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PUBLIC NEARLY UNANIMOUS IN URGING TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO RETAIN PROTECTION FOR NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Special places and wild landscapes are valued for their historical, cultural, and recreational value, innovative study finds

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA, AUGUST 22, 2017 -- More than 99.2% of people weighing in on a Trump Administration proposal want to keep their parks and public lands–specifically those designated as national monuments–protected, according to a new analysis. The proposal, announced in April of this year, called for review and possible elimination or reduction in size of 27 national monuments that preserve natural beauty, recreational resources, Native American cultural sites, and scientifically important landscapes for the American public. This includes five national marine monuments under similar review that could also lose their protected status.

All of the national monument lands under review were designated by Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, or Barack Obama under authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906. The Antiquities Act has been used by almost every president since Teddy Roosevelt and is responsible for the preservation of Native American cultural sites like Devil's Tower, natural wonders like the Grand Canyon and Muir Woods, and historic places like the Statue of Liberty, Fort Laramie, and sites along the Underground Railroad.

The landscapes targeted in the review currently protect similar scenic, cultural, scientific recreational and other resources for all Americans.

As part of the review, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke solicited input from the public during an official comment period beginning May 11 and ending July 10, 2017. He has received more than 2.8 million comments from individuals and interested organizations.

Charlottesville, Virginia-based Key-Log Economics used an innovative combination of crowdsourcing and machine learning, to comb through and analyze every one of the 1.3 million comments that were publicly available by the end of the official comment period. They found that 99.2 percent of comments oppose the possible elimination of the national monument designations or a reduction in their size and protected status.

"Especially in light of what has been seen and said over the past 10 days in and about Charlottesville, it is ironic that the Trump Administration may be poised to undo protections for treasured recreation lands that bring Americans together while exalting statues of men who tried to tear this nation apart," **said Key-Log Economics founder, Dr. Spencer Phillips, who co-authored the study.** "Regardless, it is clear

from our analysis that Americans love their parks and public lands, such as Bears Ears, Katahdin Woods and Waters, Grand Staircase-Escalante, and other national monuments. They want these nationally significant lands to remain protected."

Public comments on the proposal came in the form of individual letters, eComments, form letters submitted one at a time or in bundles, and petitions. "Everyone who submitted a comment, signed a petition, or otherwise expressed an opinion on the proposal will have their voices heard as a result of our study," **lead author Sonia Wang said**.

A cadre of 366 volunteers reviewed a random sample of the comments, and their review was used to train and test the machine-learning algorithm. Once trained, the algorithm could classify a comment as opposing versus supporting the president's proposal 99.8 percent of the time, with a margin of error of less than one half of one percent.

"The open source community's emphasis on developing accessible, well-cited machine learning tools has enabled an accuracy to the results that allows this project to step beyond the norm of random sampling," **said co-author Oliver Beavers, the project's lead data scientist.**

Beyond measuring the degree of support for the continued protection of these places, the report also documents some of the reasons why the national monument lands are important. Based on the human-reviewed comments (which comprise a statically valid sample of all comments), the authors found that opposition to the proposed elimination or reduction of the national monument lands is strong among individuals who mention specific national monuments, hail from all corners of the country, and have a range of concerns. For example:

- Among commenters noting concerns about the environment in general, Tribal rights and Native American interests, scenic beauty, and future generations, 98% or more oppose the President's directive.
- Of those interested in non-motorized recreation, fishing, hunting, and local economic vitality, between 92 and 98 percent oppose the Executive Order.
- Residents of the states where the monuments are located are generally opposed to a loss of protection for these lands. Opposition is least among self-identified Nevadans and Mainers, of whom 72% and 75%, respectively, oppose the executive order. Among Coloradans and residents of Washington state, opposition runs at 97% and 98%, respectively.

It is expected that Secretary Zinke will be making recommendations in the coming days regarding whether the public lands under review should lose their protection as national monuments. The 1.3+ million Americans who spoke up (primarily) in defense of these special, scenic, and sacred places should expect that their voices are heard as those decisions are made. With its new analysis, Key-Log Economics is proud to have helped make that hearing possible.

Key-Log Economics is an independent, employee-owned consultancy specializing in natural resource, environmental, and ecological economics. We help people, organizations and communities realize–that is, both understand and attain–the benefits of land conservation and environmental stewardship. We develop solid information about critical connections between human and natural communities. We

communicate that information in strategic policy and public education efforts. And we use the insights we gain from research to design and implement individual projects, broader programs, and land stewardship plans that make and maintain positive ecological-economic relationships.

The full report, titled "*Public Support for Public Lands: Analysis of Comments Regarding Review and Potential Loss of Protection for America's National Monuments",* is available for download from keylogeconomics.com (http://bit.ly/2uhTFX1).

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