

**Leavitt Still Hopes To Stop Clinton; But Many Say Monument Already Is a Done Deal;
Monument: Leavitt Hopes To Stop Clinton**

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Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt will make a last-ditch effort today to persuade the Clinton administration to withdraw plans for a 1.8 million-acre ``Canyons of the Escalante National Monument."

Numerous sources in Washington reported Monday that President Clinton already has decided to announce the new monument during a speech Wednesday at the Grand Canyon. But Leavitt said he was assured Monday that no decisions will be made before his 11 a.m. meeting with White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta -- and possibly Clinton himself.

A Clinton administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, also told The Salt Lake Tribune late Monday that ``the president has all of this under review and hasn't made any decisions. Anyone who says he has doesn't know what he's talking about."

During a news conference Monday, Leavitt said, ``I really like the idea of preserving major parts of this land." But instead of a huge, arbitrarily declared national monument, the governor said he will encourage administration officials to adopt a plan developed two years ago by state and local officials to create an Escalante Canyons ``eco-region."

This alternative plan called for the designation of four categories of land in the area -- ranging from tightly regulated ``wilderness lands" to ``enterprise lands," where development would be encouraged.

``Frankly, a national monument would fit nicely in this," Leavitt said.

The eco-region concept never went far. Most environmentalists preferred designating much of the area as wilderness, and Utah's congressional delegation decided to push a statewide wilderness bill rather than focus on regional initiatives.

But a growing number of people are saying Clinton already has decided to create the national monument, and the governor's trip to Washington will be meaningless.

Sen. Bob Bennett, R-Utah, is among them.

``I don't have a whole lot of confidence the governor will get any more {information} than we have gotten. But if, indeed, they are going to give us any advance information on acreage and boundaries, it will likely happen with the governor," Bennett said after his staffers, and those representing other members of Utah's congressional delegation, met with officials from the Interior Department and the Council on Environmental Quality.

Bennett and Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, met Saturday with Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

Hatch said then that he doubted Clinton would make the monument designation without receiving greater input from Utahns. His legislative aide, Robert Dibblee, said Hatch still feels the same after Monday's meeting.

``{Hatch} would be surprised if the president would do this without giving us the details beforehand. It would be out of character in our experience of working with the administration," Dibblee said.

While Monday's meeting dealt with issues such as water, grazing and hunting rights that might be affected by a monument designation, the key continues to be the potential effect on Andalex Resources' plans to develop a coal mine on the Kaiparowits Plateau.

The administration official told The Tribune that ``if the president were to make such a determination to create a national monument, what we would try to do immediately with Andalex is what we tried to do outside Yellowstone {National Park} with New World Mine, or PacifiCorp, and help them get out of their leases."

Clinton announced last month that Crown Butte Mines was giving up its plans to develop the New World gold mine just outside Yellowstone in exchange for \$65 million worth of federal land elsewhere. On Friday, PacifiCorp signed an agreement with the Interior Department to relinquish 18,000 acres of federal leases in the Kaiparowits Plateau for ``credits against leases in other areas."

Leavitt said it is ``pretty clear" the monument idea was hatched by groups ``outside the government," but he did not specify which.

Bennett contended: ``This is all put together by the White House political operation: The timing of it, in the middle of the {presidential} campaign; waiting until the end of the congressional session after authorizing committees have shut down for the year to guarantee no congressional action to stop it; the deliberate hiding of any details until the president can make the dramatic decision. The entire operation is political."

Meanwhile, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance issues coordinator Ken Rait challenged state claims that a Kaiparowits coal mine will generate \$1.1 billion for Utah schools.

``It's voodoo economics -- pure and simple," he said, citing a Governor's Office of Planning and Budget study estimating the mine could generate \$7.5 million to the school-trust fund, yielding about \$36,000 annually.

Brad Barber, the office's director, said Monday that the trust fund could receive \$16 million from the Andalex mine.