



Trump Shrinks Fedgov Landgrab in Utah: Hopefully, More Similar Acts to Follow

Did President Donald Trump slaughter the last baby seal? Did he harpoon the last whale? Pave over the last wetland? It might seem so judging from the wails of anguish and rancorous denunciations from the environmental Left that have greeted one of his latest actions. His issuing of two proclamations on Monday to undo part of two huge federal land grabs in Utah by previous presidents (Clinton and Obama) is being called “shameful,” “illegal,” “a disgrace,” even “evil.”



President Trump came to Utah on December 4 to reduce the size of two national monuments that have been political flashpoints in the battles over local vs. federal control, and the extremist lock-everything-up environmentalism vs. the wise-use stewardship of natural resources. Under the president’s plan, the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, now encompassing 1.9 million acres illegally seized from the state of Utah by President Bill Clinton under the 1906 Antiquities Act, would be shrunk to about 1 million acres. The Bears Ears National Monument created by fiat of President Barack Obama, took another 1.35 million acres. After President Trump’s revision, it will be “approximately 201,876 acres.” The monument designations by Presidents Clinton and Obama amounted to federal acts of usurpation and were implemented without consultation of the people and officials of Utah and in defiance of expressed popular opposition in the Beehive State.

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“I know all of you feel blessed to be living among some of the most glorious natural wonders anywhere in the world,” President Trump [stated](#) in his address to state and federal lawmakers at the Utah State Capitol in Salt Lake City on Monday. “You cherish Utah’s gleaming rivers and sweeping valleys. You take inspiration from its majestic peaks. And when you look upon its many winding canyons and glowing vistas, you marvel at the beauty of God’s great creation.”

“And that is why I’m here today,” he continued, “Because some people think that the natural resources of Utah should be controlled by a small handful of very distant bureaucrats located in Washington. And guess what? They’re wrong.”

Federal Overreach

“The families and communities of Utah know and love this land the best, and you know the best how to take care of your land,” President Trump remarked, continuing the theme of residents versus a distant, bureaucratic, uncaring federal landlord. “You know how to protect it, and you know best how to conserve this land for many, many generations to come.” The president was greeted with applause for denouncing “the whims of regulators thousands and thousands of miles away” who “don’t know your land, and truly, they don’t care for your land like you do.”

“But from now on, that won’t matter,” he pledged. “I’ve come to Utah to take a very historic action to



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reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens.” The president slammed past administrations that “have severely abused the purpose, spirit, and intent of a century-old law known as the Antiquities Act.” This law, he rightly noted, specifically “requires that only the smallest necessary area be set aside for special protection as national monuments.” However, he remarked, “previous administrations have ignored the standard and used the law to lock up hundreds of millions of acres of land and water under strict government control.”

“These abuses of the Antiquities Act,” the president charged, “give enormous power to faraway bureaucrats at the expense of the people who actually live here, work here, and make this place their home. This is where they raise their children. This is the place they love.” The [Presidential Proclamation Modifying the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument](#) and the [Presidential Proclamation Modifying the Bears Ears National Monument](#) provide detailed lists of the cultural, archeological, and natural treasures (real and fabricated) that the monument designations ostensibly were created to protect: Native American ceremonial sites, ancient cliff dwellings, caves, petroglyphs, pictograph, tools and projectile points, as well as habitat of threatened and endangered species.

The Trump proclamations point out in detail that most of the alleged concerns for protecting the various treasures are already covered under a multitude of federal laws, such as the Archaeological Resources Protection, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act, and many additionally listed laws. Most importantly, both of the proclamations assert that the newly modified monument boundaries are “the smallest compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected,” thus complying with the Antiquities Law that Presidents Clinton and Obama cited as their authority for egregious and arrogant seizures of land, which clearly violated the “smallest compatible” language of the act.

President Trump’s Utah proclamations are the first delivery on a an [executive order](#) he promulgated on April 26 directing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review “all Presidential designations or expansions of designations under the Antiquities Act made since January 1, 1996, where the designation covers more than 100,000 acres, where the designation after expansion covers more than 100,000 acres, or where the Secretary determines that the designation or expansion was made without adequate public outreach and coordination with relevant stakeholders.”

Predictable Outrage From the Pampered, Privileged Plutocrats

“I’m going to sue him,” says billionaire Yvon Chouinard, founder and CEO of Patagonia, an outdoor gear brand favored by much of the trendie-yuppie-greenie set. “It seems the only thing this administration understands is lawsuits. I think it’s a shame that only 4% of American lands are national parks.... We need more, not less. This government is evil and I’m not going to sit back and let evil win.”

On Monday the home page of Patagonia.com, which was blacked out in protest of President Trump, carried a message that said, “The President Stole Your Land.” The page also offered an option to learn more about “the largest elimination of protected land in American history.”

Chouinard, who lives the dream life of a spoiled eco-brat — jet-setting about the planet to climb the highest peaks, kayak the gnarliest rivers, surf the biggest waves, and sail the seven seas — is not above sermonizing to the rest of us on carbon footprints. Typical of the uber-rich enviro-elite, Chouinard would push family farmers, ranchers, loggers, miners, and other working people (who produce the raw materials for Patagonia trendies) off the land so that he and his privileged cohorts might arrogate the



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“public lands” for their own private playgrounds.

The Trump proclamations are “a shameful and illegal attack on our nation’s protected lands,” said Jamie Rappaport Clark, a former director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and now head of Defenders of Wildlife. “Teddy Roosevelt is rolling in his grave. We’ll be seeing President Trump in court.”

Ben Schreiber, the senior political strategist at Friends of the Earth, had a similar take. “Donald Trump is overseeing the largest elimination of protected areas in US history,” he said. “Dismantling these monuments is Trump’s latest gift to the corporate interests who backed his campaign. This action is unprecedented and will end up in court.”

Schreiber gave a hint of the extremist nature of the Friends of the Earth agenda (as well as the agendas of the Clinton and Obama administrations) with an additional comment on the proclamations. “The majority of Americans want to keep fossil fuels in the ground,” Schreiber declared.

Real Green Agenda: Keep Fossil Fuels in the Ground

Schreiber’s comments about keeping fossil fuels in the ground point to the real objective of the Clinton and Obama monument creations. Using pretexts about protecting natural scenic wonders, historical sites, and endangered species, the actual target of the monument designations was (and is) America’s natural resources. Specifically, the intent was/is to lock up the coal, oil, gas, shale, minerals, precious metals, timber, grazing land, etc. Why? As we have extensively reported (see, for example, “[Enforced Energy Poverty: Coal, Oil, Gas Must Stay in Ground Say Alarmists](#),” and “[Top Climate Alarm ‘Scientist’: Get Rid of Cars, Coal, Steel — or It’s End of the World](#)”), the green extremists and their globalist funders are on record in favor of forcing America to “de-industrialize,” for Americans to be forced to adopt a “greener” lifestyle. In order to accomplish that, natural resources, especially those essential to cheap energy, have to be made less available and more costly.

The recent Trump proclamations in Utah are a start at reversing the blatant abuses of Presidents Clinton and Obama. But there is much more to go, including abuses by President George W. Bush, as well. However, as Michael Tennant [pointed out](#) in *The New American* last April, the only real solution that will begin to remedy the myriad of remaining abuses and avoid more of the same in the future is for Congress to repeal the Antiquities Act. This act is manifestly unconstitutional and, by its very nature, invites abuse and corruption. Why must we accept the premise that the occupant of the White House, politicians in Congress, and federal bureaucrats can, and will, better understand and protect the natural wonders and resources than will the people and state governments that are closest to them?

Getting rid of the Antiquities Act, though, would hardly suffice to correct the “federal overreach” that plagues the western states. In my 2014 article, [Feds vs. the West](#), as well as in several subsequent article (listed and linked below), I covered the issue of the oppressive “Federal Footprint” that is stomping the life out of the rural West. As explained in those articles, the American founders never envisioned — and would be aghast to see — a federal government that would occupy and control 30 percent to 84 percent of a state’s lands. Yet, that is what we have today in the 12 western states. In refusing to relinquish sovereignty over the lands that became the western states, the federal government is acting as an unconstitutional landlord, and is denying them “equal footing” (as the U.S. Supreme Court put it) with the other states in our union.

This is not only unjust and unconstitutional, as I explain in the above-mentioned article, but it is also counter-productive in terms of the stated objectives of preserving and protecting the natural environment. The federal government’s own studies admit that the national forests, national parks,



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national monuments, and virtually all other national “treasures” have been abysmally managed, their critical maintenance has been neglected, and they are, as a result, in various stages of “crisis.” The jet-setting Patagonia/Friends of the Earth doomsayers and their political allies would have us believe that President Trump’s proclamations mean we will soon be fracking the Grand Canyon and roasting the last spotted owl. Not so — by a long shot. We are simply seeing a small step in restorative order — one that, hopefully will be followed by many more executive, legislative, and judicial actions to undo more than a century of “federal overreach.”

Photo of President Trump: AP Images

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