

# SALT LAKE CITY WEEKLY

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## **LETTER: Obama Should Protect Canyonlands**

Salt Lake City Weekly, June 11, 2014

President Obama recently gifted the American people with another new national monument: the spectacular Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks area in southern New Mexico. In 2013, Obama similarly protected the 224,000-acre Rio Grande Del Norte area in the northern part of the state.

Both of these monument proclamations were widely supported by citizens of the state—businesses, elected officials, local residents and churches—not only because they contain outstanding scenery, terrific recreational opportunities and amazing archeological sites, but also because citizens understood that monument proclamations would benefit our local rural economies.

As a former Utah resident, I hope Obama now turns his attention to Utah and protects the Greater Canyonlands area. Without question, Greater Canyonlands is one of the most exquisite and extraordinary landscapes in the world. It is one of our last largely untouched vast Western frontiers, but its beauty remains easily accessible. Spectacular geologic formations, amazing ancestral Puebloan sites and superlative hiking, camping, rafting, climbing and sightseeing offer plenty to see and do.

When I moved to Utah in 1989 for professional reasons, I had only intended to stay for several years. But like so many people who “discover” the state, I stayed—in my case, for 15 years. I had not expected to find such a wonderful environment in which to live. I was unprepared for the welcoming nature of the people and even more unprepared for the rich beauty of Utah’s landscape and the spectacular outdoor experiences that were so accessible.

The ease of traveling to and from Canyonlands allowed me to regularly head south for weekends and vacations. I always returned renewed, full of awe and grateful for the natural beauty I had experienced. After I retired, I returned to New Mexico to be closer to my partner and family. Now I have more time to run away, and I regularly head to Moab every chance I get—usually with others, eager to introduce them to this spectacular land.

A presidential proclamation protecting Greater Canyonlands would be a sterling gift to the world and to the citizens of Utah. It would ensure that one of the world’s most amazing landscapes would be protected for all time for Utahns and the whole country to enjoy. It would benefit local communities, as we here in New Mexico have experienced.

I hope we can all work together and that people in Utah will encourage Obama to come to Utah and see what is at stake first hand, and then act to protect this precious and irreplaceable part of our natural heritage.

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For more information about the letter, go to: [www.greatercanyonlands.org/news/](http://www.greatercanyonlands.org/news/).

Read more: [Obama Should Protect Canyonlands](#)

<http://www.cityweekly.net/utah/obama-should-protect-canyonlands/Content?oid=2418824>