



Grand Staircase-Escalante Inter-Tribal Coalition

HOPI TRIBE • NAVAJO NATION • SOUTHERN PAIUTE
UTE MOUNTAIN UTE • ZUNI TRIBE

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Inter-Tribal Coalition Members Condemn Reduction of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

ESCALANTE, UT – Members of the [Grand Staircase-Escalante Inter-Tribal Coalition](https://grandstaircasecoalition.org) strongly condemn the Trump administration's actions to virtually eliminate Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and call for the defense and protection of their ancestral lands. In an event at the White House today, the president issued orders cutting the boundaries of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments by almost three million acres combined.

"Our Tribes were not informed of or asked about this decision, and that's unacceptable. The federal government must honor its Trust and Treaty obligations to our Tribes – it is not optional," said **Grand Staircase-Escalante Inter-Tribal Coalition Coordinator Autumn Gillard, Southern Paiute**. "Today's action is a direct strike against the federal government's duty to consult with Tribes. It also profoundly disrespects our intergenerational Traditional Knowledge by destroying a framework for Tribal co-stewardship over our ancestral lands in which we invested years of effort. Today's action cannot stand."

"Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument holds thousands of years of Southern Paiute cultural history as well as ancestral history and ties for our relative tribes. It is through our strong connection to the land that we can maintain our spiritual and religious beliefs and practices. Areas like Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument are known for their deep cultural connection to Nuwu holistic conservation traditions. 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," **Gillard** continued.

Our Tribes participated in a years-long and [in-depth consultation process](#) surrounding Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument's current management plan, offering our Traditional

Knowledge about stewarding the monument as it was being created. The monument's management plan was finalized in [January 2025](#) after a two-year public process, during which thousands of Americans participated by offering input that helped inform the plan.

The 2025 plan remained in place after Utah's Congressional Delegation failed to act on a bill ([S.J.RES. 109](#)) before a June 11, 2026 deadline that would have required only a simple majority vote to overturn the plan. Now, the bill needs 60 votes to overcome the Senate filibuster, making the measure very unlikely to become law. Today's action by the administration, however, does more than just eliminate a management plan, it attempts to destroy our sacred cultural heritage altogether.

"Grand Staircase-Escalante has already been through too many rounds of planning, litigation, boundary changes, and political reversals," said **Erik Stanfield, an anthropologist with the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department**. "Every time the Monument is cut apart and put back together, proper land management gets delayed, public resources are wasted, and Tribes are asked to start over after years of consultation. We need stewardship and consistency, not reactionary politics."

"Today's action threatens to destroy precious cultural places that are part of our histories and identities as Native peoples," said **Georgie Pongyesva, Hopi**. "Many assume that cultural sites have been abandoned, or refer to them as 'ruins.' These places are not abandoned, nor are they ruined. These are living landscapes for which Tribes are the original stewards, and we are the living descendants of the ancestors that left their footprints and writings on these landscapes."

"In this time of drought, fires, and low water levels in the West, Tribal input and co-management is needed more than ever. Decreasing these monuments and cutting protections for these priceless ecosystems only adds fuel to the fires and problems we are now facing in the West," **Pongyesva** continued.

"To find ourselves here again is deeply heartbreaking. Grand Staircase-Escalante is far more than a landscape, it is an ancestral homeland that holds our sacred places, plant medicines, waters, wildlife, and living history," said **Davina Smith-Idjesa, Grand Staircase Escalante Inter-Tribal Coalition Navajo Representative**. "Once again, Tribal voices are being pushed aside, yet we will continue to stand together in unity and fulfill our responsibility to protect these lands for the generations yet to come. Our connection to this place cannot be erased by the stroke of a pen."

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was designated in 1996 under the Antiquities Act and preserves almost two million acres in southern Utah – protecting slot canyons and stone arches, dinosaur fossils, and cultural and archaeological places of profound importance to Native American Tribes, including sacred petroglyph panels and ethnobotanical resources that

Native peoples continue to use today. Native peoples have lived in and cared for the Grand Staircase-Escalante landscape traditionally, ceremonially, and domestically since time immemorial.

Members of the Grand Staircase-Escalante Inter-Tribal Coalition call on the Trump administration and the United States Congress to halt their aggression against Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and our natural and cultural heritage, and to protect these lands for all people, and for our children and grandchildren.

The Grand Staircase-Escalante Inter-Tribal Coalition, which includes the Hopi Tribe, the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, the Navajo Nation, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Zuni Tribe, advocates for Grand-Staircase-Escalante National Monument, for Tribal voices and perspectives to be heard and included in the management of the monument, and for protecting the monument for all Americans to appreciate and enjoy.