

Resolution No. 2024-31**A RESOLUTION OF MESA COUNTY OPPOSING DESIGNATION IN WHOLE OR IN PART OF
THE PROPOSED DOLORES CANYONS NATIONAL MONUMENT**

WHEREAS, the Protect the Dolores Coalition has proposed the designation of an approximately 400,000-acre Dolores Canyons National Monument in Mesa County, Montrose County, and San Miguel County through the Antiquities Act of 1906, currently codified in pertinent part as 54 U.S.C. § 320301 (Antiquities Act); and

WHEREAS, designation of the Dolores Canyons National Monument, as proposed under the Antiquities Act, would occur through proclamation by the President of the United States, outside of the legislative process, and subsequent management of the Dolores Canyons National Monument would occur under a management plan developed exclusively by one or more federal agencies, with questionable consideration given to the views of local communities, their elected leaders, or these parties' practice of collaboration and cooperation established over the years through National Environmental Policy Act management plan development; and

WHEREAS, the area proposed for the Dolores Canyons National Monument is not "unprotected." In fact, it's currently mired in layers of protection. It may see more as the Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") finalizes the Grand Junction Field Office Resource Management Plan Amendment ("RMPA") and begins the Uncompahgre Field Office RMPA, both in response to a lawsuit from the environmentalists. The United States Forest Service ("USFS") is also finalizing the revision of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison Forest Plan, which incorporates additional protections for habitat connectivity; and

WHEREAS, current administrative protections conserve and preserve important resource values, including various birds, big game, plant species, recreation, and historical and cultural resources; and

WHEREAS, the applicable resource management plans that established the management layers have been through multiple rounds of scrutiny, allowing the public, local governments, and other federal agencies to evaluate, ask questions, and provide input before they were adopted by the federal agency with management authority for the area; and

WHEREAS, the proposed designation would not change the managing agency of existing BLM and USFS management; and

WHEREAS, the lands proposed for the Dolores Canyons National Monument include valuable elemental resources such as helium, vanadium, and uranium, the last of which the United States has heavily sourced from Russia in recent years, but will be unable to source moving forward, pending the President's signature on recently passed, bi-partisan legislation banning importation of Russian uranium, which further supports President Biden's Executive Order 14005, *Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers*; and

WHEREAS, the proposed lands also contain abundant timber, unappropriated water, grazing lands, and the landscape itself concerning outdoor recreation opportunities, whose development or continued use would foster and sustain strong local communities and the greater region, economically and otherwise; and

WHEREAS, the designation would drastically limit future opportunities that may present, such as science and research technology advances that would require resources to be accessible, such as but not limited to carbon capture, geothermal, and small-scale nuclear reactors, along with critical supply chain resources for semiconductors, electrical vehicle batteries, steel, and concrete manufacturing; and

WHEREAS, the designation would unnecessarily put our national security, economy, and ally nations at a significant disadvantage at a time when pivotal resources must be readily available to ensure security and stability domestically and abroad; and

WHEREAS, the proposed designation would bring uncertainty in federal funding as it is unlikely that additional funding will be allocated to this proposed national monument, and Mesa County believes it is unsustainable and ill-advised to advocate for more lands that cannot be effectively funded or staffed; and

WHEREAS, there are significant concerns for service and infrastructure deficiencies with the rapid influx of potential tourism that designation would attract in the Dolores Canyons region, including those vital to public health and safety such as fire and rescue, road and bridge, public health and sanitation facilities, and cellular service; and

WHEREAS, Mesa County is comprised of approximately 73% federally managed public lands, which provides substantial socioeconomic benefits but also removes land from local control, leaving roughly a quarter of the County open to private land activities and production. This broadly limits a community's ability to address pressing local, state, and national issues such as affordable housing, affordable energy, good-paying jobs, and the overall local approach to multifaceted business development and opportunities to generate new economic activity from non-recreation sources such as manufacturing. As such, the ability to meet future unseen demands would be exacerbated with a National Monument designation; and

WHEREAS, a National Monument designation would severely limit the practicality and flexibility needed to address water conservation by adding unnecessary red tape and layers of bureaucracy and inefficiency in a critical juncture in our Colorado water future, such as replacing aging agriculture infrastructure and innovative water storage solutions as necessary; and

WHEREAS, 72% of the residents in Mesa, Montrose, and San Miguel Counties believe that a Presidential proclamation creating a National Monument in the Dolores Canyons area is not the right approach to conservation in the region.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MESA COUNTY THAT:


1. Mesa County strongly opposes designation in whole or in part of the proposed Dolores Canyons National Monument and will, individually and in collaboration with regional partners and local communities, take appropriate formal steps in opposition to such an effort; and
2. Mesa County, in partnership with Montrose County, will lead a thoughtful and thorough community process that engages all stakeholders, including Tribal governments, to develop an appropriate and more sustainable form of conservation in the area.

DULY MOVED, SECONDED, PASSED, and ADOPTED this 14th day of May 2024.

By: 
 Bobbie Daniel, Chair
 Mesa County Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:



By: 
Bobbie Gross
Mesa County Clerk and Recorder