

Testimony on H.R. 4532
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Rebecca Benally
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Member of the Navajo Tribe

Thank you, Committee Chair and Ranking Members

Thank you for inviting me to testify in support of House Resolution 4532. My name is Rebecca Benally, San Juan County Commissioner, a member of the Navajo tribe. I appreciate the opportunity for my voice and the community voice to be heard.

In our community, public lands are our most valuable resource. The land is our inheritance, handed down from generation to generation. We treasure the land. We take care of the land. H.R. 4532 is a step to create the first Tribal managed national monument. The Shash Jaa National Monument incorporates land within the Bears Ears area. Unfortunately, the former Bears Ears proclamation never mentioned tribal management just an advisory commission. It is stated that, "The purpose of the Shash Jaa National Monument shall be to protect, conserve and enhance the unique important historic, sacred, cultural, scientific, scenic, archaeological, natural and educational resources of Shash Jaa National Monument."

The purpose is only worthwhile if it truly serves the people. And no group of people has more to lose or gain, than the local tribes. We use the land for hunting, wood cutting, gathering medicinal herbs and for sacred ceremonies. By creating the Shash Jaa Tribal Management Council, you are giving the Native American people the opportunity to manage the land of their ancestors and maintain access.

By supporting H.R. 4532, you are listening to a group that has been silenced for too long and finally allowing us a seat at the table. We all come from different backgrounds, but we want the same results. We want land that is well-managed and accessible to all people. We support the language of H.R. 4532. We agree that the land should be protected. Currently there are 14 regulation and laws in place, such as:

- 1935 Historic Sites Preservation Act
- 1960/1974 Reservoir Act
- 1964 Wilderness Act
- 1966 National History Preservation Act
- 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- 1974 Archaeological & Historic Preservation Act
- 1976 Federal Lands Policy and Management Act
- 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act
- 1979 Archaeological Resources Protection Act
- 1980 Amendment-Executive Order Protection & Enhancement of Cultural Environment
- 1990 Native American Graves Protection & Repatriation Act
- 1996 Indian Sacred Site Protection Act
- 2000 Consultation & Coordination with Indian Tribal Government Act
- 2003 Preserve American Act

Therefore, H.R. 4532 is a step in the right direction to create the Shash Jaa Tribal Management Council that will benefit the local tribes and groups to work together to manage the land.

It is an honor to be here today. Thank you for listening to the local people, San Juan County, Utah. I also would like to thank the Utah delegation for showing respect to the process and putting forward a thoughtful and inclusive bill.