The Antiquities Act of 1906 grants the President of the United States the authority – through a presidential proclamation – to create national monuments on public lands. To date, more than 80 natural areas have been set aside as park or preservation lands, including nearly 137 million acres of public lands. Due to past controversy, the Presidential powers under the Antiquities Act have been limited in two states. The first after the Jackson Hole National Monument designation in 1943, and again after President Carter created 56 million acres of national monuments in Alaska.

THE REALITY FOR RANCHERS

Many times, the President will create national monuments on millions of acres of land at a time, significantly disrupting the economies of local communities that reside on or are adjacent to those lands. The livestock industry is consistently impacted when public land that has been used for ranching for generations is taken away.

When land is designated as a national monument, new regulations greatly limit multiple uses – including livestock grazing – or create restrictions on access and range improvement maintenance. These restrictions are so costly that ranchers can no longer afford to use their public land allotments. When ranchers lose their allotments, the local economy suffers – incomes plummet, businesses close and schools shutter.

LISTENING LOCAL

In 2018, President Trump appropriately scaled back Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante national monuments. Altogether, he eliminated two million acres, focusing protections on intended features. These decisions came after then Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke conducted a comprehensive review of all national monuments designated since 1996.

Bottom line: National monument designations should be appropriately scaled to ensure that ranchers and rural economies are not disrupted.