Last week, President Trump signed an executive order directing the U.S. Department of the Interior to review the establishment of national monuments made under the Antiquities Act. The review will focus on sites designated since 1996 that comprise at least 100,000 acres.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 authorizes the President to proclaim national monuments on federal land to protect areas of cultural, historic or scientific interest. The act was designed to protect federal lands and resources quickly. Congress can modify or abolish these monuments through the enactment of legislation.

Republican lawmakers from Utah have been urging the administration to review the 1.35-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument, a designation made in President Obama’s final weeks in office. The executive order specifically requires a report reviewing the designation of the Bears Ears monument within 45 days.

“I've spoken with many state and local leaders, a number of them here today, who care very much about preserving our land and who are gravely concerned about this massive federal land grab,” said President Trump.

A final report reviewing all the other sites also is due within 120 days. The report will include recommendations for additional Presidential actions or legislative proposals to make modifications. The order also directs the Secretary of Interior to “consult and coordinate with the Governors of States affected by monument designations or other relevant officials of affected State, tribal, and local governments.” The Secretary will also be permitted to review monuments of any size, if he deems that past presidents did not seek sufficient public input before issuing a designation.

More than 50 monuments have been created since 1996. According to Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke, the review, “should include about 24 to 40 monuments.”

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