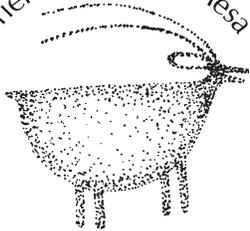


Friends of Cedar Mesa



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May 24, 2013

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
2464 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Attn.: Wade Garrett <Wade.Garrett@mail.house.gov>

Dear Representative Chaffetz:

I'm the Executive Director of the Friends of Cedar Mesa, a non-profit group based in San Juan County that is dedicated to stewardship of the natural and cultural resources of the Cedar Mesa region. Although we are just over a year old, we have more than 400 friends who support our mission, and this past November, we put on an all-day symposium in Blanding that was attended by over 220 people. We were formed to be a voice for the spectacular resources of Cedar Mesa – the magical canyons, old growth pinon and juniper forest, and the many undisturbed archaeological and historical sites, coupled with the incredible recreational opportunities the mesa affords such as hiking, camping, birding and exploring ruins.

We hope that you will consider introducing a bill to provide greater protection for this special part of San Juan County, an area that is beloved by so many citizens of the county, the Four Corners region, and the nation. Attached is our outline proposal listing the reasons that Cedar Mesa deserves to be designated a National Conservation Area or National Monument to recognize and protect its many outstanding qualities.

I understand that it will be possible for some of our board members to meet with your District Director, Wade Garrett, in Moab on the evening of Monday, June 17. We will look forward to having this opportunity to discuss our proposal with him. We appreciate your interest in receiving input from citizens regarding public land management policy and designations in southeastern Utah.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark Meloy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Mark Meloy, Executive Director
(on behalf of the Board of Directors)

Cedar Mesa Should Be Designated a National Conservation Area or National Monument

A Proposal from the Friends of Cedar Mesa—May, 2013

Proposed boundaries and size

Butler Wash on the east, Clay Hills cliffs on the west, Elk Ridge escarpment on the north, and San Juan River on the south. Total area encompassed, approximately 600,000 acres.

Why Cedar Mesa qualifies for a special designation

- The area enclosed by the above boundaries has many, many outstanding examples of Ancestral Pueblo rock art and cliff dwellings that are nationally and even internationally recognized in books, articles, and on the internet. Sites and rock art of later Ute and Navajo cultures are also present. The Hole-in-the-Rock trail, over which Mormon settlers traveled to found the community of Bluff, passes through the center of the area and is a venerated historic site.
- It is a rugged and exceptionally beautiful landscape, with deep canyons as well as mesa top environments having extensive and intact old-growth pinyon-juniper woodlands. There are no permanent residents and very little modern development.
- The opportunity to hike and backpack in this pristine environment and to visit remarkably preserved archaeological sites makes Cedar Mesa attractive to hikers and backpackers from San Juan County, the Four Corners area, the nation, and in some cases, other countries. Most parts of the mesa outside the canyons are accessible over unpaved county roads, so many of the sites and places that visitors seek out can be reached by easy day-hikes. There also are many opportunities for multi-day backpack trips as well.
- The area has been and continues to be an important area for archaeological research, from the 1890s to the present. Although the best-preserved archaeological sites tend to be in the canyons, the majority of the Ancestral Pueblo sites are located on the mesa top, where there are extensive areas of soil suitable for farming. The area has long been important for research on the Basketmaker period (ca. 400 BC-500 AD) of the Ancestral Pueblo tradition. Recent work in the later Pueblo periods has produced new evidence of Chaco-related great houses, extensive "roads" that connected different parts of the area, and other features not recognized by earlier archaeologists.
- Cedar Mesa is part of the living cultural heritage of several present-day groups—not just the Pueblo tribes such as the Hopi and Zuni, but the Utes, Paiutes, and Navajo, as well as the descendants of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. This heritage is manifest in visits to commemorate ancestry and reinforce cultural identity, and for the Native groups, periodic harvesting of game animals and plants traditionally used for subsistence or rituals. Navajo wood-cutting on the mesa has also increased in recent years.
- Increases in visitation make it imperative that the BLM apply more resources toward visitor education and monitoring archaeological and environmental conditions, so that the qualities that make Cedar Mesa special are not eroded unintentionally or by vandalism.
- The Four Corners region's 120-year history of looting of archaeological sites for artifacts to sell (the main reason for passage of the 1906 Antiquities Act) also makes it essential that more resources be devoted to law enforcement and patrol.
- NCA or Monument designation would not preclude existing economic uses such as grazing. The potential for oil and gas development appears low, but existing leases could continue to be honored.
- "National Park" style visitor management, which would draw large numbers of people to a few "hardened" sites and scenic locations is not appropriate for Cedar Mesa. However, reasonable numbers of backcountry visitors can be accommodated indefinitely provided the BLM has the resources to manage such visitation to ensure that the area's special qualities are not overrun and degraded.
- With regard to the economic effects of a special status, recent studies have shown that specially designated public lands areas such as national monuments are positively correlated with population and economic growth in the nearby rural communities. Visitors from outside the region help support outfitters, restaurants, motels, and shops. Access to

undeveloped backcountry for outdoor recreation, as well as opportunities to volunteer in research, conservation and educational programs, also provide incentives for people to retire to the area or to start businesses so they can stay there.

- NCA or Monument status for Cedar Mesa would undoubtedly attract more visitors to the area, but would also provide increased funding to ensure that the BLM allocates personnel and resources commensurate with protecting and managing the unique qualities of Cedar Mesa. Developing more effective public education programs is essential to this effort. The overriding goal of a special designation is to ensure that the area's outstanding qualities may be preserve to be appreciated and enjoyed by future generations.