30x30 plan. Gratefully, you have already rescinded 14008. Subsequently it should follow that the Conservation Rule should also be rescinded.

The Rule placed undue restrictions on recreation, grazing, and resource extraction. This disproportionately impacts local communities and economies that are reliant on public land access. The Rule creates uncertainty for stakeholders by shifting the focus of public land management away from balancing public access across all multiple uses to explicitly exclusionary practices. Additionally, the Rule allows the BLM to sell conservation leases to the highest bidder, which raises many additional grievous concerns for all stakeholders, including national security and federal agency profiteering.

5. **Travel Management Plans (TMPs):** The implementation of restrictive TMPs across public lands has led to the closure of thousands of miles of motorized routes. For example, in just the past 2 years the Richfield and Price Field Office TMPs collectively closed over 2,000 miles of roads and trails; severely limiting access for OHV users, hunters, and other recreationists. These closures frequently disregard historical access and fail to provide alternative routes, leaving responsible users with few viable options to continue using and enjoying Utah's public lands. The BLM has further disregarded the existence of State Right of Ways under R.S. 2477 claims by closing hundreds of miles of R.S. 2477 roads in the last 2 years alone.
6. **The BLM continues to overstep and expand their authority despite recent Landmark Supreme Court decisions** such as *Loper Bright v. Raimondo*, *West Virginia v. EPA*, and *Audubon Society v. FAA* that clearly issued rulings limiting authority of Federal Agencies to only those that are specifically authorized by Congress.
7. **Lack of Consideration of Public and Cooperating Agencies Comments:** Although the BLM received 18,217 comments on the Bears Ears NM Draft EIS, they disqualified the vast majority of the comments as non-substantive. This has become the standard of the BLM's recent practice: they do not publish the comments that they deem to be non-substantive, thereby denying the public to question or challenge their decisions or even allow the public to learn why their voice didn't count. Further, to the remaining few questions, they provide only broadly stated answers with no details or "best available

science” to support their answers.

An extraordinary example of the BLM’s failure to consider comments is demonstrated by Governor Cox’s Consistency Review. On December 2, 2024, Governor Cox sent a 70-page letter of objections and recommendations letter to the Interim State Director Matt Preston about the Bears Ears RMP. This was followed with a separate letter to the BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning.

Responses from the BLM Interim State Director and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Steven Feldgus **denied every single recommendation or appeal in the Governor’s Request**. Further evidence of the BLM’s failure to grant Due Process is that the individual answering Governor Cox was not the Director, rather, it was the same person that had signed the Bears Ears RMP original Record of Decision acting as judge, jury, and executioner.

In the BLM’s rush to get this decision issued before you took office, the agency has behaved arbitrarily and capriciously to achieve the extreme conservation focus of the prior administration by deciding upfront the outcome they wanted, then constructing the “findings” to support that outcome. All of the correspondence referenced above can be found on the BLM’s ePlanning Website under the Governor’s Consistency Review.

The cumulative impact of these actions has been devastating for the OHV community, rural economies, and the principle of balanced land use. These restrictions disproportionately affect small businesses, local governments, and families who depend on access to public lands for recreation, grazing, and resource development.

I respectfully request your assistance in the following areas:

1. **Review and Revise Restrictive Designations:** reassess recent National Monument designations and expansions, ACEC and NCA designations, the Landscape Health and Conservation Rule, and TMPs to ensure they reflect a balanced approach in alignment with the multiple-use mandate that accommodates responsible recreation and resource use. An order by your Secretary of the Interior to complete new plans within a specific time could quickly restore balance and common sense to these Plans.
2. **Promote Collaborative Land Management:** advocate for decision-making processes that include robust input from local governments, OHV organizations, conservation groups, and other stakeholders to achieve balanced solutions. Engage directly with Utah Public Lands Alliance and BlueRibbon Coalition to gather further insights and collaborate on effective management strategies.
3. **Rescind the BLM’s Landscape Health and Conservation Rule:** nothing further needs to be said, there is nothing good in this rule except tyranny.
4. **Restore Access and Opportunities:** identify and reopen roads and trails that were closed without adequate justification to ensure access for responsible users and support rural economies.
5. **Issue Proclamations Reducing the Size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments** to the size limitations you established in your

Proclamations dated December 4, 2017; then rescind the RMP for each Monument as they are incompatible with the reduced size.

6. **Issue a Proclamation Rescinding President Biden's Proclamation 10285 which established the Bears Ears Commission (BEC)** and directed the BLM to "meaningfully engage the Commission." This was interpreted by the BLM to give the BEC a seat at the head of the table to develop the original concepts of the RMP. This resulted in many exemptions specifically limited to Tribal partners, not available to other Americans or cooperating agencies.
7. **Order Federal Agencies to comply with the orders of the Supreme Court or any other Federal Court of appropriate jurisdiction.** Although this has long been the practice of federal agencies, they no longer seem compelled to obey the law of the land, they need a stern reminder.
8. **Order the BLM to cease implementation of the Bears Ears RMP until after the review process stipulated in your Executive Order for "Regulatory Freeze Pending Review".** The RMP decision was not published in the Federal Register until January 16, 2025; so it is in accord and in the public interest for review by the OMB Director.

These examples and requests represent only a few instances of federal agency overreach of authority in the management of our public lands. I will be glad to provide a more exhaustive list upon request. Utah Public Lands Alliance is committed to advocating for responsible recreation and conservation practices, and I welcome the opportunity to work with you and your administration to ensure that our public lands remain open, accessible, and protected for all Americans, not an elite few.

We need your leadership and commitment to steer the management of our public lands back on course. I thank you in advance for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Loren Campbell
President
Utah Public Lands Alliance
President@UtahPLA.com

Attachments and References

- Bears Ears Aquifer ACEC Map
- Governor Consistency Review Documents: Located at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project>

CC: The Honorable Senator Mike Lee
The Honorable Senator John Curtis
The Honorable Spencer J. Cox, Governor of Utah

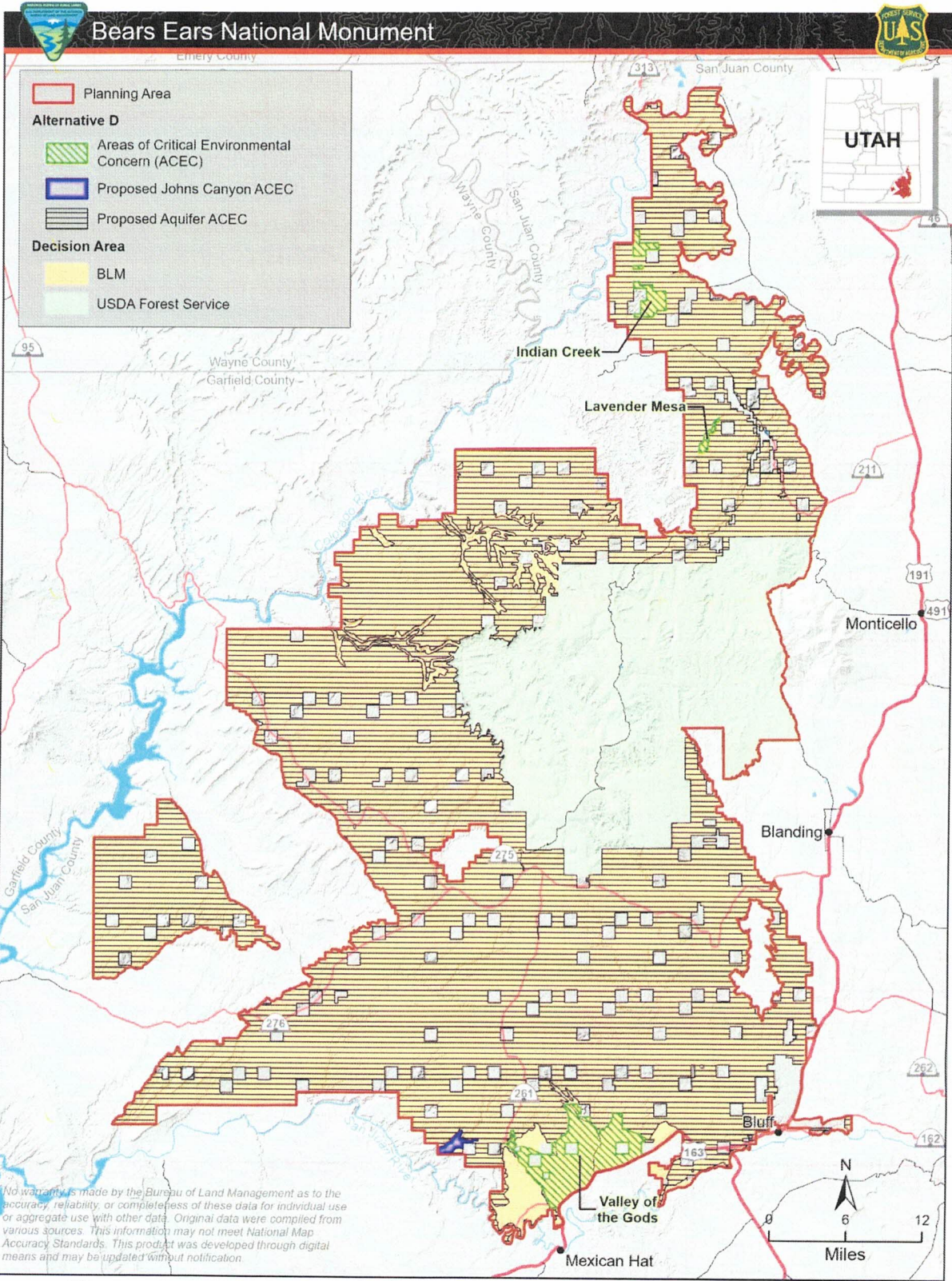


Figure 2-10. Alternative D, areas of critical environmental concern.