



ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Rising from the center of the southeastern Utah landscape and visible from every direction are twin buttes so distinctive that in each of the native languages of the region their name is the same: Moon'Navvut, Shash' Jaa, K'wiyagatu Nukavachi, Ansh An Lashok'wile, or "Bears Ears." For hundreds of generations, native peoples lived in the surrounding deep sandstone canyons, desert mesas, and meadow mountain tops, which constitute one of the densest and most significant cultural landscapes in the United States. Abundant rock art, ancient cliff dwellings, ceremonial sites, and countless other artifacts provide an extraordinary archaeological and cultural record that is important to us all, but most notably the land is profoundly sacred to many Native American tribes, including the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah & Ouray, Hopi Nation, and Zuni Tribe.

The area's human history is as vibrant and diverse as the ruggedly beautiful landscape. From the earliest occupation, native peoples left traces of their presence. Clovis people hunted among the cliffs and canyons of Cedar Mesa as early as 13,000 years ago, leaving behind tools and projectile points in places like the Lime Ridge Clovis Site, one of the oldest known archaeological sites in Utah. Archaeologists believe that these early people hunted mammoths, ground sloths, and other now-extinct megafauna, a narrative echoed by native creation stories. Hunters and gatherers continued to live in this region in the Archaic Period, with sites dating as far back as 8500 years ago.

Ancestral Puebloans followed, beginning to occupy the area at least 2500 years ago, leaving behind items from their daily life such as baskets, pottery, and weapons. These early farmers of Basketmaker 2 and 3 and builders of Pueblo 1, 2 and 3 left their marks on the land. The remains of single family dwellings, granaries, kivas, towers, and large villages and roads linking them together reveal a complex cultural history. "Moki steps," hand and toe holds carved into steep canyon walls by the Ancestral Puebloans, illustrate the early people's ingenuity and perseverance and are still used today to access dwellings along cliff walls. Other, distinct cultures have thrived here as well — the Fremont people, Numic- and Athabaskan-speaking hunter-gatherers, and Utes and Navajos. Resources such as the Doll House Ruin in Dark Canyon Wilderness Area and the Moon House Ruin on Cedar Mesa allow visitors to marvel at artistry and architecture that have withstood thousands of seasons in this harsh climate.

The landscape is a milieu of the accessible and observable together with the inaccessible and hidden. The area's petroglyphs and pictographs capture the imagination with images dating back at least 5000 years and spanning a range of styles and traditions. From life-size ghostlike figures that defy categorization, to the more literal depictions of bighorn sheep, birds, and lizards, these drawings enable us to feel the humanity of these ancient artists. The Indian Creek area contains spectacular rock art, including hundreds of petroglyphs at Newspaper Rock. Visitors to Bears Ears can also discover more recent rock art left by the Ute, Navajo, and Paiute peoples. It is also the less visible sites, however — those that supported the food gathering, subsistence and ceremony of daily life — that tell the story of the people who lived here. Historic remnants of Native American sheep-herding and farming are scattered throughout the area, and pottery and Navajo hogans record the lifeways of native peoples in the 19th and 20th centuries.

For thousands of years, humans have occupied and stewarded this land. With respect to most of these people, their contribution to the historical record is unknown, but some have played a more public role. Famed Navajo headman K'wiyélie was born around 1840 near the twin Bears Ears buttes. His band used the area's remote canyons to evade capture by the U.S. Army and avoid the fate that befell many other Navajo bands: surrender, the Long Walk, and forced relocation to Goshute Redondo. Another renowned 19th century Navajo leader, "Kastiin Ch'ihaa'jin" Manuelito, was also born near the Bears Ears.

The area's cultural importance to Native American tribes continues to this day. As they have for generations, these tribes and their members come here for ceremonies and to visit sacred sites. Throughout the region, many landscape features, such as Comb Ridge, the San Juan River, and Cedar Mesa, are closely tied to native stories of creation, danger, protection, and healing. The towering spires in the Valley of the Gods are sacred to the Navajo, representing ancient Navajo warriors frozen in stone. Traditions of hunting, fishing, gathering, and wood cutting are still practiced by tribal members, as is collection of medicinal and ceremonial plants, edible herbs, and materials for crafting items like baskets and footwear. The traditional ecological knowledge amassed by the Native Americans whose ancestors inhabited this region, passed down from generation to generation, offers critical insight into the historic and scientific significance of the area. Such knowledge is, itself, a resource to be protected and used in understanding and managing this landscape sustainably for generations to come...

Barack Obama
December 28, 2016