

Statement for the Congressional Record  
Office of Senator Orrin G. Hatch  
May 21, 2015

Mr. President, I have always been proud of Utah's rich heritage, from the pioneers that came across the plains to the brave families that settled the territories throughout Utah and the Mountain West. Many of them traveled with little more than the shirts on their backs. Still, they brought the skills and trades necessary to be self-sufficient. They provided for their families and took pride in their land.

As the pioneers knew then, and as we know now, Utah is blessed with incredible natural resources, beautiful landscapes, and breathtaking vistas. Utahns have always understood the importance of maintaining a responsible balance between the development of our abundant resources and the need to protect the unique features of our state. But the Executive Branch threatens to disrupt that delicate balance. Countless rural communities in Utah are currently facing difficult challenges to their way of life as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) increases restrictions on traditional economic activities, such as ranching and grazing operations on federal land.

Under President Teddy Roosevelt's leadership, Congress easily passed the Antiquities Act of 1906—a short four-paragraph law, which gave the President unilateral authority to designate unique areas as National Monuments. Such designations were intended to protect special areas in our country that have significant natural, historical, or cultural features. Congress crafted these designations to be limited in scope and “confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected.” The Antiquities Act was essential to protect our nation's historical treasures against growing dangers, such as looters and vandals. Congress drafted this law after archaeologists began complaining that American natural treasures were turning up in overseas museums and in private collections.

After President Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act into law, he subsequently set aside nearly 20 natural and cultural landmarks. These national monument designations were limited in scope and designed to protect specific locations rather than massive acreages. For example, the total area of our nation's first national monument, Devil's Tower in Wyoming, spans only about two square miles. Unfortunately, over time, the use of the Antiquities Act has evolved from protecting historic landmarks to restricting development across vast swaths of land without any local input.

For example, on September 18, 1996, President Bill Clinton issued a proclamation that designated nearly 1.9 million acres in southern Utah as a National Monument. Utah's entire federal delegation, the Utah State Legislature, and Governor Mike Leavitt all opposed this proclamation. President Clinton's declaration was made without so much as a ‘by your leave’ to the people of Utah. There were no consultations; no hearings; no town hall meetings; no TV or radio discussions; no input from federal land managers; no maps; no boundaries; there was nothing. In fact, the federal delegation had to learn about the proclamation from the *Washington Post*.

There are significant impacts on the ground when a monument is designated, not only on federal land, but also on state and private land. Had President Clinton consulted with the state and the delegation, he would have learned that the designation would landlock and render useless 200,000 acres of Utah School Trust Lands—lands held in trust for the school children of Utah. This designation deprived Utah schools of a significant revenue source. Fortunately, Utah's federal delegation was eventually able to pass legislation in Congress allowing these school trust lands to be swapped out of the monument boundary. This legislation helped the schools, but it did nothing for the locals who lost their jobs because of the President's declaration.

The only one silver lining in this debacle was language written into the President's proclamation that protected livestock grazing on the monument. While the President was fine with blocking significant mineral development and other economic activity in the 1.9 million acre area, he at least understood that blocking traditional grazing in the area was untenable. Sadly, since the 1996 monument designation, according to the Utah Cattlemen's Association, nearly 28% of the federal livestock grazing AUMs have been suspended.

According to the 2015 Economic Report to the Governor prepared by the Utah Economic Council, "Of Utah's 45 million acres of rangeland, 33 million acres are owned and managed by the federal government, while only 8 million acres are privately owned." With that in mind, most ranching operations in Utah must combine private grazing, feed importation, and access to the renewable grasses and forage through federal grazing leases in order to be economically viable. Unfortunately, since the late 1940s, the Utah Farm Bureau found that the BLM and the Forest Service have drastically cut or suspended Utah's total livestock grazing AUMs from 5.4 million AUMs in 1949 to just over 2 million in 2012.

With grazing on federal land already in peril, grazing on the monument is at even greater risk. Currently, the BLM is considering an amendment to the management plan that would eliminate grazing on the monument altogether. If the BLM eliminates grazing on the monument, there would be significant, negative economic impacts to the area. Consider the economic benefits grazing already brings to these rural counties in Utah. The Utah Farm Bureau reports that:

"Around 11,500 feeder cattle sold out of Kane and Garfield County ranches brought in more than \$16 million dollars and generated in excess of \$25-\$30 million based on a conservative economic multiplier. With about one-half of the calf crop coming from grazing allotments within the monument, of that total, about \$8 million in direct feeder cattle sales and between \$12 - \$15 million in economic activity is tied directly back to cattle grazing on the monument."

Those ranching dollars create jobs in Utah's counties. The money also contributes to local tax revenue and supports public services. Eliminating grazing on the monument would have disastrous implications for the local economy.

While I view the designation of the monument as a significant risk to continued grazing in the area, there is another risk as well. The rangeland on the monument is being mismanaged. Even if the BLM decided to change course overnight and restore grazing to the historic levels

that existed before the designation of the monument, the land in its current state would not be able to sustain it. Over the last twenty years, we have witnessed a worrisome decline in rangeland health. With this decline, livestock carrying capacity has also decreased.

To protect rangeland health, I joined Senator Mike Lee and Congressman Chris Stewart to introduce The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Grazing Protection Act. This bill would direct the BLM to create and implement a management program within the areas of the monument to improve rangeland conditions for wildlife and livestock carrying capacity. It would also restore livestock grazing to the historic levels that existed before the designation. There are many things BLM can and should be doing to restore rangeland health. Improving the range would not only benefit ranchers and affected communities; it would also bring significant ecological and environmental benefits to the entire area. This legislation will direct the BLM in that effort.