

# HELP US HALT BILL TO GUT THE ANTIQUITIES ACT

Bears Ears National Monument / Bob Wick, BLM

**R**ep. Rob Bishop's (R-UT) legislation, HR 3990, to gut the 1906 Antiquities Act and put current and future national monuments at risk passed the House Natural Resources Committee and can now move to the House floor. The bill is a gift to special interests and an unprecedented attack on our public lands. It would make it all but impossible for presidents to create new national monuments – and it provides presidents authority to rescind or shrink existing ones.

## **BISHOP'S LEGISLATION WOULD:**

- Limit national monuments to 85,000 acres;
- Require county, state legislature and governor approval for new monuments between 10,000-85,000 acres;
- Prohibit presidential designation of marine national monuments;
- Prohibit monument designations to protect natural or scientific wonders. Only “objects of antiquity” such as relics, cultural artifacts and fossils would be deemed worthy of monument protection;
- Require private landowners whose land abutted proposed monument boundaries to agree to the monument's designation giving them veto power over public lands;
- Give presidents authority to shrink existing national monuments (an acknowledgement that President Trump lacks authority to reduce boundaries, as his administration has suggested).

## **BACKGROUND**

Most of our national parks began as national monuments. Had Bishop's legislative language been adopted in 1906, the majority of today's national parks and monuments would not exist. Under Bishop's vision, there would be no Grand Canyon, Zion, Grand Teton, Acadia and Arches national parks today. Nor would past presidents have protected California's Muir Woods, a grove of ancient redwoods, Utah's Bears Ears that's sacred to Native Americans, California's Carrizo Plain, a last remnant of a vast grassland or the Pacific Remote Islands and Rose Atoll that harbors marine life south of the Hawaii Islands.

Bishop is framing HR 3990 as a return to the original intention of the Antiquities Act, but he's trying to rewrite history. The Antiquities Act was deliberately written broadly to include objects of historic or scientific interest, and without acreage limits, to stop their destruction.

Congress saw the need for the Antiquities Act after decades of looting and destruction of Native American sites. It is one of America's oldest, most important conservation laws, allowing presidents to quickly protect natural and cultural resources on public lands when Congress fails to act in order to preserve objects of “historic and scientific importance.”

The American public overwhelmingly supports keeping protections for public lands and waters in place. National monument designations have protected some of the most spectacular public landscapes in the country.

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