

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 21, 2025

Hon. Doug Burgum
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

Our national monuments in New Mexico protect some of the most significant landscapes and cultural resources in the nation. The monuments were carefully curated and represent a balance of public land protection negotiated between local leaders, communities, Tribes, and our constituents. The areas protected under national monument status across the state are culturally valuable, archeologically and geologically unique, and represent a conservation legacy that should not be erased. They are also some of the most popular areas for recreation in the country. They support a robust economy of hikers, rafters, hunters, and anglers as well as a wide variety of traditional land uses. Monuments are treasured places among New Mexicans and Americans.

National monuments are vitally important to our history and any proposals to reduce their boundaries will not be reflective of the voices of New Mexicans. Each monument in New Mexico represents years of community advocacy and support for the protection of the value they hold. In New Mexico, we have a \$3.2 billion outdoor recreation sector and monuments are a significant contributor to this robust economy. A recent study conducted in southern New Mexico found that a decade after the establishment of Organ Mountains – Desert Peaks National Monument (OMDP), visitation rates had more than tripled and drew-in more than \$234 million in cumulative economic impact.¹ In 2022 alone, monument visitation resulted in \$1.9 million in tax revenue. The economic impacts of visitation to OMDP surpassed the initial prediction by more than 50 percent.² In just one year after its establishment, the Rio Grande del Norte (RGDN) National Monument saw a 40 percent increase in visitors, resulting in a 21 percent increase in Town of Taos lodgers' tax revenue.³

Reportedly, three notable, valuable, and popular New Mexican national monuments are under consideration for reduction or elimination. In OMDP in southern New Mexico, you will find significant petroglyph and archeological sites and walk among historic travelers' routes. In northern New Mexico, RGDN boasts some of New Mexico's most prized recreational opportunities in an area where the Rio Grande carves an 800-foot gorge through historic volcanic activity. RGDN offers immense economic value to northern New Mexico and provides access for traditional use like piñon nut collection. As for the third monument under review, Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument, the Bureau of Land Management recently celebrated the monument's inclusion on TIME's World's Greatest Places of 2025. Not only is Tent Rocks "geologically surreal,"⁴ but it is also a sacred landscape to the Cochiti Pueblo.

¹ Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce. *2023 OMDP Business Report- NEW REPORT: Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Drives Economic Growth*. (2023). Available online at: <https://locallascruceres.com/omdpbizreport2023/>.

² Ibid.

³ New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce. *Business, civic leaders celebrate Rio Grande del Norte National Monument's One-Year Anniversary*. (2014). Available online at: <https://www.nmgreenchamber.com/press-release-business-civic-leaders-celebrate-rio-grande-del-norte-national-monuments-one-year-anniversary/>.

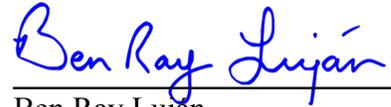
⁴ TIME. *The World's Greatest Places of 2025: Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument*. (2025). Available online at: <https://time.com/collections/worlds-greatest-places-2025/7263161/kasha-katuwe-tent-rocks-national-monument/>.

There is no greater value to these natural landscapes than what is brought to the community through their continued protection. Withdrawing protections from these sites would threaten the economic benefits associated with New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy and it undermines our community and tribal voices. We urge you to honor the voices of New Mexicans and confirm that you will leave the Organ Mountains, Rio Grande del Norte, Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks, and all other national monuments intact.

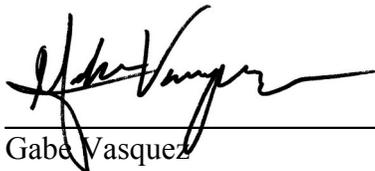
Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



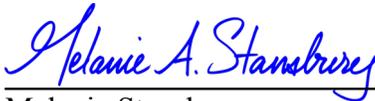
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress