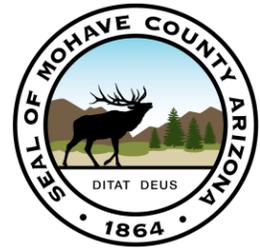


# MOHAVE COUNTY BOARD of SUPERVISORS

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P.O. Box 7000  
700 West Beale Street  
Kingman, Arizona 86402-7000  
Telephone (928) 753-0722 Cell (928) 279-9010  
Website -- [www.mohavecounty.us](http://www.mohavecounty.us)

## **Travis J. Lingenfelter - Mohave County Supervisor District 1** **Marianne Salem – District 1 Manager**

Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni National Monument is asking for 1.1 million acres to be permanently protected.

As Chairman of the Mohave County Board of Supervisors and the District 1 County Supervisor, I am here this morning to speak in opposition to the proposed executive action utilizing the Antiquities Act to designate 1.1 million acres of land in northern Arizona as the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni National Monument. After past failed attempts, this latest proposed executive action would devastate the future economic development growth potential of northern Arizona and would have long lasting adverse economic effects on the human environment within the County of Mohave.

The proposed Baaj Monument land coverage within Mohave County District 1 alone is 445,159.7 acres.

Land currently managed by the BLM comprises 88% of the proposed Monument at 391,936 acres.

Arizona State Trust Land comprises 9.2% of the proposed Monument at 41,090 acres.

The proposed Monument curiously also includes privately held land comprising 2.7% at 12,133 acres. These private lands would be forever stripped of their ability to be developed to their full economic development potential within a rapidly growing area. Within my District 1 and directly bordering the proposed national monument to the north are the City of Colorado City, Arizona, Centennial Park, Arizona, and Cane Beds, Arizona. The current poverty rate in Colorado City, Arizona – which is experiencing an incredible economic resurgence after so many years under the thumb of monster Warren Jeffs – is a whopping 42.4%. Within Centennial Park and Cane Beds, Arizona, the poverty rates are 22% and 18.8% respectively. The current suicide rate is many times higher than the national average, and community mental health is slowly on the mend after experiencing generational trauma. Their story is a real tale of resilience and of rising up and rebuilding from the ashes that should be applauded and supported at all levels of government. These communities will be harmed by the unintended consequences of designating yet another national monument right in their backyard – as national monument designations have the unintended consequence of dooming the local residents to living in “poverty with a view”.

The State of Arizona already has 18 national monuments in existence today – more than any other state in our nation. Mohave County, Arizona, alone has only 10% privately-owned land. The State of Arizona and Mohave County simply cannot afford to lose any more land to the federal government. Nearly 50% of our State of Arizona is now managed and owned by the federal government. Designating another 1.1 million acres to the federal government will further reduce private ownership and hurt hard working rural Americans within Arizona and Mohave County District 1.

As I stated previously in my testimony, approximately 90% of the proposed acreage is already under BLM control, and Mohave County fails to understand why the current level of federal oversight and management, and working collaboratively with state, county and local elected officials and agencies as has worked well for so long is no longer sufficient? Also, as a matter of public policy, is forever locking down known American natural resources really the wisest course of action to take when looking at an uncertain future with international players like China and Russia? The only thing placing “keep out signs” on the land does is that it forever hamstringing our citizens from making a living or enjoying the land.

On August 28, 1984, as Public Law 98-406, the Arizona Strip Wilderness Act was, at the time, thought to have once and for all addressed all questions of wilderness and conservation on the Arizona Strip in northern Arizona. The Arizona Wilderness Act specifically recognized the uranium potential of over one-half million acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service lands in northern Arizona by releasing them from wilderness classification so they could be explored and mined. With overwhelmingly bipartisan support at that time from across the entire political spectrum, the United States Congress had finally spoken and clearly defined the disposition of public lands in northern Arizona.

Twenty-six years later in 2010 and 2011, the Obama Administration’s Interior Secretary Ken Salazar requested the National Park Service to evaluate nearly 1,000,000 acres of lands – now being proposed as the new Baaj Nwaavjo Itah Kukveni monument – for a 20-year moratorium on uranium mining, which was in fact enacted and is still in place today. Internal National Park Service emails from Park Service employees at the time showed that they could not identify a threat to the lands or watershed leading into or surrounding the Grand Canyon – and further that breccia pipes inside the Grand Canyon National Park, which no one intends to mine, are in fact, naturally occurring. If the federal government is looking to prevent uranium mining, it does not require a new national monument designation to deny permits – as the federal government already has that authority.

Approximately 90% of these proposed lands are currently held in trust and managed by the federal government for ALL American citizens. Abusing the Antiquities Act to designate a new national monument would strip away the ability of all interested American citizens to participate in a public process and to have their comments accepted and publicly heard by the federal government. The County of Mohave also has the following questions as a part of this process which we are still looking for answers to:

- Mohave County is interested to learn how the boundaries of the proposed new national monument were drawn up – as we cannot help but notice that the proposal affects both Arizona State Trust Lands and privately-held lands, but not the Reservations of the Havasupai, Hualapai, or Kiabab Paiute Tribes or the other Tribes lobbying to restrict this land.
- Mohave County would like to know if the federal government has taken a hard look at the cumulative effects that a new monument designation would have on the human environment and the natural environment.
- Mohave County would also like to know what the Biden Administration has done regarding vitality of commerce in this proposed area within Arizona and Mohave County District 1.

Designating this land as a national monument will take away future economic opportunity for the taxpayers of Mohave County and the State of Arizona. Rather than the Biden Administration designating this unnecessary new national monument, continuing to work together collaboratively as we have will protect the land far better than no trespassing signs and forever harming the economic development future of the real human beings that actually live there.

The County of Mohave takes great pride in the fact that we are rich in natural resources, and we hold the utmost respect and reverence for the Grand Canyon National Park and for our serious responsibility in protecting the Park from harm. We understand that tourism generates significant economic activity annually from visitors, and that most of that activity is at the south rim and miles away from the proposed national monument. Most of the accompanying jobs are low-wage and seasonal jobs which is consistent with tourism employment which is typically at poverty level.

We are aware that as of today, over 60% of the uranium used in domestic nuclear plants is unnecessarily shipped through the Port of St. Petersburg. At a time when the United States of America has abundant supplies of uranium in our backyard, this reliance on Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and communist China defies common sense. For those that understand modern mining, it makes no sense when Americans are told that mining domestic uranium supplies is “bad”, but mining copper, lithium, cobalt and nickel is “good”. It is wrong for American electricity rate payers to be financing Russia's war against Ukraine through international uranium purchases. President Biden has provided strong support for Ukraine. Why then would the Biden Administration even consider placing off-limits our nation's largest sources of high-grade domestic uranium by designating yet another national monument.

It is, in fact, a national security choice. Thank you.

Travis J. Lingenfelter, Chairman  
County Supervisor – District 1  
County of Mohave, Arizona