



# SIERRA CLUB

## TEHIPITE CHAPTER

### Tehipite Chapter Annual Potluck and Awards Banquet Saturday, March 14, 2026, 5:00 PM

Join us for our annual potluck dinner. Doors open at the "Big Red Church" at 5:00 PM, dinner and program at 5:30. The First Congregational Church is located at 2131 N Van Ness Blvd, Fresno.

Keynote speaker: Robert Groos, adventurer, award-winning photographer, and storyteller. During his presentation, "How Watching Birds Saved my Sanity but Drove Me Crazy," we will join in the hunt as he recounts incredible moments in the life history of several individual birds, events that brought to him great joy as well as sorrow, wonder and awe, and a heavy dose of serendipity. And just wait till you see his photographs!

Bring your potluck item ready to serve with a serving utensil. Suggestions of what to bring: Main dish (P to Z) side dish or salad (H to O) dessert (A to G). This is a free event, but donations are encouraged to help defray the cost of the venue.



### This Backdoor Legislative Tool Could Unravel Public Lands How the Congressional Review Act is being used to erase protections for America's shared lands and waters

By Lindsey Botts

February 6, 2026

Excerpted from *Sierra Magazine*, February, 2026

Lawmakers in Congress are deploying an obscure legislative tool to upend America's most beloved wild spaces. In the last few months, Republicans have overturned land-management plans in Alaska, North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming. Conservation groups fear they'll target national monuments and wilderness areas next.

On January 15, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued an opinion asserting that the management plan for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument could be revoked. These plans, called resource management plans (RMP), are like road maps for how the Bureau of Land Management, which oversees the monument, sets its priorities, said Kristen Brengel, the senior vice president of government affairs at the National Parks Conservation Association.

At issue is whether they count as "rules" under the Congressional Review Act (CRA), a legal statute that allows lawmakers to overturn a regulation within 60 legislative days of an administration submitting it to Congress. Conservation groups expect that legislators will put forward a bill to roll back the monument's plan within days. That bill, called a resolution of disapproval, would then start the 60-day clock.

The GAO memo was prompted by Utah Republican Representative Celeste Maloy, who last year asked the agency if the monument's RMP could be considered a rule under the CRA.

This case is unprecedented—never has a monument's plan been undone using the CRA, and never has Congress rescinded a mineral withdrawal using the statute. "If these measures pass, said Rachel Kondor, a staff attorney with The Wilderness Society, it will have the potential to severely undermine public land management." This is bigger than what we've seen before," Kondor said. "It's kind of an unchecked way for Congress to go after plans that take decades sometimes to revise or to create."

#### Conservation vs. resource extraction

The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument covers almost 2 million acres in southern Utah and is famous for being the last mapped place in the lower 48 states. It's home to over 20,000 archaeological sites, and researchers have discovered nearly two dozen new dinosaur species within its borders. Between 2001 and 2015, one analysis found that jobs in the two counties surrounding the monument grew by 24 percent and personal income grew by nearly a third.

Steve Bloch, the legal director for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, said going after a national monument using the CRA is a dangerous escalation in the attempt to weaken public lands. Lawmakers have recently taken the unprecedented step of using the CRA to allow mining and oil and gas exploration in protected areas of Alaska, North Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana. Bloch explained that those plans govern multiple-use lands where managers have a mandate to mix development and conservation.

"Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is different," Bloch told *Sierra Magazine*. "The fact that it's a national monument means that it's managed to a much higher standard. It's managed to safeguard and protect the irreplaceable cultural, paleontological, biological resources that are in that monument."

In 2021, President Biden restored the monument's previous boundary after the first Trump administration attempted to shrink the protected area by nearly half. If the current RMP is revoked, management would revert to the one put forward by the Trump administration, which reduced protections. However, because the monument was established by a president, the current boundary would remain the same, creating a sort of legal gray area for much of the land within its borders, Bloch said.

"I think the biggest risk is the confusion on the ground.... We're all very worried that this is the tip of the iceberg," Bloch said. I think everybody—from the Bureau of Land Management to local government to permittees to the visiting public—won't know how to behave inside of the monument.... When you're in a place that's as fragile as the Grand Staircase, that confusion results in on-the-ground impact...."

Lindsey Botts is the digital editor at *Sierra magazine*. You can follow him on Bluesky @lkbotts.bsky.social.



A hiker at Jacob Hamblin Arch in Coyote Gulch, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. | Photo by Wildnerdpix/iStock