

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2021

Mr. Scott de la Vega
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Acting Secretary de la Vega,

Section 3 of Executive Order (EO) 13990, "Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis," directed the Department of the Interior (DOI) to review three national monument boundaries and conditions. Despite the fact that three-fourths of the review period has now passed, DOI has yet to initiate any formal review process and the Department does not even have a Senate-confirmed Secretary.

President Trump's decision to reduce the boundaries of the Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments in Utah and revise the conditions of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument in the Atlantic Ocean came after a historic, transparent review. Not only did then-Secretary Ryan Zinke visit these sites personally, the Department received over 2.8 million public comments and conducted dozens of meetings with tribal, state, and local officials and other stakeholders.¹

In contrast, EO 13990 gave the Secretary of the Interior half of the time allotted to Secretary Zinke to review these monuments and provided no criteria by which this review should be completed. Furthermore, the Trump Administration review was personally conducted by a Senate-confirmed Secretary and not by acting officials or lower-level political appointees.

In light of the lack of public information surrounding this review process, I am requesting that you provide a briefing for committee staff on the status of this review no later than Friday, March 12. Please contact Aniela Butler (Aniela.Butler@mail.house.gov) and Sang Yi (Sang.Yi@mail.house.gov) to schedule this briefing.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources

cc: The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chair, House Committee on Natural Resources

¹ Ryan Zinke, Final Report Summarizing Findings of the Review of Designations Under the Antiquities Act, https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/revised_final_report.pdf.