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Designation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and the Impact on Trust¹

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“Twenty years from now will anyone care that the Grand Staircase and other landscape monuments were set aside with little, if any, public participation and by a process so lacking....that even admirers of the monument admit to some discomfort?....If history is any guide, it seems most likely that twenty, or even ten, years from now most will look out upon the dramatic western landscapes that have been set aside and be grateful.”
(Rasband 2001: 619).

Introduction

It’s a well-known, and often repeated, story in Utah. In September of 1996, without prior warning to most Utah residents, the Clinton Administration announced the creation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) in southern Utah. Residents reacted by schoolchildren releasing black balloons signaling mourning, and effigies of former President Clinton and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt “dangled from the lampposts of the streets in Escalante”—one of the key gateway communities to the monument (Baird 2005: C4).

Opposition to the designation occurred for various reasons, including the loss of anticipated economic opportunities from a proposed coal mine, anticipated impacts of future restrictions on traditional uses of the public land; and animosity toward President Clinton. Opposition to the designation also resulted from how it occurred. Using the 1906 Antiquities Act, President Clinton was able to create the GSENM without public participation or Congressional approval. This lack of input drew ire among Utah citizens living near the monument and statewide. This anger continues--exemplified by the Utah Legislature passing in 2012 a bill demanding that the federal government relinquish control of federal lands in the State, including the GSENM, by the end of 2014.

Research suggests that the exclusionary manner in which designation of natural protected areas (NPAs) occurs often results in detrimental impacts for the residents living in and/or near the NPA and also produces contentious relations between those representing the designation makers and local residents. For example, in 1989, the Mexican government created the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve without consulting neighboring communities (Haenn 1999). Local residents were not aware of the new reserve, nor that they were now living within its boundaries, until a year after the reserve was created. Lack of including residents’ voices resulted in resistance by the residents to Reserve regulations such as restricted hunting, and burning and felling of forests. In South Sumatra Indonesia, government planners greatly expanded an NPA “with a stroke of a pen”, resulting in “considerable economic sacrifice and community dislocation” for those in neighboring communities (Brechtin 2003: 67). Surprisingly little research examines social and political impacts of designation of protected areas and the protected area-

¹For complete study see: Peggy Petrzelka and Sandra Marquart-Pyatt. 2012. “With the stroke of a pen”: Designation of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument and the Impact on Trust.” Human Ecology. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2F9545-012-9544-x>

neighboring community relationship in the Global North (Brown and Lipscombe 1999). This research report begins to fill that void, by examining impacts of the GSENM designation on trust in federal agencies. We first provide information on the setting and methods used. We then turn to the findings and discuss their relevancy for policy makers considering designation of natural protected areas.

Background and Methods

Escalante is located in southern Utah, in Garfield County (Figure 1). Ninety-six percent of the land in Garfield County is public land and primarily managed by the USFS, NPS, and BLM. Garfield County depends more on tourism for employment than any other county in Utah. In 2006, the county’s leisure and hospitality industry accounted for more than one-third of the county’s jobs in nonfarm employment. While agriculture has become less important to economic activity in Garfield County, in 2006, it still represented

more than 10% of total employment, down from 18% in 1970 (Crispin et al. 2008).

As far back as the 1930s, Escalante residents and state officials felt their voices were not included by the federal government in decision making processes regarding monument designation. In 1938, the Utah Planning Board called for “public opposition” to a 1936 national monument proposal by the federal government, suggesting an alternative proposal that would “require local approval for all executive proclamations of national monuments” (Richardson 1965: 124). In 1940, Utah’s Governor Blood wrote to all Utah federal representatives stating, “Some morning we may wake up and find that . . . the Escalante Monument has been created by Presidential proclamation, then it will be too late to forestall what we in Utah think would be a calamity” (Richardson 1965: 127). Most Utah residents argue a sudden proclamation is exactly what happened when, in 1996, the GSENM was established by President Clinton (Belco and Rottinghaus 2009).

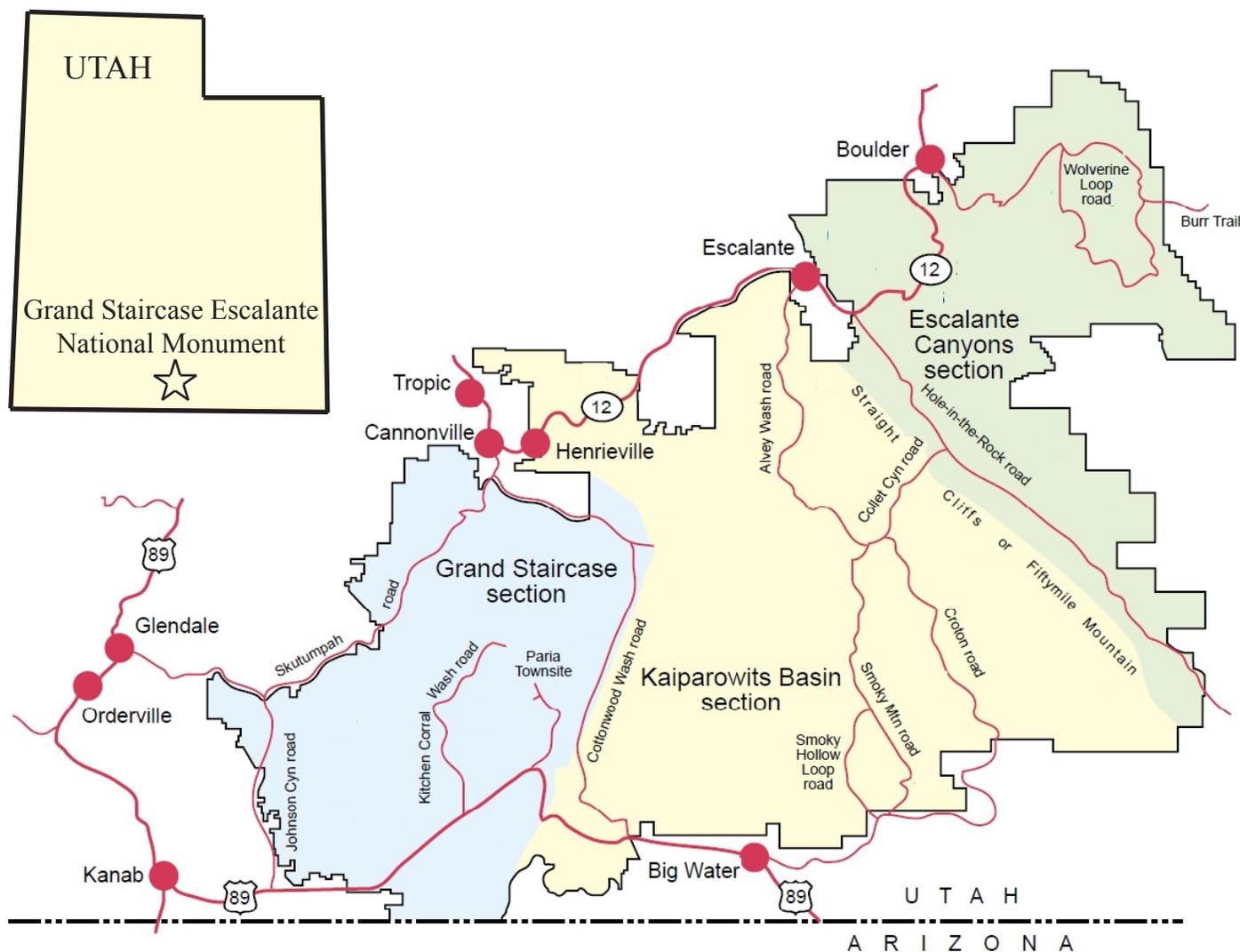


Figure 1. Location of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Escalante, Utah

To examine the impacts of the GSENM designation, we analyzed survey data collected in Escalante, Utah, in 1996, immediately after the GSENM designation, and in 2006, 10 years after the designation. For both the 1996 and 2006 surveys, data were collected through use of self-completion questionnaires, using a drop-off/pick-up method. This produced response rates of 79% (n=98) in 1996 and 82% (n=151) in 2006. We included here only those from the 2006 survey who were living in Escalante in 1996 (n=104) to make comparisons across the ten year timeframe. More males responded in 1996 (54%) and more females responded in 2006 (54%). The average age of respondents in 1996 was 52 years and 59 years, in 2006. Over half of the sample in each year had some college education. The qualitative data consists of respondents' open-ended comments from the 2006 survey when asked about important issues facing Escalante. The dominant themes presented are those consistent across age, gender, and length of residency in Escalante.

Results & Discussion

Our analyses begin by examining how perceptions of the BLM compared with other resource management agencies like the USFS, F&WS, and NPS changed from 1996 at the time of the GSENM designation announcement, to 2006. Respondents were asked, on a scale from 1 (Far too little) to 7 (Far

too much), how much effort government resource management agencies make to include local residents' input in public land decisions (Table 1). Results show that no agency is perceived as making too much effort, but all agencies are seen as making more effort in 1996 than 2006. For all four agencies, respondents' perception of inclusion of local residents' input in public land decisions effort has declined over the 10 years, significantly so for the BLM ($p < .05$). Escalante residents also exhibited a decline in trust in the agencies to make good decisions about management of land (based on a scale where 1=No Trust to 7=Complete Trust). Of particular note is the change in trust in the BLM from 1996 to 2006, the only agency to have a significant decrease over the 10 years ($p < .001$).

We now turn to results from our qualitative and multivariate analyses to explain this decrease in residents' trust of the BLM over the ten year period. Several interrelated themes emerged in the qualitative analysis, including (a) impacts of the GSENM, (b) the manner in which the GSENM designation occurred and (c) the political nature of government protected areas. Impacts of the GSENM are expressed both generally, "*Escalante was better off before the monument status and nothing can be done to mend the harm done by Clinton [and] Babbitt*" and specifically, "*GSENM ruined this town, killed the economy.*" Residents also expressed concern for the manner in which the designation occurred, evident

Table 1. View of Federal Agencies Over Time (Independent t-test results)

	1996 (N=98)	2006 (N=104)
Perceived effort of federal agencies to include local residents' input in public land decisions†		
Forest Service	3.00	2.76
Bureau of Land Management	2.87	2.35*
Fish & Wildlife Service	2.61	2.43
National Park Service	2.54	2.20
Trust in federal agencies to make good decisions about management of public lands‡		
Forest Service	4.09	3.72
Bureau of Land Management	3.92	2.82***
Fish & Wildlife Service	3.45	3.07
National Park Service	3.36	2.82

*** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

† 1 = Far too little effort, 4=About right level of effort, 7 = Far too much effort

‡ 1 = No Trust, 4 = Some Trust, 7 = Complete Trust

in these comments: “...the GSENM was a surprise to us because of that spineless Bill Clinton” and “The making of the monument was a colossal bunch of lies by the government to the people of this area.” The political nature of residents’ reactions to the GSENM is illustrated by these residents’ comments, “We do feel that too often we are ignored when decisions are made concerning us and our area. We are too often told but not asked” and “We would like for the people that have always been here to be able to have a say in whatever happens in Escalante. Our own local voices are often not heard.”

In addition to residents’ qualitative comments, multivariate analysis was used to examine possible determinants of trust in the BLM (Table 2). Results show that views on the federal government’s manner of monument designation in 1996 significantly predict trust in the BLM in 2006. Those residents who feel positive about the manner in which the designation

occurred in 1996 have higher trust in the BLM ($p < .05$). Conversely, the findings suggest those who feel negative about the manner in which the designation occurred have lower levels of trust in the BLM.

The most powerful predictor of trust in the BLM’s management activities was gender, with men significantly less trusting than women ($p < .01$). This may be explained, in part, by the occupational identity held by those in Escalante to traditional natural resource-based industry jobs such as ranching and mining. Men have a significantly higher level of this sense of identity, and were more active in voluntary organizations associated with resource-based occupations (such as local irrigation district groups and agricultural production organizations) and more attached to preserving opportunities for traditional activities such as grazing/logging/farming (Petrzelka et al. 2006).

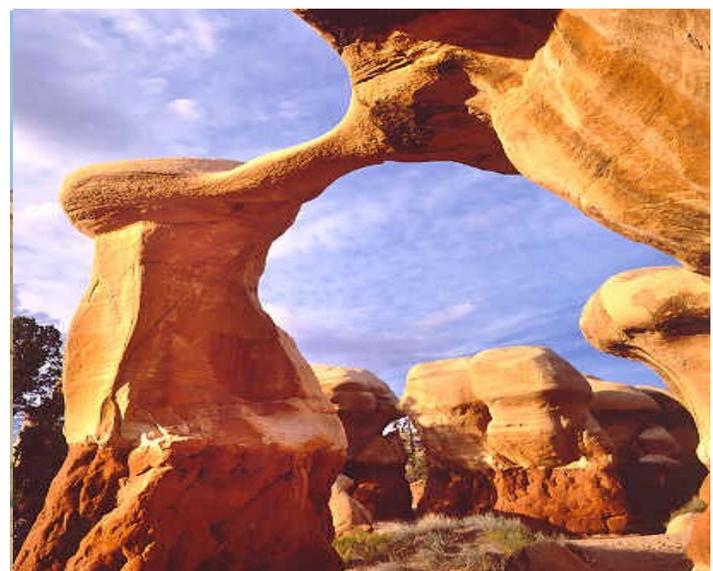


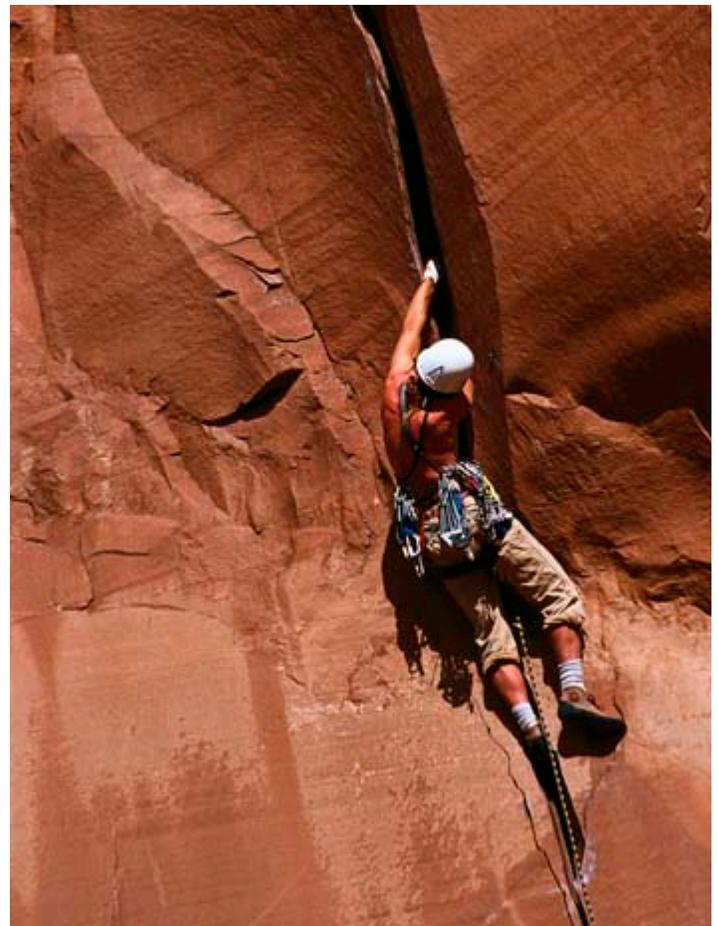
Table 2. Determinants of Trust in the Bureau of Land Management (N=104) Regression Results

	b	B
Constant	.331 (1.183)	
Monument Designation	.135* (.063)	.243
Current Decision Making Process	.148 (.094)	.173
Participation in BLM Meetings	-.326 (.293)	-.104
Sorry to leave Escalante	.411 (.251)	.152
Years lived in Escalante	-.004 (.007)	-.061
Party Identification (Republican)	-.268 (.281)	-.084
Sex (Male)	-.980** (.283)	-.311
Education	.046 (.117)	.037
Adjusted R Squared	.300	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ or below

The data suggest, despite the quote at the beginning of this article, some residents do care that the GSENM was designated with little public participation. While there is much focus in the literature on ways to build trust between federal resource management agencies and local residents (e.g. Olsen and Shindler 2010), our study findings suggest it may not be what the BLM is doing (or not doing) locally which influences trust in them; it is the actions by those at a more distant level of governance.

We are hopeful that our study findings are useful to those considering federal designation of protected areas. As previous literature and this study show, when such designation occurs without the involvement of people in the area, there are costs involved, and potential repercussions for both residents and local resource management staff. As McCool (2001) states, “When people are left out of the decision making process, it gives them a great incentive to sabotage anything that comes out of that process” (p. 614). If cooperative management of a local protected area is a primary goal of designation, then policy makers at more distant levels of governance should take note. The manner in which they designate matters.



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