

# Bear Ears National Monument Roundtable



Students at UVU introduce speakers and moderate the Roundtable

The issue of Bears Ears national monument was discussed during a round table at Utah Valley University on November 10, 2021. It is so much more complex than I had imagined. It is a deeply complicated issue involving the state and federal government battling out how to best handle land that so many people want to do so many things with. First nations, tourism groups, farmers, ranchers, residents, power and power and mining companies all have something to say as well. It has been controversial ever since there was a large amount of fossil fuels and uranium discovered in the lands. It is home to indigenous people and their religious traditions of medicine gathering. Naturally those two things will not mix.

President Obama signed an executive action to designate the land as a national monument and then it was reversed in a way and reduced in size by President Trump. That brought up an interesting issue of whether one President can reverse or change an executive action of another President whereas national monuments and parks are concerned.

The speaker that brought up something very interesting to me was Sarah Hunt. Her credentials were impressive, and she had a good flow in the way she spoke about the issue. She brought up how if we really want to switch to clean energy than we as a nation need to utilize our natural resources and mine some of the uranium to power clean nuclear energy. I agree with that, but it does feel like a slippery slope of where we stop or make sure we don't destroy the environment in southern Utah. There are so many people involved and so many people affected by how Bears Ears is dealt with. She also brought up a good point of the qualifications for how big a national park is vs how big a national monument is. I did not know there was much of a difference before. Next, she pointed out that Bears Ears being protected doesn't lose that much revenue for the state of Utah, it would only lose around 5 million. It would affect locals and receiving tax funding from the federal government but in the grand scheme of things it doesn't really affect the state of Utah and its budget all that much.

Dustin Jansen mentioned how it hit people hard going from over a million acres down to just two hundred thousand acres. That was depressing to hear. I can empathize with the first nation people who were shocked by that happening after they had been assured it would previously have been protected. Dustin brought up a few good points. Overall, the issue of Bears Ears feels too complex for just a one-hour discussion. I think we need to analyze the area further and there should be more discussion. We need to see what is worth utilizing in the area

without overstepping and offending the indigenous people and their traditions. There is a good solution out there, but I think it requires compromise. Climate change is a very important issue, and it will kill everyone in Bears Ears if we don't do our part to work against it and switch to clean energy. The possibility of the clean energy coming from the Uranium and NOT the fossil fuels found there seems like the thing that needs to be focused on. Partisan politics have really clouded the issue and don't address the basic fact that climate change is real, and that Bears Ears can be part of the solution rather than just taking advantage of more American Fossil Fuels.

**-Wesley Keetch, UVU Student**