

Outdoors firms in battle over public lands

By Stuart Leavenworth, McClatchy

Two generations ago, they were often written off as a bunch of hippies making backpacks and climbing gear for niche markets. But in recent decades, companies such as Patagonia and REI have become consumer powerhouses and political players, increasingly eager to influence decisions over public lands.

A sign of that clout came this year, when the outdoor industry decided to pull its twice-yearly trade show from Salt Lake City, where it been based since 1996. The shows injected tens of millions of dollars into the Utah economy, but industry leaders decided to pull out after Gov. Gary Herbert and other Utah Republicans started lobbying President Trump to roll back the Bears Ears National Monument, a 1.35-million-acre conservation area in south Utah that Native Americans and environmentalists have championed for years.

Made up of 1,200 companies, the Outdoor Industry Association is based in Boulder, Colo., with an outreach office in Washington, D.C. The group estimates that consumers spend about \$120 billion on outdoor recreation products each year, ranging from apparel to tents, bicycles and camping gear.

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