

**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Subcommittee on Federal Lands**  
**Hearing on H.R. 4532**  
**Testimony of Suzette Morris**

Thank you, Chairman McClintock, Congressman Lowenthal and members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for inviting me to testify in support of HR 4532. My name is Suzette Morris and I am a member of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe from White Mesa, Utah. I am also the Vice President of the Stewards of San Juan County. Stewards of San Juan County is a diverse working group made up of stakeholders, advocates, and interested citizens who are working together to determine how we can best maintain and enhance land in San Juan County.

I got a call Sunday evening asking if I would come testify. I left my six daughters early the next morning, drove two and a half hours to the airport, took a plane to Dallas and then another plane here to Washington DC, a place I have never been in my life, because this is so important to me and my family.

I grew up in White Mesa. My family is from this area. From a young age I was taught all about these lands. I was taught where to go, and also where not to go. In our community, public lands are our most valuable resource. We use the land for hunting, wood cutting, gathering sage and medicinal herbs, and for sacred ceremonies. There is no one who cares for the land more than we do, the local residents and Native people of San Juan County. It is the people who live closest to the land that understand the land best and should have a voice in how the lands are managed.

HR 4532 will finally empower the voices who have been silenced in this debate, and those are the voices of the local tribes who actually live in San Juan County. Our voices have been silenced by special interest groups funded by Hollywood actors, San Francisco boardrooms and by tribes who do not live anywhere near Bears Ears. Even the leaders of my own tribe in Colorado probably don't even know where Bears Ears is. They decided to support the Obama monument in secret. They didn't ask the White Mesa Utes to support it, because the majority of us don't.

By creating the first ever Tribal Management Council you are empowering local Native American people with real authority to manage the land of their ancestors. The Obama creation of the Bears Ears National Monument never mentioned tribal management, it only created an advisory committee that had no real power over the land.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge that Rebecca Benally, the San Juan County Commissioner and a member of the Navajo tribe was initially scheduled to testify today. Sadly she was unable to make it because of a sickness and hospital visit. I would like to submit her testimony for the record and read it in part:

“By supporting H.R. 4532, you are listening to a group that has been silenced for too long. 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.”

Unfortunately the Obama monument was done to us, not with us. A national monument should be an honor to an area, not something forced upon us by a President thousands of miles away. The Obama monument ignored the voices of locals. That is why I am here.

It is an honor to be here today. Thank you for listening and I look forward to your questions.