

Debunking Sen. Lee's One-Pager on Grand Staircase-Escalante

Senator Lee is back! Following on the heels of last year's failed public lands sell-off, Senator Lee is back with another attempt to attack Grand Staircase-Escalante, weaken public lands, and make them easier to sell off to the highest bidder.

One Pager

MIKE LEE
US SENATOR for UTAH

March 4, 2026

Congressional Review of the January 2025 Grand Staircase-Escalante Resource Management Plan

In its final days, the Biden Administration approved a resource management plan (RMP) for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. State and local authorities resoundingly rejected the RMP, which was contrary to federal law's requirement of coordination and consistency with State and local government resource plans.

The Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and its implementing regulations provide that any federal resource management plan "shall be consistent with officially approved or adopted related plans, and the policies and programs contained therein, of State and local governments...so long as the guidance and resource management plans are also consistent with the purposes, policies and programs of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands."¹ In October 2024, the Governor's Consistency Review raised a number of concerns about the proposed RMP and final Environmental Impact Statement. **The final RMP released in January 2025 left each concern either unaddressed or discarded. Contrary to FLPMA, the Biden Administration rushed to finalize this rule without coordination and in spite of the State's concerns.**

In addition to BLM's failure to uphold its State and local coordination obligations under Federal law, the RMP's substance exemplifies abuse of executive authority consistent with the Monument's history.

The Biden Administration's Grand Staircase RMP rejects the principle of multiple use by restricting access to and use of extensive swaths of land within the monument's boundaries. It re-establishes a four-zone management framework, including front country, passage, outback, and primitive areas, prescribing additional management directives for each area. A similar framework went into effect under the 2000 RMP and governed the monument until 2020, following the initial monument designation. Essentially, the 2025 framework treats 30 percent of the Monument, or 559,600 acres, as Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC). **These lands are subject to wilderness management without an actual wilderness designation, since only Congress can designate wilderness areas. LWC management within the Monument includes a de facto prohibition on noncommercial woodland harvesting, including a ban on removing old growth and mature trees. Access to LWCs is subject to additional limitations by this RMP, including the closure of 341 miles of R.S. 2477 routes to offhighway vehicle (OHV) travel. Official designations within this RMP include 56,264 acres of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and Research Natural Areas.**

The Grand Staircase RMP dismisses statutory requirements for the sustained yield of resources, favoring static preservation and neglect over access and use. **Under this plan, the entirety of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) is withdrawn from mineral leasing and production. Additionally, 105,300 acres are made unavailable for livestock grazing "in an effort to prevent [impact on ecological and hydrological functions in a manner that would not be consistent with the protection of objects] and ensure the protection of GSENM objects."**² The few acres allocated for livestock grazing in the RMP are limited to nonrenewable permits and leases. These decisions were made without consultation with the State or affected counties and against their express objection.

The Grand Staircase RMP has been disapproved by the State of Utah, Garfield County, Kane County, as well as other local authorities. The Utah Congressional Delegation now pursues a joint resolution of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act. Passage of the resolution of disapproval **will render the Biden RMP no longer in effect, and management of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument will be governed by the previous management plan.** The Congressional Review Act prohibits the issuance of a rule "substantially the same" as a rule disapproved by Congress unless Congress passes a new law authorizing the rule (5 U.S.C. §801(b)(2)).

[Senator Lee's document continues, describing the Congressional Review Act and the history of the monument.]

FALSE: The BLM finalized the monument management plan in 2025, after more than two years of planning and a process that included extensive outreach to Tribal Nations, state and county officials, businesses, other stakeholders and the public. Utah officials were involved every step of the way. In response to state and local officials, the BLM made changes to the management plan, including expanding target shooting and grazing opportunities, and revising camping requirements.

MISLEADING: The plan identifies portions of the monument that possess wilderness characteristics and manages some of those lands to preserve wilderness values, while still allowing uses like grazing, recreation, hunting, and camping. At the same time, the plan identifies more than 900 miles of roads and trails as open for driving.

NOPE: The Antiquities Act of 1906 authorizes a president to reserve and withdraw lands from mining and leasing. The monument management plan implements that order. Sen. Lee takes issue with the fact that the monument exists. Using the Congressional Review Act to undo the monument management plan will not remove that mineral withdrawal.

JUST WRONG:

Federal law requires that lands within a national monument be managed to prioritize the protection of cultural and historic sites, fossils, and the unique flora and fauna the monument was established to protect. These are no longer "multiple use" lands. Activities like camping, sightseeing, and grazing are allowed throughout most of the monument.

WAY OVERBLOWN:

More than 95% of the monument (over 1.7 million acres) is open to grazing.

WRONG AGAIN: Using the CRA to undo the monument management plan will create chaos and uncertainty on the ground and disregards years of public input on how these lands should be managed for the American public, not just a few.