

Trump lessens size of two national monuments

Areas include millions of acres

By CATHERINE LUCEY and DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — President Donald Trump on Monday took the rare step of scaling back two sprawling national monuments in Utah, declaring that “public lands will once again be for public use” in a move cheered by Republican leaders who lobbied him to undo protections they considered overly broad.

The decision marks the first time in a half century that a president has undone these types of land protections. Tribal and environmental groups oppose the decision and are expected to go to court in a bid to stop Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

Trump made the plan official during a speech at the State Capitol, where he signed proclamations to shrink the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. Both monuments encompass millions of acres of land.

State officials said the protections were overly broad and closed off the area to energy development and other access.

Environmental and tribal groups say the designations are needed to protect important archaeological and cultural resources, especially the more than 1.3 million-acre Bears Ears site featuring thousands of Native American artifacts, including ancient cliff dwellings and petroglyphs.

Trump argued that the people of Utah know best how to care for their land.

“Some people think that the natural resources of Utah



President Donald Trump holds up a signed proclamation to shrink the size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments at the Utah State Capitol Monday in Salt Lake City.

AP Photo/Rick Bowmer

‘I’ve come to Utah to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens.’

President Donald Trump

should be controlled by a small handful of very distant bureaucrats located in Washington,” Trump said. “And guess what? They’re wrong.”

Roughly 3,000 demonstrators lined up near the State Capitol to protest Trump’s announcement. Some held signs that said, “Keep your tiny hands off our public lands,” and they chanted, “Lock him up!” A smaller group gathered in support, including some who said they favor potential drilling or mining there that could create jobs. Bears Ears has no oil

or gas, Zinke told reporters, though Grand Staircase-Escalante has coal.

“Your timeless bond with the outdoors should not be replaced with the whims of regulators thousands and thousands of miles away,” Trump said. “I’ve come to Utah to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens.”

Bears Ears, created last December by President Barack Obama, will be reduced by about 85 percent, to 201,876 acres.

Grand Staircase-Escalante, designated in 1996 by President Bill Clinton, will be reduced from nearly 1.9 million acres to 1,003,863 acres.

Both were among a group of 27 monuments that Trump ordered Zinke to review this year.

Zinke accompanied Trump aboard Air Force One, as did Utah’s Republican U.S. senators, Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee. Hatch and other Utah Republican leaders pushed Trump to launch the review, saying the monuments designated by the former Dem-

ocratic presidents locked up too much federal land.

Trump framed the decision as returning power to the state, saying, “You know and love this land the best and you know the best how to take care of your land.” He said the decision would “give back your voice.”

“Public lands will once again be for public use,” Trump said to cheers.

Hatch, who introduced Trump, said that when “you talk, this president listens” and that Trump promised to help him with “federal overreach.”

Patagonia President and CEO Rose Marcario said the outdoor-apparel company will join an expected court fight against the monument reduction, which she described as the “largest elimination of protected land in American history.”

No president has tried to eliminate a monument, but some have reduced or redrawn the boundaries on 18 occasions, according to the National Park Service. The most recent instance came in 1963, when President John F. Kennedy slightly downsized Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico.

Trump’s move against Bears Ears, covering lands considered sacred to tribes that long pushed for protections, marks his latest affront to Native Americans.

Trump overrode tribal objections to approve the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines. He also used a White House event honoring Navajo Code Talkers to take a political jab at Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat he has nicknamed “Pocahontas” for her claim to have Native American heritage.

“One week ago today, our Code Talkers were disrespected. And one week later, we get this,” said Navajo Nation

Vice President Jonathan Nez, referring to the monuments.

Trump signed an executive order in April directing Zinke to review the protections, which Trump is able to unpend under the 1906 Antiquities Act. The law gives presidents broad authority to declare federal lands as monuments and restrict their use.

Zinke has also recommended to Trump that Nevada’s Gold Butte and Oregon’s Cascade-Siskiyou monuments be reduced in size, though details remain unclear. The former Montana congressman’s plan would allow logging at a newly designated monument in Maine and more grazing, hunting and fishing at two sites in New Mexico.

Democrats and environmentalists accuse Trump and Zinke of engaging in a secretive process aimed at helping industry groups that have donated to Republican political campaigns.

“The president’s unprecedented and astonishing decision to shrink the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments is based on faulty information,” Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said. “The battle to safeguard Utah’s national monuments for all Americans to enjoy will continue in the courtroom. The fight must continue to protect our public lands across the country, including the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in southern Oregon, from Trump’s and Zinke’s erratic and destructive agenda to restrict access to lands that belong to all Americans in order to benefit large corporations and donors.”

Superville reported from Washington, D.C. Associated Press writers Brady McCombs and Michelle L. Price in Salt Lake City contributed to this report.

New ordinance: Police can tow noisy cars

Condemnation power also granted for bridge work

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Just when people in businesses, apartments and artists’ studios near the Commodore Hotel thought the car alarm had stopped, it started blaring again.

It was the end of October and Astoria police officers couldn’t reach the out-of-town owner who had left the car parked near the hotel for over 24 hours. At the time, city code didn’t allow police to tow the car away. Now, with a new ordinance, they can.

At a meeting Monday night, the Astoria City Council agreed to modify city code and expand the police depart-

ment’s capacity to tow vehicles and deal with these types of noise complaints. In addition to being able to tow the cars of people arrested for driving drunk or with a suspended license, police can now also tow vehicles whose alarms or horns are “activated continuously, intermittently or repeatedly and a police officer is unable to locate the owner of the vehicle within 20 minutes from the time of arrival at the vehicle’s location.”

The new ordinance is similar to ordinances other cities have enacted to address this kind of nuisance, Interim Police Chief Geoff Spalding wrote in a memo to the City Council. Noise complaints will be prioritized based on what other calls are coming in, said Deputy Chief Eric Halverson. Threats to life and safety still come first.

In other business, the City Council:

- Approved a resolution that will allow City Attorney

Blair Henningsgaard to file condemnation proceedings against properties, including property owned by JB Holdings LLC — developer Joe Barnes’ company — if an agreement can’t be reached over an easement the city seeks in order to do bridge work off Seventh Street where Barnes’ property is located.

The city is in the beginning stages of a project to replace short waterfront bridge structures between Sixth and 11th Streets along the Columbia River. The work requires city staff to obtain easements and dedication deeds from a variety of property owners. When the work is finished, city staff and crews will either restore the properties to their previous conditions or, in the case of dedication deeds, compensate the property owners for the value of the slivers of property the city is taking over.

The City Council met in executive session to talk with

Henningsgaard and approved the resolution after returning to regular session.

- Accepted a bid by Big River Construction to replenish four slow sand filters at Astoria’s water supply system. Big River’s bid, which at \$1.9 million was the lowest of the two bids the city received, came in above the budget for the project. Public works staff trimmed the scope of work to bring the bid down to \$1.4 million.

- Approved a resolution by the Astoria Library Foundation that will help the group pursue outside individuals and organizations with “deeper pockets” to fund a renovation of the 50-year-old building, according to Willis Van Dusen, president of the foundation.

The resolution is a “powerful tool highlighting council support for a library worthy of the citizens of Astoria,” wrote Library Director Jimmy Pearson.



Tiffany Boothe/Seaside Aquarium

This sea turtle found by a Fort Stevens ranger was transported to Oregon Coast Aquarium for rehabilitation.

Ranger finds sea turtle on Columbia River beach

The Daily Astorian

A 20 to 30 pound juvenile green sea turtle was found on the beach Sunday morning by a ranger from Fort Stevens State Park.

“When we arrived the turtle was quite active, which is a good sign,” Tiffany Boothe of the Seaside Aquarium said. “But knowing that this poor turtle went through the Columbia River Bar and the fact that its shell looked pretty beat up, we knew that if this turtle had any chance

of survival it would be a rough road.”

The turtle was taken to the Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport, one of two licensed rehabilitation facilities in the Pacific Northwest for sea turtles. The other facility is the Seattle Aquarium, which is rehabbing a turtle found in early October on the central Oregon coast.

The Oregon Coast Aquarium is also in the midst of rehabbing an olive ridley sea turtle found in Illawco, Washington, in late November.

Rising retirement costs drive up college tuition

By CLAIRE WITTHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon’s public universities are devoting a growing share of spending to retirement costs, a trend that factors into rising college tuition.

Between the 2017 and 2018 fiscal years, public employee retirement costs for the state’s public universities grew by 19.6 percent, according to the Oregon Council of Presidents.

That brings the total amount that universities will devote to retirement costs in the 2018 fiscal year to \$166 million, or nearly 10 percent of the universities’ total education and general expenditures.

The annual amount universities pay toward the state’s Public Employees Retirement System as a share of overall payroll is expected to continue to rise in the next several budget cycles as well.

PERS is faced with obligations to retirees that exceed the system’s current assets by about \$25.3 billion.



Oregon State University
Oregon’s public pension unfunded liability is putting pressure on tuition at the state’s public universities. University pension costs account for nearly 10 percent of their budgets.

Most employee benefits are generated by investing, and the system’s funded liability tanked when the stock market took a tumble starting in 2008. So public employers started having to pay more money to help the state meet its obligations to employees.

A certain percentage increase in retirement costs doesn’t mean an equivalent increase in tuition, but officials say retirement costs and health

benefits are factors that can drive up undergraduate tuition.

“Combined our cost drivers create a situation where universities have to balance the realities of our state appropriations, increased costs and cuts in services to students in determining tuition,” Dana Richardson, executive director of the Oregon Council of Presidents, wrote in an email to the EO Media Group/Pamplin Capital Bureau.

Undergraduate tuition at Oregon’s public universities has increased, on average, 6 percent, in the past year, according to the council.

That increase is the merely the most recent.

Adjusted for inflation, average tuition and fees increased by about 38 percent for in-state residents between the 2005-06 and 2015-16 school years, according to the state’s Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

And tuition is among the limited funding sources for universities.

“Community colleges and K-12 get local property taxes,”

said Brian Fox, vice president of finance and administration at the Oregon Institute of Technology. “For us, it really is state appropriations and tuition dollars.”

There’s not quick solution. Much of the \$25.3 billion unfunded liability is taken up by benefits already earned, which the Oregon Supreme Court has said cannot be rescinded or reduced.

That will continue to put financial pressure on public employers, including universities, in the next several budget cycles — longer if there is a recession, Fox said.

“It gets really hard to balance the books when you have really massive cost increases,” Fox said. “And you see those coming, for, you know, we probably have eight years of this.”

University administrators say that they are also cutting costs elsewhere in their budgets.

Higher education funding and rising tuition costs were highlighted in the most recent legislative session.

Coal terminal backers file second lawsuit

Associated Press

LONGVIEW, Wash. — The backers of one of the biggest coal terminals in North America have filed a second lawsuit against Washington state over a \$680 million coal export terminal.

Millennium Bulk Terminals-Longview filed the lawsuit Monday in Thurston County Superior Court against the state Department of Ecology.

The lawsuit alleges Ecology violated public records laws by withholding the basis for its findings in a

key environmental impact statement.

A county hearing examiner last month relied on that statement when he denied two shoreline permits that Millennium Bulk needs for its Columbia River coal dock.

Ecology described 10 adverse impacts from the coal dock in its report, from noise pollution to an impact on tribal resources.

Millennium says the state didn’t provide the modeling data it used to estimate greenhouse gases and particulate emissions.

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