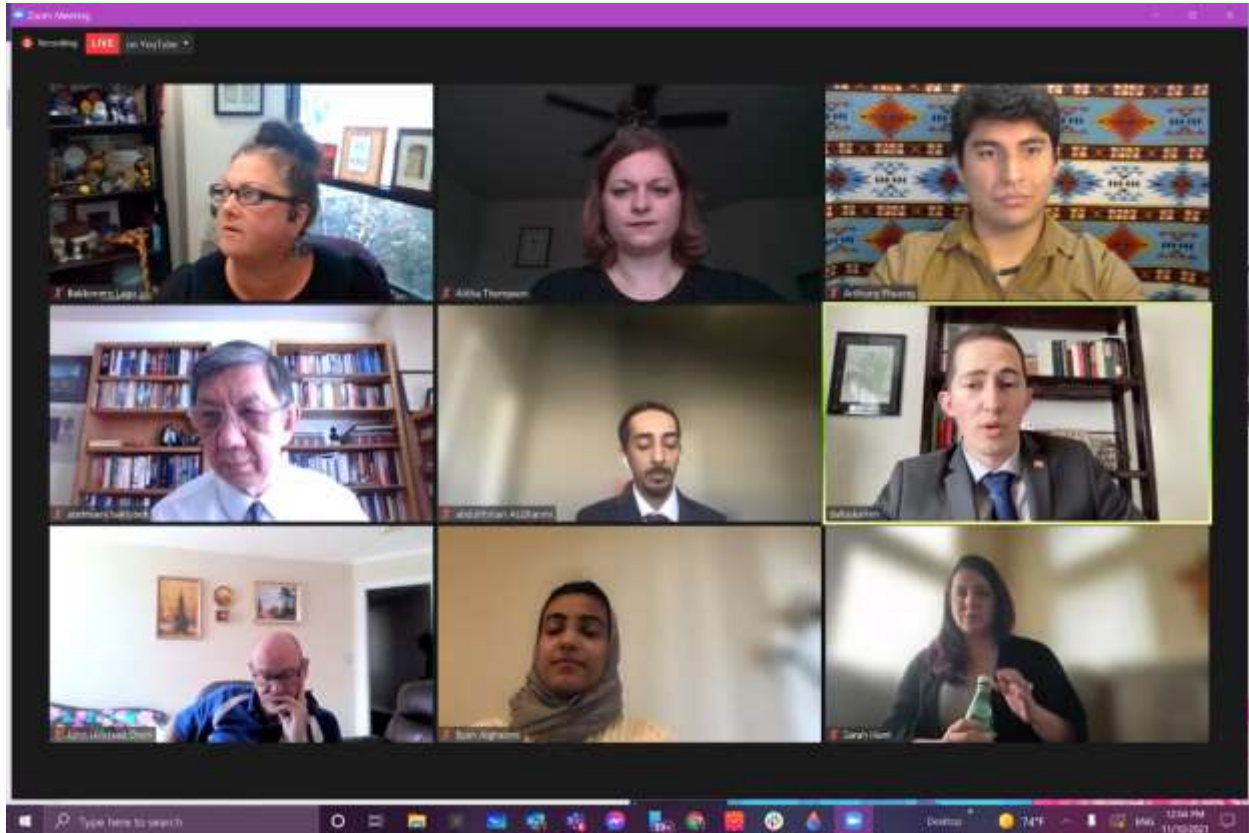


Bear Ears National Monument Discussion

Being aware of what it is and how we can help I was not aware of any of this before I listened to the discussion on the Bear Ears National Monument which took place at Utah Valley university on November 10, 2021. I was not even aware of the differences between Monuments and National Parks.

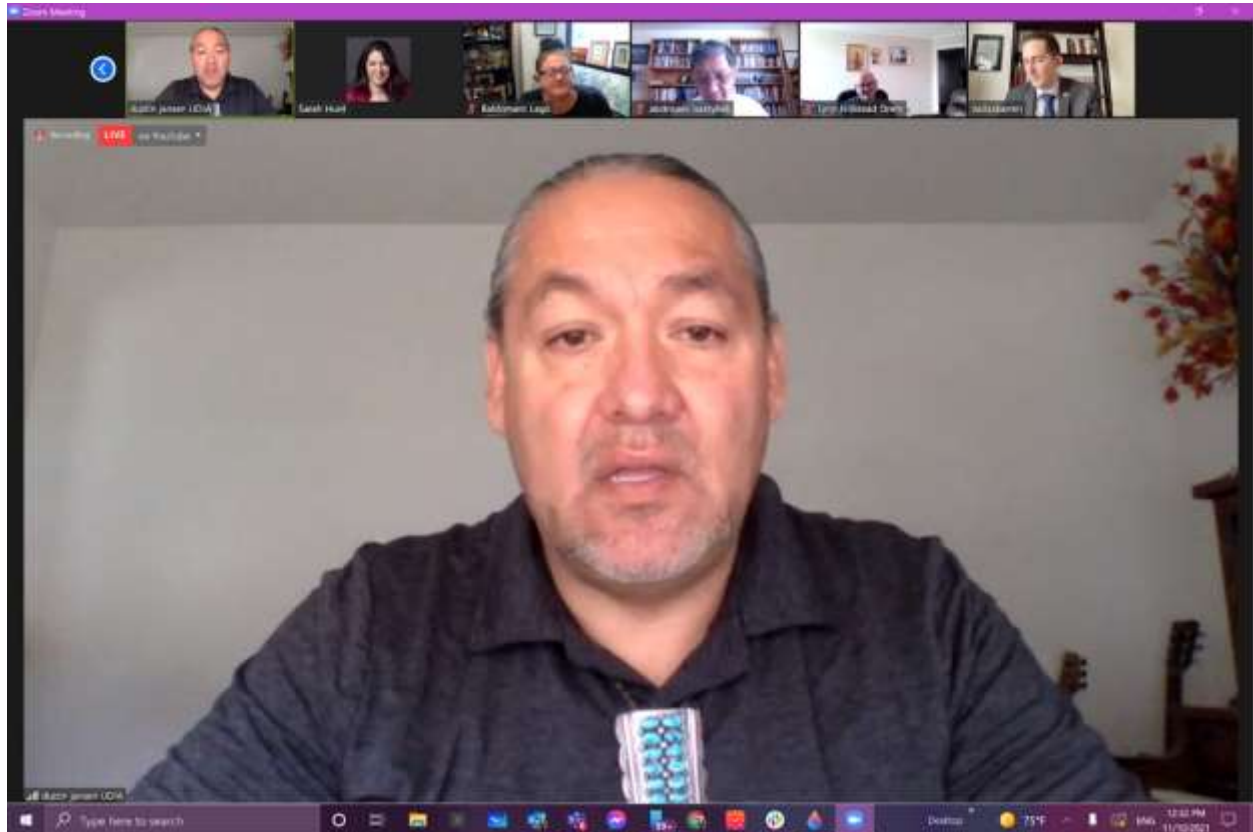


Roundtable participants

What first struck me was that National Monuments can be controlled by executive order. This can change every time a new group is put into office, so it creates an area that can change rules constantly. It's interesting that our recent presidents have changed the size of the area of Bears Ears National Monument. President Barack Obama by executive order initially established bear ears as a national monument as a sacred land of cultural and spiritual significance to tribal nations. 1.5 million acres. President Donald Trump reduced the Monument's borders size by 85%. Then President Joe Biden reverted the size to what Barack Obama originally made it. Will there be a stop to this? There is controversy on Federal Lands and what is allowed.

As Sara Hunt mentions, this area has many natural and energy sources. There are a lot of controversies around getting the natural resources and who gets the money. And it is about who controls the land. Who gets royalties from the use of those lands. She is a clean technology advocate, she wants clean nuclear power. This area and the Grand Canyon have our only national Uranium resources. Also has other clean energy options, like fossil fuels. We are dependent on Uranium from other countries right now.

She talked about National Parks having to be a certain size and having to be established by congressional order. National Monuments can be assigned by executive order. Can you rescind as Trump did? Always worried about too much federal control vs. state control. Utah loses money every year from federal control. It is all becoming more politicized. We need to listen and understand how they are used.



Dustin Jansen speaks during the event

Dustin Jansen is a teacher of American Indian Studies at UVU. He shared his views about the religious sites located within the Bear Ears area. The area has structures from people that lived there for thousands of years. There are a lot of medicinal plants there. It is a ceremonial spot and a religious area for the American Indian population.

He talked about the Antiquities act, not being updated and is still trying to be understood. Now they are all in court to figure it all out. He talked about if you want to know what your country thinks about you, look at the laws that protect you, and you will know. How you see people is how you treat people.

He reminded us about the Dass act that reduced their land and sent their kids to boarding schools. If parents did not let them go, they could be sent to Alcatraz. They were told they could not practice their religion. Tribes were wiped out for doing a ceremonial dance. He talked about injustices and perceptions. 500 years later and they are still invisible. Native American Religion is land-based religion. Land is a sacred thing for them. They want to respect the land. Rights vs. responsibility. They are fighting to protect Bear Ears.

I thought it was all interesting but confusing so I am glad Alitha sent her message during our team class meeting. It made more sense. So it sounds like it comes down to many wanting this area and how can we do it to help all without damaging the current ecosystem and needs. Sustainable development is for all and then we would not have to rely on other countries, but can we do so and still let the Native Americans have their sacred land?

Derek Balkman, Utah Valley University student