

Interior chief urges shrinking four national monuments in West

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is recommending that four large national monuments in the West be reduced in size, potentially opening up hundreds of thousands of acres of land revered for natural beauty and historical significance to mining, logging and other development.

Zinke's recommendation, revealed in a leaked memo submitted to the White House, prompted an outcry from environmental groups who promised to take the Trump administration to court to block the moves.

The Interior secretary's plan would scale back two huge Utah monuments — Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante — along with Nevada's Gold Butte and Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou. The monuments encompass more than 3.6 million acres — an area larger than Connecticut — and were created by Democratic administrations under a century-old law that allows presidents to protect sites considered historic, geographically or culturally important.

Zinke's plan also would allow logging at a newly designated monument in Maine and urges more grazing, hunting and fishing at two sites in New Mexico. It also calls for a new assessment of border-safety risks at a monument in southern New Mexico.

Bears Ears, designated for federal protection by former President Barack Obama, totals 1.3 million acres in southeastern Utah on land that is sacred to Native Americans and home to tens of thousands of archaeological sites, including ancient cliff dwellings. Grand Staircase-Escalante, in southern Utah, includes nearly 1.9 million acres in a sweeping vista larger than the state of Delaware. Republicans have howled over the monument since its creation in 1996 by former President Bill Clinton.

Cascade-Siskiyou, which



Francisco Kjolseth/The Salt Lake Tribune via AP, File

This May 2016 file photo shows the northernmost boundary of the proposed Bears Ears region, along the Colorado River, in southeastern Utah. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is recommending that six of 27 national monuments under review by the Trump administration be reduced in size, along with management changes to several other sites.

into Northern California, protects about 113,000 acres in an area where three mountain ranges converge, while Gold Butte protects nearly 300,000 acres of desert landscapes that feature rock art, sandstone towers and wildlife habitat for bighorn sheep and the threatened Mojave Desert tortoise.

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the 19-page memo, which was submitted to the White House last month and has not been officially released.

Two marine monuments in the Pacific Ocean also would be reduced under Zinke's memo, and a third monument off the Massachusetts coast would be modified to allow commercial fishing. Commercial fishing also would be allowed at two Pacific sites, west of Hawaii and near American Samoa.

President Donald Trump ordered a review of 27 sites earlier this year after complaining about a "massive land grab" by Obama and other former presidents.

"It's gotten worse and worse and worse, and now we're going to free it up, which is what should have happened in the first place. This should never have happened," Trump said in ordering the review in April.

National monument designations add protections for lands known for their natural beauty with the goal of preserving them for future

generations. The restrictions aren't as stringent as for national parks, but include limits on mining, timber cutting and recreational activities such as riding off-road vehicles.

No president has tried to eliminate a monument, but boundaries have been trimmed or redrawn 18 times, according to the National Park Service.

Zinke's recommendations to pare down the four Western monuments — and allow more economic activity at three other sites — "represent an unprecedented assault on our parks and public lands" by the Trump administration, said Jamie Williams, president of the Wilderness Society.

"This callous proposal will needlessly punish local, predominantly rural communities that depend on parks and public lands for outdoor recreation, sustainable jobs and economic growth," Williams said, vowing to challenge in court any actions by the Trump administration to reduce the size of national monuments.

It was not clear from the memo how much energy development would be allowed on the sites recommended for changes, but Zinke said in the report that "traditional uses of the land such as grazing, timber production, mining, fishing, hunting, recreation and other cultural uses are unnecessarily restricted."

PENDLETON

School enrollment continues to fall

East Oregonian

For the third year in a row, first-day enrollment at the Pendleton School District has fallen.

At a Pendleton School Board meeting Monday, Superintendent Chris Fritsch presented the first enrollment report of the 2017-2018 school year. It was the board's first chance to take a look at the district's raw headcount for the first day of school.

According to the latest attendance report, 3,072 students were in class on the first day of school, 101 fewer students than the first day of the 2016-2017 school year.

For Michelle Jones,

the district's director of business services, it was to be expected. She said the first report was in line with projections — down from a year ago.

Board member Dave Krumbein said the district often gets a small bump in enrollment following the Round-Up.

Monday's report was representative of the continual downward enrollment trend the district has experienced in recent years.

The district tends to end the year with fewer students than when they started, and if that trend holds true, it would mark a low within the past 10 years.

The district has made

boosting enrollment one of the central focuses of its strategic plan and has discussed advertisements and online school as some of the ways they might reverse the trend.

It's been nearly four years since the district passed a \$55 million facilities bond, and Jones said its nearly finished.

Among the last items on the district's checklist, Jones said the new track at Pendleton High School and the demolition of the old district office are completed and renovations at the high school auditorium are nearly complete.

Jones estimated there could be \$300,000 left after all the final billings are received and the district could further invest in facilities, like new carpeting at the high school auditorium.



Fritsch

Rain brings relief for Oregon wildfires

Oregon Public Broadcasting

With cooler temperatures and rain hitting the region this week, some firefighters are headed home Monday. The Chetco Bar Fire in Southwest Oregon is 53 percent contained as of Monday morning, while the Eagle Creek Fire in the Columbia River Gorge is 32 percent contained.

"We still have over 7,500 firefighters and support personnel working in our region," said Carol Connolly, a public information officer with the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center in Portland. "But the Eagle Creek and the Chetco Bar numbers are down just slightly."

Connolly says despite the rainy weather, crews are expected to be working on both fires for weeks. The Northwest remains the nation's top firefighting priority.

No more evacuations in Multnomah County and Hood River Valley

PORTLAND (AP) — Authorities have rescinded evacuation notices in Multnomah County and the Hood River Valley.

The notices had been issued because of the large wildfire that's been burning since Labor Day weekend in the Columbia River Gorge. Rain and lower temperatures have reduced the threat.

Though fire danger has eased, rain falling on charred land has spurred a flash-flood advisory. The sheriffs of Multnomah and Hood River counties reminded motorists Monday that landslides are also a possibility, and to be alert for rocks and trees crashing onto roadways.

The rain forces firefighters to think about other hazards.

"With the rain coming in it's going to dislodge boulders, it will make the ground not as stable, we could see some mudslides, trees going, rocks falling," Connolly said.

Firefighters are working to create drainage and erosion controls in burned areas to reduce the risk of landslides. That's in addition to continued work to control the fires.

State officials warn travelers to be extra aware when traveling through susceptible landslide areas.

The current area of concern includes Government Camp, Detroit, Santiam Pass, Corbett, Rooster Rock, Multnomah Falls, Cascade Locks, Hood River, North Bonneville, Stevenson, Carson, and Underwood.

Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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