"With the Stroke of a Pen": Designation of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument and the Impact on Trust

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Abstract In September of 1996, without prior warning to Utah residents, the Clinton Administration announced the creation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) in southern Utah. Reactions by residents in neighboring gateway communities were both swift and intense. Lack of citizen input in the process drew ire among Utah residents living near the monument and statewide. In this article we examine how the designation process has impacted residents' trust in the federal agency managing the monument—the Bureau of Land Management. Research on trust in federal resource management agencies is important for successful natural resource planning and management. We extend the research by incorporating the manner in which the designation of the GSENM occurred as an additional factor in the analyses on trust. We find the manner of designation matters, and discuss implications of this finding for both research and policy makers.

Keywords Gateway communities · National monuments · Natural protected areas · Resource management agencies · Trust

"Twenty years from now will anyone care that the Grand Staircase and other landscape monuments were set aside with little, if any, public participation and by a process so lacking... that even admirers of the monument admit to some discomfort?... If history is any guide, it seems most likely that 20, or even ten, years from now most will look out upon the dramatic western landscapes that have been set aside and be grateful" (Rashand 2001: 619)

"I did not appreciate the way President Clinton, with the stroke of a pen, locked up millions of acres of land without even visiting the area he was looking up." 81-year-old lifelong Escalante resident, July 2006

It's a well-known, and often repeated, story in Utah. In September of 1996, without prior warning to most Utah residents, the Clinton Administration announced the creation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) in southern Utah. Reactions by vocal residents in neighboring gateway communities were both swift and intense. Groups of schoolchildren released black balloons signaling mourning, and effigies of former President Clinton and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt "dangled from the lampposts of the streets in Escalante"—one of the key gateway communities to the monument (Baird 2005: C4).

As discussed in more detail shortly, opposition to the designation occurred for various reasons, including the loss of anticipated economic opportunities from a proposed coal mine (the designation blocked mining), anticipated impacts of future restrictions on traditional uses of the public land; and animosity toward President Clinton.

Opposition to the designation also resulted from how it occurred— with the stroke of a pen. Using the 1906 Antiquities Act, President Clinton was able to create the GSENM without public participation or Congressional approval. Few local public officials knew about the designation until the day before the announcement, made by President Clinton on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Lack of citizen input in the process drew ire among Utah citizens living near the monument and statewide. As one Southern Utah county commissioner stated, "All kinds of people I work with are angry about the process that didn't happen" (Larmer 1996: par. 28). In 2011, 15 years after the designation, most of Utah's congressional delegation introduced federal legislation that would void presidential powers under...
“quietly and without warning or local advice” (2009: 191) created a national park along its border with Guatemala. Similar to Haenn’s (1999) findings in Mexico, those living in the boundaries of the NPA were not aware of the designation, nor that they were living in an NPA until much later—in this case—3 years after the national park was established. Restrictions to residents’ hunting and fishing in the area occurred, resulting in what Dowie terms, “soft eviction” (Dowie 2009: 229). That is, while not forcibly evicted from the NPA land, the residents, through regulations and restrictions on the NPA, were evicted from traditional occupations and practices done on the land.

Similar research conducted on designation of NPAs in the Global North is underdeveloped. Beyond economic impact studies, little has been done which looks at social and political impacts of designation of protected areas and the protected area-neighboring community relationship (Brown and Lipscombe 1999). One exception is Robert W. Righter’s book, Crucible for Conservation: The Struggle for Grand Teton National Park (1982). Righter details Wyoming residents’ reactions to President Roosevelt’s establishment of Jackson Hole National Monument on March 15, 1943, including calling it a, “fool, sneaking Pearl Harbor blow” (1982: 110). While Righter notes that the “moral outrage” of 1943 had passed by 1947, Wyoming is the only state where the 1906 Antiquities Act cannot be used, due to Roosevelt’s designation.

The research illustrates how the exclusionary manner in which designation of NPAs has occurred often results in detrimental impacts for the residents living in and/or near the NPA and also produces contentious relations between those representing the designation makers and local residents. As Méndez-Contreras et al. (2008: 112) note, “When people feel excluded from the establishment of an NPA in a territory that, for historical, customary or legal reasons belongs to them or they perceive as being theirs, they assume the “outsiders” establishing it form part of a group external to their community, with contrary objectives and interests.” We now turn to examining this contentious relationship between those representing designation makers of NPAs and local residents of NPAs in the US.

**Trust in US Resource Management Agencies**

Research on the relationship between US governmental authorities and residents living near an NPA focuses primarily on trust in these agencies. And, there is ample evidence of a distrusting public living near an NPA. For example, Shindler et al. (2011: 337) examine trust in the US Forest Service (USFS) and BLM in the Great Basin, measured by residents’ reaction to statements gauging how federal managers engage the public through using public input in decision-making, building trust and cooperation, and incorporating participation. The researchers find that Great Basin residents surveyed gave the agencies low marks for trust building and their use of public input. In their study of nonmetropolitan communities in Idaho, Utah and Wyoming, Kranich and Smith (1998) asked residents whether they trust federal resource management agencies such as USFS, BLM, and Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS) agencies to “make wise decisions about the management of natural resources on public lands” (p. 685). The researchers find that while trust across all agencies is low, trust is highest in the USFS, followed by F&WS, then the BLM.

One of the few longitudinal studies on trust in government resource management agencies was conducted in eastern Oregon and Washington. Shindler and Toman (2003) used panel data from mail surveys administered in 1996 and 2000, to measure attitudes toward fire management programs on federal government lands. The researchers found that in both years, “citizens voiced relatively low levels of trust in the USFS to implement a responsible and effective program” (2003: 10), and that this level of trust decreased significantly (from 52 % to 43 % trusting) over the 4 years. Two additional studies that measure change in agencies and residents’ relationship over time (but do not include specific timeframes measured) include Frenz et al. (2000) and van Kooten et al. (2006). In their interviews with residents of Western US communities and USFS personnel, Frenz et al. (2000) found that conflict between the residents and USFS increased over time, and a decline in trust of public land managers has occurred over time in Nevada, with ranchers reporting a decline in trust with the USFS and the BLM (van Kooten et al. 2006).

Various explanations have been offered for this decrease in trust. As Kranich and Smith (1998) detail, during the 1990s relationships between governmental resource management agencies and Western rural communities grew increasingly contentious as a result of factors such as increased grazing restrictions on public lands, regulations on timber harvests, and public land use policies of the Clinton Administration. van Kooten et al. (2006) and Frenz et al. (2000) echo this, arguing that with reductions in public grazing allocations has come “a decline in trust between ranchers and the land agencies” (van Kooten et al. 2006: 710). Trust in the USFS declined more than with the BLM (60 % and 39 % respectively), given the USFS “reduced access to public forage to a greater extent than did the BLM” (van Kooten et al. 2006: 710). Similarly, Frenz et al. (2000) attribute the decline in Western US residents’ trust in government agencies due to resource management decisions being made by USFS staff in Western rural communities.

An additional reason given for this decline in trust focuses on the public input process, including resident’s
raising livestock, and many identify with a local “custom and culture” associated with ranching" Brugger (2007: 7).

As far back as a 1936 Escalante national monument proposal, trust in federal land agencies was tenuous, with local residents and state officials feeling their voices were not included by the federal government in decision making processes regarding monument designation. In 1938, the Utah Planning Board called for “public opposition” to a 1936 national monument proposal by the federal government, suggesting an alternative proposal that would “require local approval for all executive proclamations of national monuments” (Richardson 1965: 124).

Since Dinosaur National Monument and Arches National Monument in Utah had been designated (in 1915 and 1929 respectively), according to local authorities, “without notice to state officials or residents,” one Planning Board member stated: “I just cannot trust the Park officials... We have too many examples in this state of double dealing by them” (Richardson 1965: 124).

In 1940, Utah’s Governor Blood wrote to all Utah representatives in the U.S. Congress stating, “Some morning we may wake up and find that... the Escalante Monument has been created by Presidential proclamation, then it will be too late to forestall what we in Utah think would be a calamity” (cited in Richardson 1965: 127). Governor’s Bloods’ words were prophetic, as most residents of Escalante argue a sudden proclamation is exactly what happened when, in 1996, the GSENM was established by President Clinton on BLM lands to the north and west of Escalante.2

The economic and political interests regarding the use of the GSENM’s natural resources are also of note. The designation was part of a larger wilderness issue occurring in the area. While environmental groups were lobbying for increased designation of wilderness acres and protection of the area from mining, state and federal delegates from Utah were attempting to pass legislation to allow mining on the land. The potential of planned coal mining in the GSENM area had generated expectations of economic benefits among local residents. The Dutch mining company,

\[\text{Fig. 1 Location of Escalante}\]

2 For a complete history of the public lands which became GSENM see Belco and Rottinghaus (2009).
questionnaire (within 24–48 h of delivery). If a respondent was unable to complete the survey by the time the research team left the area, s/he was provided a postage-paid envelope and asked to return the completed questionnaire by mail. These procedures produced response rates of 79% (n=98) in 1996 and 82% (n=151) in 2006. For this analysis, we included only those from the 2006 survey who were living in Escalante in 1996 (n=104) to make comparisons across the 10 year timeframe. While population data for the exact timeframes of the surveys is unavailable, in 1995 the total population estimate for Escalante was 901 (Population Projections for Utah’s Cities and Unincorporated Areas 1997). For those 18 years of age and over, Escalante’s population was 561 in 2000, 673 in 2005, and 621 in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012).

More males responded in 1996 (54%) and more females responded in 2006 (54%). The average age of respondents in 1996 was 52 years and 59 years, in 2006. Ninety-eight percent of the sample identified as White. Levels of education were fairly similar between the two samples in the 2 years of data collection, with over half of the sample having some college education. While not asked in the 1996 survey, in 2006 59% of the respondents self-identified as Republican, 22% as Independent, 12% as “Other”, and 7% as Democrat.

Our qualitative data consists of respondents’ open-ended comments from the 2006 survey when asked about important issues facing Escalante. We were cognizant of emergent themes related to reactions to the GSEN M designation and trust in government agencies. We also remained open to new themes emerging in the data (Aronson 1994). We ensured inter- and intra-coder reliability by using multiple coders and coding the data a minimum of three times. The first read uncovered potential themes and patterns, allowing creation of a coding scheme for subsequent readings. The second and third readings ensured consistency in the coding, paying attention to the depth and breadth in the comments. The dominant themes presented are those consistent across age, gender, and length of residency in Escalante.

Our analyses begin by examining how perceptions of the BLM compared with other government land management agencies like the USFS, F&W, and NPS changed over time, from 1996 at the time of the GSEN M designation announcement, to 2006. We then turn to the findings from the qualitative analyses. Finally, to more closely examine the impacts of trust in the BLM, we turn to structural equation modeling (SEM) of the 2006 data.

Results and Discussion

View of Federal Agencies Over Time

Respondents were asked, on a scale from 1 (Far too little) to 7 (Far too much), how much effort government resource management agencies make to include local residents’ input in public land decisions. Independent t-test results show that no agency is perceived as making too much effort, but all agencies are seen as making more effort in 1996 than 2006 (Table 1). In 1996, the highest mean is held for the USFS (3.00) followed by the BLM (2.87). For all four agencies, respondents’ perception of inclusion of local residents’ input in public land decisions effort has declined over the 10 years. While the USFS still received the highest score (albeit low at 2.76), the BLM dropped to third in terms of perceived effort, and is the only agency to decline significantly (p<.05).

Respondents were also asked about their level of trust in the agencies to make good decisions about management of public lands (based on a scale where 1 = No Trust to 7 = Complete Trust). In 1996, the USFS and BLM are either at “some trust” (4.09) or just below “some trust” (3.92), respectively, which were the two highest mean scores. In 2006 this changes, with no agency at the level of “some trust”, the USFS closest with a mean of 3.72, and the BLM at 2.82, tied with NPS for the lowest level of trust. Consistent with the decline in perceived effort residents have of agencies to include their input, survey respondents also expressed a decline in trust for all agencies to make good decisions about management of land. Of particular note is the change in trust in the BLM from 1996 to 2006, which, again, is the only agency to have a significant decrease over the 10 years (p<.001).

The decline in Escalante residents’ perceptions of resource management agencies and trust in them is consistent with previous research showing a decline in trust over time between these agencies and local residents (Frentz et al. 2000; Shindler and Toman 2003; van Kooten et al. 2006). We next turn to results from our qualitative and multivariate analyses to explain this decrease in residents’ trust of the BLM over the 10 year period.

Several interrelated themes emerged in the qualitative analysis. These include (a) impacts of the GSEN M, (b) the manner in which the GSEN M designation occurred and (c) the political nature of government protected areas.

Impacts of the GSEN M were noted by 52 (50%) of the 2006 survey respondents and are expressed in general and specific comments. The general view of the impacts of the
58-year old female, Escalante resident for 16 years

Lack of inclusion of local voices in the designation is evidenced in this 81-year old lifelong Escalante resident's quote from the beginning of the article, "I did not appreciate the way President Clinton with the stroke of a pen locked up millions of acres of land without even visiting the area he was locking up." Residents' frustration with the GSENM designation process is also illustrated in this 36-year old resident of 12 years when he states, "Decisions about Escalante and surrounding areas are being made with little or no input from citizens or surrounding communities." And a 69-year old lifelong resident noted in her comment regarding the GSENM:

It would be nice to be considered when things happen that effects [sic] your current lifestyle. It has been stated that "the local people are not smart enough to know what we want." Well, let me tell you we do, but so many times we are left out of the loop.

A consistent thread in the above comments, and a third dominant theme, is the political nature of residents' reactions to the GSENM. That is, the residents' perceptions of GSENM are as much about politics as they are about relationships between humans and the environment—and as much about feelings of powerlessness as they are about specific impacts on people and the land. It is not just the monument, nor the designation process, but residents' perceived lack of democracy and control over their culture and lifestyle that is at issue. This is further exemplified in these residents' comments:

Escalante was settled by honest, hardworking people without government help. For over 100 years, people have lived and worked the land supporting families and a way of life enjoyed by those who lived here. Many of us are multi-generational families who continue to love this town. The downfall of our community has been the environment and government agencies who have encroached on our land and have forced their opinions and land regulations upon us. They all need to go back where they came from and leave the people of southern Utah alone.

77-year old male, Resident of Escalante all his life

We do feel that too often we are ignored when decisions are made concerning us and our area. We are too often told but not asked.

84-year old female, Escalante resident for 64 years

We would like for the people that have always been here to be able to have a say in whatever happens in Escalante. Our own local voices are often not heard.

45-year old male, Escalante resident all his life

The language in the above comments also provides some insights as to what may have influenced the change in residents' trust in the BLM over the 10 years. A 52-year old lifelong Escalante resident alludes to the impact on trust in the BLM when he writes, "I was working for the BLM prior to the Monument creation and locals were content with BLM management. Not totally happy but content. Creation of the Monument—in the sneaky, cowardly manner that it was created—made a major lack of trust of the government. I am glad that I no longer work for them."

This residents' comment clearly draws a link between the manner of designation and its potential role in influencing trust in the BLM. We more closely examine this relationship in our multivariate analyses, to which we now turn.

The Dependent Variable: Trust in the BLM

The dependent variable in the model is trust in the BLM. Respondents were asked, on a scale from 1 (No Trust) to 7 (Complete Trust) how much they trust the BLM to make good decisions about the management of natural resources on public lands. We selected this measure given the emphasis on trust in management activities in previous research (Krannich and Smith 1998; Olsen and Shindler 2010).

Independent Variables

'Monument Designation' is a scale of statements that measures residents' satisfaction with aspects of the public participation process related to the GSENM designation in 1996. On a scale from 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 5 (Very Satisfied) respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with federal officials giving/getting information to/from the public, as well as fairness of the designation process and citizens' opportunity to be involved in the decision making. Exact wording of the indicators is shown in Table 2. This scale is a reliable (α=.90) measure of satisfaction with the designation, supported by confirmatory factor analyses (CFA).5

'Current decision-making process' includes two survey items. Survey respondents were asked how satisfied they were with particular aspects of the current public participation process related to GSENM including fairness of the decision making process (all citizens' voices are heard and considered) and opportunities to be involved in decision-making regarding GSENM. Possible responses range from Very Dissatisfied (1) to Very Satisfied (5). These survey items tap the process's inclusiveness regarding citizen involvement (α=.81) and include relevant issues identified in

5 Both component and overall model fit statistics from CFA support this measure. Detailed results available upon request.
Table 3 Determinants of trust in the Bureau of Land Management (N=104) regression results

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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>(1.183)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monument designation</td>
<td>.135*</td>
<td>.243 ( .063)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current decision making process</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>.173 ( .094)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in BLM meetings</td>
<td>-.326</td>
<td>-.104 ( .293)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sorry to leave Escalante</td>
<td>.411</td>
<td>.152 ( .251)</td>
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<td>Years lived in Escalante</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>-.061 ( .007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party identification (Republican)</td>
<td>-.268</td>
<td>-.084 ( .281)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (male)</td>
<td>-.980**</td>
<td>-.311 ( .283)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.037 ( .117)</td>
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<td>Adjusted R squared</td>
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*p <.05; **p <.01 or below

process (indeed, when asked on the survey about the designation process some respondents wrote "what process"?)

In addition, the significance of gender may be explained, in part, by the occupational identity held by those in Escalante. Previous analysis on residents in this same geographical region revealed that both men and women hold a high level of occupational identity to traditional natural resource-based industry jobs such as ranching and mining. However, men have a significantly higher level of this sense of identity, and were more active in voluntary organizations associated with resource-based occupations (such as local irrigation district groups and agricultural production organizations) and more attached to preserving opportunities for traditional activities such as grazing/logging/farming (Petzzelka et al. 2006).

There are also several non-significant relationships of interest. While the direction of the relationships between residents’ perceptions of the current GSENM decision making process and trust in the BLM is positive, residents’ views of the initial designation trump the current public input process, which is not a significant predictor of trust in this case. In addition, those who participated in BLM sponsored meetings were less trusting, suggesting Escalante residents may view the agency as going through the motions of holding public meetings, but not incorporating residents’ voices, echoing previous research on government agencies and public input processes (Cheng and Mattor 2006). This negative relationship may also be due to the gendered nature of participation in BLM meetings (31% of men versus 17% of women, significant difference at p <.01). While neither measure of community attachment was significant, length of residence has a negative relationship with trust, with those living in Escalante longer less trusting, consistent with previous research on the relationship between residents and federal resource management agencies (Kramnick and Smith 1998). And although not significant, those self-identifying as Republicans were less trusting in the BLM. Former President Clinton, who designated the monument, is a Democrat and also finished third in Utah in the 1992 Presidential Election, after George H.W. Bush and Ross Perot, the Republican and Independent candidates, respectively. It may be that views of the government and the GSENM decision-making process are intertwined, and we are unable to separate these processes in our data.

Conclusion

Unlike the prediction at the beginning of this article which dismisses the controversy that surrounded the designation and in essence justifies the manner in which it was done, some residents do care that the GSENM was designated with little public participation. One interpretation of these results is disconcerting. There is much focus in the literature on ways to build trust between federal resource management agencies and local residents (e.g. Frantz et al. 2000; Olsen and Shindler 2010). Hibbing and Thicss-Morse (2001) argue that government’s responsiveness to public input and the manner in which this occurs, remains central to understanding trust in public officials and agencies. What our study findings suggest though, is it may not be what the BLM is doing (or not doing) locally which influences trust in them, it is the actions by those at a more distant level of governance.

This may be a difficult barrier for the BLM to overcome, which is a second disconcerting interpretation of the findings. We see this being played out currently, as discussions of the BLM grazing plan have begun. Seen as “too controversial” a topic after the GSENM designation, 15 years later it appears it still is. The current BLM Monument manager restarted the grazing plan process in early 2010, but has since canceled community meetings scheduled for May 2012, stating the BLM needs, in addition to other things, time to “build trust” (Loomis 2012: B2). While we are optimistic that trust building between the BLM local personnel and community residents is possible, how to move...


