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Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Inter-Tribal Coalition Forms to Protect and Preserve Aboriginal Lands and Advocate for Monument

ESCALANTE, UT — Today representatives of six tribes, including the Hopi Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Zuni Tribe announced the formation of the **Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Inter-Tribal Coalition**.

“We are the living descendants of the ancestors that left their footprints and writings across Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument,” said **Autumn Gillard, Cultural Resources Manager with the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah**. “In Southern Paiute teachings, we are taught from infancy that we are the stewards of these lands which must be protected and preserved for future generations.”

The coalition will focus on advocating for the conservation of their aboriginal lands and for the continued protection and preservation of the cultural and environmental resources found within the monument. The coalition is also committed to defending Grand Staircase-Escalante from any attempts to modify the monument boundaries or reduce protections for the monument.

In particular, the coalition will advocate for tribal voices and perspectives to be heard and included in the management of the monument, which protects cultural resources of great significance to tribes.

“The input of Tribal Nations, federal agencies, and local communities balancing cultural protection and conservation through Tribal Knowledge, lifeways, and conservation expertise ensures that Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument remains protected, accessible, and well-managed for future generations. Hopi believe that understanding the past is important for the future. It is essential to preserve our aboriginal lands as today I’Tah Kukveni (footprints) are recognized as ancestral clan migrations and something we can learn from for posterity,” said **Craig Andrews, Vice Chairman of the Hopi Tribe**.

“Tribes carry an invaluable treasure of traditional knowledge about these lands, meticulously passed down through generations,” emphasized **Head Councilman Anthony Sanchez Jr. of the Zuni Tribe**. “This profound understanding reveals deeper meanings that extend far beyond what is visible. Indigenous perspectives illuminate the intricate interconnectedness of ecosystems, fostering harmony and sustainability. The rich tapestry of oral histories, cultural narratives, and ceremonial traditions provides essential context, often uncovering insights that written records overlook. By wholeheartedly embracing this connection, we can enhance preservation efforts, honor cultural integrity, and forge impactful collaborations. Let us recognize and elevate these vital traditions together, ensuring they are cherished and integrated into a sustainable future for all,” said Sanchez.

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was designated in 1996 under the Antiquities Act to protect 1.7 million acres in southern Utah, including slot canyons and stone arches, dinosaur fossils, and cultural and archaeological sites of profound importance to Native American Tribes, including sacred petroglyph panels and ethnobotanical resources that Native peoples continue to use today. Native peoples have interacted with the Grand Staircase-Escalante landscape traditionally and ceremonially, as well as domestically, since time immemorial.

The inter-tribal coalition’s advocacy will include working to address threats to the monument such as looting, vandalism, and graffiti, and protecting the monument for all Americans to appreciate and enjoy.

The announcement of the coalition’s formation comes just weeks after U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum issued a [secretarial order](#) calling for a review of national monuments for the purpose of prioritizing oil and gas drilling and energy development. Grand Staircase-Escalante is among the national monuments targeted by the order.

“Our ancestors have walked the Aboriginal path to extinction, but we will continue on that Aboriginal Path with their spiritual Blessing,” said **Hank Stevens of the Navajo Nation**, who serves as the tribal representative on the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Advisory Committee.

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