



Utah's Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments make list of 15 wild areas at high risk of development for oil, gas and other resources

New report shines spotlight on important wild lands that must be protected

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Denver, CO - (September 19, 2017) -- A new report released today by The Wilderness Society raises the alarm about [Bears Ears](#) and [Grand Staircase-Escalante](#) national monuments and other wild lands across the U.S. threatened by extractive industries eager to exploit the resources on or underneath them, including oil, gas, coal and potash.

'[Too Wild To Drill](#)' identifies 15 unique places found on public lands that are at high risk of drilling, mining and other development—and the damage and destruction that inevitably follow. The Trump administration's efforts to remove protections from national monuments, including Utah's Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, could open them up to mining and drilling, destroying many of the sensitive resources there.

"Just when Americans thought our treasured lands, including culturally and scientifically important places, were protected from the impacts of energy development, the new administration comes in and puts the future of these places at even greater risk than before," said [Phil Hanceford](#), Conservation Director at The Wilderness Society's BLM Action Center. "We will use every tool at our disposal to ensure these monuments are adequately and permanently protected, as intended."

The fossil fuel industry has long eyed the coal resources found in the Grand Staircase-Escalante region, despite the recent rapid decline in demand for domestic coal. They have found a sympathetic ear in the Trump administration, which is proudly developing a fossil-fuels-above-all energy plan. Removing protections for Bears Ears National Monument would pave the way for oil and gas drilling and potash and uranium mining, inevitably destroying some of the area's world-class cultural and natural resources, including those important to local Native American Tribes involved in the designation and management of the monument.

"The internationally significant cultural landscape protected by Bears Ears is just too important to American history – and sacred to Native peoples – to mar with extractive activities," said Josh Ewing, Executive Director of Friends of Cedar Mesa. "As a resident of the town bordering Bears Ears National Monument, I also value the protection the monument provides to our irreplaceable water supply."

The Interior Department received more than 2.8 million total public comments with 99.2 percent in support of leaving our national monuments alone. This included comments from business owners near national monuments whose livelihood and economic stability are also at stake.

For example, Grand Staircase-Escalante has become a destination for tourists from around the globe for unique hiking, camping and backpacking experience. Tourists spend money at nearby restaurants, hotels and shops as well as outfitter businesses in southern Utah. The monument has demonstrated its ability to support the local economy and local economic growth has been steady since the monument designation in 1996. This is why the Escalante-Boulder Chamber of Commerce has unanimously supported leaving the monument and its full protections intact.

"I invested in my local economy before Grand Staircase-Escalante became a national monument," said Susan Hand, a Kanab, UT business owner. "Those early years were so lean, I wondered if our business could survive. But since the designation I've seen steady growth. Moreover, our town has developed a robust and vibrant economy as more and more people discover this region and the unique history and recreation opportunities the land holds. Without Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, the future of businesses in the surrounding communities—and our quality of life—would be at risk. We shouldn't surrender the protections of this incredible landscape for drilling rigs or mines."

The release of 'Too Wild Too Drill' falls during [numerous reviews](#) of public lands policies, ordered by President Donald Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, that are taking place behind closed doors with little or no public oversight or accountability. In fact, earlier this week news broke of the Trump administration's secret efforts to roll back protections for several wild places featured in 'Too Wild To Drill,' including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante national monuments, presumably to make them available for energy development.

The Wilderness Society issues a new version of 'Too Wild To Drill' every few years to call attention to vulnerable places on public lands. In this edition, other places highlighted include the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the most remote and wild places left in the world, as well as:

- Greater Grand Canyon Watershed, Arizona
- Mojave Trails National Monument, California
- North Fork of the Gunnison, Colorado
- Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Minnesota
- Badger-Two Medicine, Montana
- Paradise Valley, Montana
- Owyhee Desert Sagebrush, Nevada
- Chihuahuan Desert Rivers, New Mexico
- Wayne National Forest, Ohio
- Appalachian Trail, Virginia
- Green River Valley, Washington
- Northern Red Desert, Wyoming

"Once these lands are gone, they're gone, and we can never get them back," said Hanceford. "The Trump administration is feeling the pressure of the fossil fuel and mining industries but America has spoken loud and clear—keep your hands off our national monuments. Our national monuments are certainly too wild to drill and mine!"

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The Wilderness Society is the leading conservation organization working to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. Founded in 1935, and now with more than one million members and supporters, The Wilderness Society has led the effort to permanently protect 109 million acres of wilderness and to ensure sound management of our shared national lands.

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