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# Congressional Review of the January 2025 Grand Staircase-Escalante Resource Management Plan

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In its final days, the Biden Administration approved a resource management plan (RMP) for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. State and local authorities resoundingly rejected the RMP, which was contrary to federal law’s requirement of coordination and consistency with State and local government resource plans.

The Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and its implementing regulations provide that any federal resource management plan “shall be consistent with officially approved or adopted related plans, and the policies and programs contained therein, of State and local governments...so long as the guidance and resource management plans are also consistent with the purposes, policies and programs of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands.”<sup>1</sup> In October 2024, the Governor’s Consistency Review raised a number of concerns about the proposed RMP and final Environmental Impact Statement. The final RMP released in January 2025 left each concern either unaddressed or discarded. Contrary to FLPMA, the Biden Administration rushed to finalize this rule without coordination and in spite of the State’s concerns.

In addition to BLM’s failure to uphold its State and local coordination obligations under Federal law, the RMP’s substance exemplifies abuse of executive authority consistent with the Monument’s history.

The Biden Administration’s Grand Staircase RMP rejects the principle of multiple use by restricting access to and use of extensive swaths of land within the monument’s boundaries. It re-establishes a four-zone management framework, including front country, passage, outback, and primitive areas, prescribing additional management directives for each area. A similar framework went into effect under the 2000 RMP and governed the monument until 2020, following the initial monument designation. Essentially, the 2025 framework treats 30 percent of the Monument, or 559,600 acres, as Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC). These lands are subject to wilderness management without an actual wilderness designation, since only Congress can designate wilderness areas. LWC management within the Monument includes a de facto prohibition on noncommercial woodland harvesting, including a ban on removing old growth and mature trees. Access to LWCs is subject to additional limitations by this RMP, including the closure of 341 miles of R.S. 2477 routes to off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel. Official designations within this RMP include 56,264 acres of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and Research Natural Areas.

The Grand Staircase RMP dismisses statutory requirements for the sustained yield of resources, favoring static preservation and neglect over access and use. Under this plan, the entirety of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) is withdrawn from mineral leasing and production. Additionally, 105,300 acres are made unavailable for livestock grazing “in an effort to prevent [impact

on ecological and hydrological functions in a manner that would not be consistent with the protection of objects] and ensure the protection of GSENM objects.”<sup>2</sup> The few acres allocated for livestock grazing in the RMP are limited to nonrenewable permits and leases. These decisions were made without consultation with the State or affected counties and against their express objection.

The Grand Staircase RMP has been disapproved by the State of Utah, Garfield County, Kane County, as well as other local authorities. The Utah Congressional Delegation now pursues a joint resolution of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act. Passage of the resolution of disapproval will render the Biden RMP no longer in effect, and management of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument will be governed by the previous management plan. The Congressional Review Act prohibits the issuance of a rule “substantially the same” as a rule disapproved by Congress unless Congress passes a new law authorizing the rule (5 U.S.C. §801(b)(2)).

### **Eligibility of the Grand Staircase RMP Under the Congressional Review Act**

On January 15, 2026, GAO issued opinion B-337705 on the Grand Staircase-Escalante Resource Management Plan (Grand Staircase RMP.) The decision concludes that “the Grand Staircase RMP is a rule subject to CRA’s submission requirements.”

GAO outlined the decision using a three-part test under Section 551 of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA): (1) it must be an agency statement, (2) it must have future effect, and (3) it must be designed to either implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or describe the agency’s organization, procedure, or practice requirements. The following is GAO's justification for the decision:

1. The Grand Staircase RMP reflects BLM’s independent exercise of its discretion and authority under FLPMA, and therefore qualifies as an agency statement;
2. The Grand Staircase RMP is a rule of future effect because it applies prospectively to guide all subsequent management decisions, implements and directs the long-term allocation of public land for certain uses, establishes permissible resource uses, and defines the conditions and constraints necessary to achieve objectives outlined in the RMP;
3. The Grand Staircase RMP meets the third requirement, as it establishes management policies pursuant to BLM’s authority under FLPMA that were not included in the Proclamation, establishes conditions for land use, allocates resources for specific purposes, and prohibits certain activities.

This decision is publicly available here: [90 Fed. Reg. 2741](#).

### **History of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument**

1996: President Clinton designates 1.7 million acres, inconsistent with the “smallest area compatible” requirement of the Antiquities Act.

2000: The Monument's first Resource Management Plan establishes the four-management zone framework, shuts off access to areas of land, restricts existing grazing allotments, and creates a process for the government to permanently lock up parcels of land to industrial mining.

2017: President Trump reduces the boundaries of the Monument, more closely following the restrictions of the Antiquities Act, and opens 800,000 acres to multiple-use activities.

2020: The 2020 Resource Management Plan streamlines processes for valid existing rights, reopens areas previously closed to livestock grazing, and increases access for multiple-use purposes.

2021: President Biden reverts Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument to its original size.

2025: In its final days, the Biden Administration finalizes the 2025 Resource Management Plan, ignoring concerns raised by the State of Utah, local governments, communities, and members of the Utah Congressional Delegation.