



Rediscover YOUR Public Lands

Questions and Answers on the Grand Staircase/Escalante National Monument

What is a national monument?

A national monument is a land designation to protect "objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the government of the United States."

Under what legal authority was this action taken?

In the Antiquities Act of 1906, Congress gave the President authority to designate national monuments by proclamation. President Theodore Roosevelt, for example, exercised this authority to ensure protection for the Grand Canyon. Nearly every President since has exercised this authority to create national monuments. More than 100 national monuments have been established by Presidents over the past 90 years. Some of the nation's best loved natural wonders were first protected by this authority, including Zion, Bryce Canyon, Glacier Bay, and Death Valley.

What area is encompassed by the newly designated Grand Staircase- Escalante National Monument?

The proposed Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument covers about 1.7 million acres of Federal land. It is located on the Colorado Plateau in south-central Utah.

What resources are contained within the national monument?

The newly designated national monument contains features of geological, paleontological, archeological, biological and historical significance. The national monument extends across fragile and scenic terrain, including red rock canyons, rare rock formations and high cliffs that provide vistas of up to 60 miles. Thousand-year old pinon and junipers can be found in the region, as well as prehistoric dwellings, examples of ancient rock art, a world-class fossil trove and hundreds of living species of amphibians, birds, mammals and reptiles.

How does a national monument differ from a wilderness area?

Wilderness areas are managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964, and are areas with no roads, and have opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Motorized vehicles and other forms of intensive human activity are generally prohibited within a wilderness area. By contrast, a greater range of activity is permitted in national monuments so long as it is consistent with protection of the scientific and historic values of the area. According to the Presidential proclamation creating the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, existing uses will continue to be permitted, including grazing and existing types of recreation, such as hunting and fishing where authorized under state law.

How will this affect the reinventorying of Utah land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that is under consideration for wilderness designation?

The designation will not affect the BLM's current statewide reinventory, which is due to be completed in January 1997.

Why was this designation necessary?

The designation was necessary to ensure protection for the area's resources. Over the past few decades, Federal, State and local governments, as well as private groups and individuals, have been involved in efforts to evaluate this area for its resource values. These evaluation efforts have been aimed at ensuring that an appropriate level of protection was given to the area. In the late 1970s, the BLM evaluated it for its "wilderness characteristics," in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The BLM designated several Wilderness Study Areas totaling 900,000 acres that are located in the area covered by the newly designated monument. The wilderness inventory and study process identified many objects of scientific and historic interest within the monument area.

Who will manage this National Monument?

The Secretary of the Interior will manage the monument through the BLM.

How will it be managed?

Under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM will prepare a management plan within three years. The Secretary will then issue such regulations for its management as deemed appropriate. During this period, there will be extensive public input.

Will there be consultation with the State of Utah and Congress?

Yes. Especially because the State owns several thousand acres of isolated, 640 acre sections of school lands scattered within the boundaries of the monument. The President has directed the Secretary to work closely with Governor Leavitt, Congressman Orton, Senators Bennett and Hatch, and others to respond to exchange requests and other issues submitted by the State. These State lands currently produce essentially no income for Utah schools, but the U.S. has authority to exchange these isolated school lands for more readily developable land of equal value elsewhere in Utah.

How will this affect Federal water rights?

The proclamation does not reserve water as a matter of Federal law. In compiling the management plan, the Secretary will address the extent to which water is necessary for the proper care and management of the objects of this monument, and the extent to which further action may be necessary under Federal or State law to ensure availability of water.

Is this the first step toward the creation of a national park or a national wilderness area?

Not necessarily. An Act of Congress is required to create a national park or wilderness. Congress has sometimes created national parks or wilderness in existing national monuments. For example, Zion, Bryce, Death Valley, Glacier Bay and Grand Canyon are now national parks, having been first put aside by Presidents as national monuments.

What will be the impact on coal development in the area?

The proclamation preserves valid existing rights, including coal leases within the monument held by Andalex, a Dutch-owned corporation. However, any proposed mining activity is subject to an environmental assessment process that will address whether mining is compatible with the purposes of the monument. Andalex has the opportunity to exchange its leases for more appropriate sites outside the monument area. Other than valid existing rights, all Federal lands within the boundaries of this monument are withdrawn from entry, location, selection, sale, leasing, or other disposition under the public land laws, other than by exchange that furthers the protective purposes of the monument. Among other things, the proclamation withdraws land in the area from new claims under the Mining Law of 1872.

Does the BLM have the resources and/or experience to manage this National Monument?

Since passage of FLPMA, the BLM has administered the public lands for multiple use and sustained yield. This includes the management of features of natural, environmental, cultural and scientific significance. This broad range of experience qualifies the BLM for management of its first-ever national monument.

What will the impact be on the economy of Southern Utah?

We believe it will be positive. Public demand for open space continues to grow. Between 1993 and 2006, an increase of 3.36 million new jobs is projected in the Southwest, which will place additional demands on the recreational opportunities afforded by national parks and public lands in the area. In 1994, the total economic value of recreation on BLM public lands in Utah exceeded \$610 million. The creation of the Grand Staircase- Escalante National Monument promises to increase this figure, bringing with it many new business opportunities.



- [Presidential Proclamation: Establishment of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument](#)
- [Remarks by the President in Making Environment Announcement Creating Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument](#)
- [Act of June 18, 1906, 16 U.S.C. 431-433 \(Popularly known as the *Antiquities Act of 1906*\)](#)

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