

Friends, foes of national monuments jockey for Interior secretary's ear

By MICHELLE L. PRICE
Associated Press

MONTICELLO, Utah (AP) — Fifth-generation Utah rancher Bruce Adams enjoyed a prime seat next to U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke as he toured a national monument created on land in Utah that Adams' ancestors helped settle in 1879.

Adams, a county commissioner, joined Zinke on a helicopter ride and described the landscape of Bears Ears National Monument — one of 27 such sites that President Donald Trump has ordered Zinke to review to determine if they were properly established as monuments.

Adams, who opposes a monument in the area, said Tuesday he gave Zinke a cowboy hat bearing the phrase "Make San Juan County Great Again" and told him the monument designation could hurt residents' ability to earn a living from livestock and agriculture.

Adams was one of many opponents and supporters of Bears Ears who jockeyed for position with Zinke on his four-day visit to Utah. Some Native Americans and environmental groups worried that Zinke listened much more to opponents.

Zinke met for an hour on Sunday with a coalition of tribal leaders who had spent years campaigning for the



Francisco Kjolseth/Associated Press U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke visits the historic Dugout Ranch along Indian Creek near Monticello, Utah. It is operated by Heidi Redd, right, under a conservation easement with the Nature Conservancy. Zinke toured two monuments in Utah this week as part of a review ordered by President Donald Trump of 27 monuments to determine if they were properly designated.

monument on sacred tribal land that's home to ancient cliff dwellings and other archaeological sites.

In Bears Ears on Monday, one woman wearing a T-shirt supportive of the monument asked Zinke why he only met with tribal leaders for such a short time.

Zinke, who was shaking another supporter's hand,

turned to face the woman and said: "Be nice."

He also spent time in closed-door meetings Sunday and Monday with Utah's Republican elected officials, including Gov. Gary Herbert, who has called for the repeal of the monument designation.

Some later accompanied him on the helicopter ride and a short hike in the monument to look at cliff dwellings — as media and Bears Ears supporters were kept at a distance.

State and federal officials said the hike was a private meeting.

In Blanding, with a population of 3,400 people, banners around town said "#Rescind-BearsEars." In Monticello, 20 miles north, large yellow stickers in the shape of a bear with the words "no monument" could be seen on the windows of pickup trucks.

Zinke on Tuesday visited a conservation area and ranch in the monument. The Montana Republican later told reporters he hasn't made up his mind about whether the 1.3 million-acre area should remain a monument.

However, he did point out that despite the contentious debate in Utah, all sides agree that at least some of the land needs protection.

"I think there's a solution out there," said Zinke, who has until June 10 to recommend that Trump rescind the monument, shrink its borders,

enlarge it, or leave it as is.

Conservation groups worry that Zinke's review jeopardizes protections for monuments around the country. Environmental groups have threatened lawsuits.

On Wednesday, Zinke was to head west and visit Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Created in 1996, it's the oldest monument on the list of those to be reviewed.

Zinke said multiple times that he wants to hear different points of view. He said Tuesday he has concluded that Bears Ears is becoming a bigger attraction and the government must have a plan to manage visitors and protect archaeological sites.

Heidi Redd, who has been ranching 50 years on land now within the monument, said she thinks the monument could be smaller but noted that it doesn't restrict her cattle grazing.

Redd showed Zinke around her ranch and said she worries whether the government will build infrastructure such as bathrooms and install railings around cultural sites to make sure visitors don't trample the area.

"I would rather we not have a monument if you are not going to fund to protect it. And now the genie is out of the bottle," Redd said. "There is no way people aren't coming now."



Capital Press File Researchers say they have made a discovery that will allow wheat and barley breeders to develop new varieties more quickly.

Researchers report potentially significant wheat breeding advance

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

MOSCOW, Idaho — A new crop breeding advance could significantly speed up the process for developing better wheat and barley varieties.

University of Idaho wheat geneticist Daolin Fu, who joined UI's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences last year, led a team of Chinese researchers that made the discovery. It was first reported in the April 28 edition of the journal Nature Communications.

The Idaho Wheat Commission uses grower checkoff dollars to help fund Fu's position, and board members were excited both by the discovery and the fact that Fu is on their team.

"I think it could be monumental," North Idaho grower and IWC member Bill Flory said of the discovery. "We are watching this with great anticipation."

According to a UI news release, Fu led the team while a researcher at China's State Key Laboratory of Crop Biology at Shandong Agricultural University in Taian.

The report by the team described how the so-called "Ms2" wheat gene yields a protein that produces male sterility in grass species and the team identified the location of the gene. Creating sterile male breeding lines can simplify the development of hybrid wheat varieties, according to the report.

"Male sterility is a valuable trait for plant breeding

and hybrid seed production," the report states. "The cloned Ms2 could be used to improve global food security by facilitating breakthroughs in plant breeding and hybrid seed production."

According to the UI news release, the discovery could speed up a plant breeding method known as recurrent selection by several years.

Cathy Wilson, the IWC's director of research collaboration, said one of the most significant aspects of the discovery is the team found out exactly how the Ms2 gene makes a male plant sterile, and they cloned it.

"Once you've cloned the gene ... you can put that in any line that you want," which could provide a 15-20 percent yield increase, she said.

"It's still at the very beginning of the process but it's potentially a big discovery," Wilson said.

Idaho Grain Producers Association President Joe Anderson said one of the most promising aspects of the discovery is it could provide a tool to help breeders speed up the process of developing new and better varieties.

"It's a significant piece of science that isn't going to go directly to the farm, but it provides a tool that is likely going to be very beneficial in helping develop traits that lead to better varieties in the future," he said.

Besides helping fund Fu's position, grower checkoff dollars also help fund some of the equipment he uses, said IWC Executive Director Blaine Jacobson.

Wheat growers follow U.S. food aid to Africa

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Leonard Schock has gone on a lot of overseas trips with U.S. Wheat Associates. But the Vida, Mont., wheat farmer said his recent trip to Tanzania has stayed with him.

"Every day, I've thought about Africa," he said. "That situation creeps into my head. Not a day has gone by where I haven't thought about its problems and how can we help them get better?"

Schock and other U.S. wheat farmers were part of a March study group that went to Tanzania to study how U.S. wheat is "monetized" to provide non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, with cash for development projects.

U.S. Wheat has supported U.S. food aid for 50 to 60 years, but members wanted to see in person how the program works and why it matters, said Elizabeth Westendorf, a policy specialist at the organization.

Schock said he wanted to "follow the trail of the wheat" used in overseas programs.

Under a monetization program, USDA selects a country. The federal Commodity Credit Corp. buys U.S. wheat on the market at commercial prices and gives the wheat to



Elizabeth Westendorf/U.S. Wheat Associates Benjamin Mtaki, USDA agricultural specialist in Tanzania, and Mike Schulte, executive director of the Oklahoma Wheat Commission and chairman of U.S. Wheat's Food Aid Working Group, hold up a flour bag from Hill Feeds' production line. The company is a beneficiary of the Small Enterprise Assistance Fund Food for Progress project, which provides loans to small and medium agricultural enterprises.

the NGOs. They in turn work with a local miller, which buys the wheat from them.

The final sales are not always at U.S. market prices, because the wheat is competing with cheaper grain from the Black Sea region and Russia, Westendorf said.

Proceeds from the sales go to the NGOs to fund agricultural development projects for farmers and agribusinesses through micro-banks.

"We're not talking about a lot of money, but the banks in Tanzania will not loan to agriculture because it's considered too risky," said Scott

Yates, director of communications and producer relations at the Washington Grain Commission.

The average micro-loan to a farmer is about \$200 but can be as much as \$900 — a year's earnings for a typical Tanzanian.

Food aid is the fifth-most important market destination for the soft white wheat grown in the Pacific Northwest. The top markets are the Philippines, South Korea, Japan and Indonesia, Yates said.

In the current marketing year, which ends May 31, 160,000 metric tons of soft

white wheat went to Yemen and 86,000 metric tons went to Bangladesh. The Bangladesh wheat was monetized and is funding NGO projects, Yates said.

Westendorf said countries receiving food aid aren't likely to develop into competitors for U.S. wheat. Most grow some wheat, but it doesn't do well in tropical climates.

Purchasing monetized wheat also allowed the Tanzanian mill to reduce its prices for flour.

Schock, the Montana farmer, believes a food aid country today could eventually become a significant market for U.S. wheat.

The Philippines, Japan and South Korea all started out as food aid recipients, Yates said.

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