



CITY OF CORTEZ
210 EAST MAIN STREET
CORTEZ, CO 81321

June 13, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Re: Designation of Canyons of the Ancients

Dear Secretary Zinke:

The City of Cortez supports the continued designation of Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. The City understands that the Department of the Interior is reviewing Canyons pursuant to Executive Order 13792, and is certain that any review should conclude that no changes to the designation are warranted or necessary.

The Canyons of the Ancients National Monument draws approximately 30,000 visitors a year. Since it was designated as a monument in 2000, Montezuma County's population has grown about 8 percent, jobs are up 10 percent and personal income is up about 20 percent, according to research by the nonpartisan Headwaters Economics group.

The BLM's multi-use management plan still allows for grazing and oil and gas development on parts of the monument, as it did before the designation. Of note, the monument comprises 178,000 acres of the highest-known density of archaeological sites in the United States. With just over 6,000 sites already recorded, there are estimates that there may be between 20,000 and 30,000 sites within the boundaries of this monument.

Additionally, in the Southwest Colorado region, protected federal lands represent a direct, significant driver in our regional economy. Local Archaeological resources in our area are the cornerstone of our local tourism and marketing efforts, and protecting these resources helps to ensure our continued financial viability as a region. As reported by the National Park Service, Mesa Verde National Park hosted over 547,000 visitors in 2015 who spent \$55.4 million in communities near the park. That spending supported 814 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$66.8 million. There is no doubt that the 30,000 annual visitors to Canyons is also a significant economic driver to the area.

We hope that you agree that Canyons of the Ancients became a National Monument because it is a special place and merits the protections that Monument Status provides. The City urges you to keep Canyons in tact without any changes to the designation.

Sincerely,

Karen W. Sheek, Mayor