OPEN LETTER FROM THE UNDERSIGNED PROFESSIONAL & AVOCATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS

TO

REPRESENTATIVES ROB BISHOP, JASON CHAFFETZ & JIM MATHESON
SENATORS ORRIN HATCH & MIKE LEE
PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

The greater Cedar Mesa area contains one of America’s best-preserved collections of prehistoric dwellings, rock art, artifacts, and sacred Native American ceremonial sites. As archaeologists, we have a particular appreciation for the cultural, scientific, and human importance of this area. We urge you to do everything in your power to protect the exceptional cultural landscape of the greater Cedar Mesa area.

This region would be a treasure worth preserving for future generations, if only for its scenery, wild canyons, immense vistas, and colorful red rock. However, the value of this place goes far beyond its natural beauty. Evidence of twelve thousand years of human occupation in the greater Cedar Mesa area gives us all an irreplaceable connection with ancient American history. There’s perhaps no better place to experience well preserved Ancestral Puebloan habitation sites in a backcountry setting.

For well over 100 years, archaeological research in the Cedar Mesa area has contributed greatly to knowledge of the prehistoric cultures of the American Southwest. It is a revered part of the cultural heritage of present-day Pueblo, Navajo, and Ute people. The Hole-in-the-Rock Trail, over which the Mormon settlers of southeastern Utah made their way in the winter of 1879-80, traverses the area. Ever-increasing numbers of visitors are coming from across the US and even internationally to experience the cultural and scenic treasures of the greater Cedar Mesa area.

The region proposed by Friends of Cedar Mesa for a National Conservation Area or National Monument contains more than 56,000 archaeological sites. And this is just a part of the vast region of southeast Utah that needs greater protection.

This landscape is filled with exactly the kind of “objects” the 1906 Antiquities Act was created to protect. Yet, unfortunately the mere fact that these archaeological sites are protected by law has done little to stop more than 100 years of looting, grave robbing, and vandalism. Contrary to public opinion, this looting has not stopped. In just the last year, several serious looting cases have been reported to law enforcement. Increasing visitation combined with a severe lack of resources for effective management creates a newer yet no less menacing challenge to archaeology in the region.

We strongly support Congressional action to designate the greater Cedar Mesa area as a National Conservation Area. Such a designation could accomplish the goal of prioritizing protection of cultural resources, while also allowing flexibility in management of other uses of these public lands. This locally driven process could also resolve long-standing wilderness issues, which have been festering for many decades. However, if Congress fails to act quickly to protect this landscape, we urge the President to be ready to preserve this imperiled resource as a National Monument before the end of his term. Congressional deadlock or politics should not allow another decade of continued loss of American history.

Sincerely,

Archaeologists meeting at the Pecos Conference, Blanding Utah, August 2014.
James Allison - Provo, UT
Matthew Aspros - Durango, CO
David Ayers - Farmington, NM
Pam & Quentin Baker - Moab, UT
Erin Baxter - Boulder, CO
Jeffrey Begay - Farmington, NM
Ben Bellorado - Tucson, AZ
Jean Berkebile - Cortez, CO
Bob Bernhart - Cortez, CO
Mark Bond - Bluff, UT
Richard Boston - Berthoud, CO
Stephen Bowers - Durango, CO
David Boyle - Aztec, NM
Michael Braitberg - Boulder, CO
Robert Breunig - Flagstaff, AZ
Barbara Brown - Palisade, CO
Evelyn Christian - Pine, AZ
Jason Chuiptila - Mancos, CO
Helen Crotty - Sandia Park, NM
Natalie Cunningham - Delaware, OH
Dale Davidson - Cortez, CO
William Davis - Bluff, UT
Lydia De Haven - Dolores, CO
Steven Dominguez - Bryce, UT
Sharon Dubose - Fountain Hills, AZ
Marietta Eaton - Dolores, CO
Al Enouen - New River, AZ
Nancy Evans - Cortez, CO
Helen Fairley - Flagstaff, AZ
Richard Feit - Cortez, CO
T. J. Ferguson - Tucson, AZ
Jerry Fetterman - Yellow Jacket, CO
Victor Fisher - Towson, MD
Lisa Frankel - Grass Valley, CA
Noreen Fritz - Bluff, UT
Dale Frost - El Paso, TX
Dody Fugate - Santa Fe, NM
Marc Gaede - La Canada, CA
Erin Gearty - Flagstaff, AZ
Donna Glowacki - South Bend, IN
Andrea Gover - Poulsbo, WA
Robert Gross - Cedar City, UT
Charly Gullet - Prescott, AZ
John Hall - Oro Valley, AZ
Terry Hawks - Washington, UT
Diana Hawks - Washington, UT
Bradley Heap - Kanab, UT
Bud Henderson - Cottonwood, AZ
Rosalie Hewis - Morrison, CO
John Hinnant - Wilson, NC
Emy Hinnant - Wilson, NC
Amy Holden - Overgaard, AZ
Rose Houk - Flagstaff, AZ
Joshua Jones - Cortez, CO
Jonathan Knighton-Wisor - Tucson, AZ
James Krehbiel - Delaware, OH
Patricia Lacey - Cortez, CO
Donna Rae Larson - Prescott, AZ
Steven Le Blanc - Bedford, MA
Stephen Lekson - Boulder, CO
Bill Lipe - Pullman, WA
Carol Lorenz - Durango, CO
Michael Lorusso - Cortez, CO
Lonnie Ludeman - Las Cruces, NM
Robin Lyle - Cortez, CO
Robert Mark - Flagstaff, AZ
Ellen Martin - Tempe, AZ
Joan Mathien - Albuquerque, NM
R. G. Matson - Vancouver, BC
Diane McBride - Cortez, CO
Robert McBride - Cortez, CO
Randall McGuire - Vestal, NY
Leley McPeck - Ivins, UT
Raymond McPeek - Ivins, UT
Robert McPherson - Blanding, UT
Janet McVickar - Santa Fe, NM
Julie Michler - Pahrump, NV
Lance Mikkelsen - Santa Fe, NM
Barbara Mills - Tucson, AZ
Krystina Mucha - Camp Verde, AZ
Helen O'Brien - Tucson, AZ
Aaron O'Brien - Durango, CO
Diane Orr - Salt Lake City, UT
Teri Paul - Bluff, UT
Dottie Peacock - Cortez, CO
Ann Phillips - Boulder, CO
David Phillips - Boulder, CO
Linda Pierce - Tucson, AZ
August Potor - Overgaard, AZ
Sharon Richwine - Columbus, OH
Chuck Riggs - Durango, CO
Tim Riley - Helper, UT

(The Pecos Conference, initiated in 1927, is the longest running meeting of professional archaeologists in the American Southwest.)
Marcie Ryan - Dolores, CO  
Jessica Savage - Meeker, CO  
Todd Scarbrough - Las Cruces, NM  
Owen Severance - Monticello, UT  
Susan Seyden - Fairview, NC  
Deb Silverman - Cortez, CO  
Rebecca Simon - Cortez, CO  
Marcia Simonis - Bluff, UT  
Rachel Smith - Grand Junction, CO  
Susan Smith - Monticello, UT  
Ryan Spittler - Dolores, CO  
Paul Stirniman - Cortez, CO  
Rebecca Stoneman-Washee - Blanding, UT  
Kenneth Thomas - Moab, UT  
Kate Thompson - Cortez, CO  

Kellam Throgmorton - Cortez, CO  
Jonathan Till - Bluff, UT  
Peter Trosclair - Palisade, CO  
Sharon Urban - Tucson, AZ  
Mark Varien - Cortez, CO  
Nicholas Walendziak - Moab, UT  
Charlotte Wolter - Santa Monica, CA  
Ryan Washam - Cedar City, UT  
James William - Bluff, UT  
Tom Windes - Albuquerque, NM  
Michael Wolfe - Moab, UT  
Tom Wright - Tempe, AZ  
Brian Yaquinto - Meeker, CO  
Josh Zettel - Clearfield, UT