

**Western
Values
Project**



**Arizona's Outdoor
Heritage Imperiled by
Trump Administration
Culture of Corruption**

President Donald Trump's administration has been fraught with conflicts of interest that have cost the American people dearly. In every corner of the country, politically-connected industries and their allies in Trump's government have hijacked public resources to benefit themselves before the country.

In the West and in Arizona, that experience has meant public land and water are firmly in the crosshairs of the special interests that have a close relationship with the President's political organization and appointees.

In many crucial respects, Trump corruption has put Western communities at risk by compromising Arizona's water, tribal nations, borderlands, and access to its public lands. This report exposes some of the most disturbing instances of graft in each of those areas, including:

- **Nearly 2 million additional acres of public lands have all been [targeted for reductions or elimination](#) by the President, including Grand Canyon-Parashant, Ironwood Forest, Sonoran Desert and Vermillion Cliffs National Monuments.**
- **The Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan (CRDCP) was pushed through by an out-of-state lobbying firm that used to employ Trump's Interior Secretary, who will be responsible for implementing the plan. It could cost taxpayers and farmers critical water resources.**
- **A number of Trump appointees have ties to companies that could profit from the construction of his controversial border wall.**

Access to public lands

Perhaps the most egregious attack on Arizona's public lands has been a Trump proposal to mine near the Grand Canyon. This critical area is only at risk because the administration has [proposed](#) to increase production through a controversial plan to bail out the uranium industry.



Furthermore, nearly 2 million additional acres of public lands have all been [targeted for reductions or elimination](#) by the President, including Grand Canyon-Parashant, Ironwood Forest, Sonoran Desert and Vermillion Cliffs National Monuments.

Besides aiming to directly lift protections, the Trump administration has proposed disturbing and radical changes

to the way many public lands would be run. A proposal is still on the table to hand over operations at national parks and monuments to special interest private "concessionaires." Experts [say](#) that could lead to a decline in the quality of services and an increase in public entrance fees.

Arizona's national monuments and parks are worth at least [\\$2.66 billion](#) overall in economic activity, which could be put at risk if irresponsible Trump administration proposals go forward.

Water quality and quantity

Arizona's farmers, taxpayers and wildlife are also suffering because powerful out-of-state special interests that have close ties to Trump are abusing their natural resources. This is happening because the administration is gutting common-sense regulations that protect these important resources, in order to help their special interest allies.

Trump-EPA revolving door

Some of the biggest beneficiaries have been multinational corporate giants like Dow and Monsanto that have close ties to Trump appointees.

The Trump EPA approved a Dow Chemical pesticide that could force Arizona's farmers to ["take a major hit"](#) because of the chemical's negative effects on pollinators like bees. Peter Wright, [currently](#) Assistant Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response at the Environmental Protection Agency, was [formerly](#) an attorney for Dow Chemical. Dow's CEO is the [Chair](#) of Trump's American Manufacturing Council. Three more Trump appointees hold assets in the company.

Monsanto's spraying on land near Arva Valley caused people and animals to fall ill, although Trump's EPA maintained that Roundup "does not cause cancer or other health problems."

Waters of the United States

The Trump administration gutted the Waters of the U.S. clean water standards at the behest of powerful lobbying interests that have seen a number of former employees take Washington, D.C. political jobs throughout the government, including the Assistant EPA Administrator and United States Fish and Wildlife Commissioner.

That [rule](#) change paved the way for Trump's Interior Department to approve a real estate development that on-the-ground experts say threatens local water resources and wildlife.

Real estate developer Mike Ingram, a director of a former client of Interior



Secretary Bernhardt and major trump donor, would profit from that development. Lobbying groups like Edison Electric Institute and the National Association of Manufacturers, which have seen no fewer than 6 current or former Trump appointees revolve through their doors, also lobbied against the rule.

Drought plan puts water quantity at risk

The Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan was a boon to a [Trump-connected](#) mega-lobbying firm, but it will cost Arizona [taxpayers](#) and farmers. The CRDCP was pushed through by an out-of-state lobbying firm that used to employ the current Interior Secretary, who will be responsible for implementing the plan.

In some rural areas Arizona farmers could see their water supply cut by over half thanks to the administration's CRDCP. Phoenix taxpayers will need to foot the bill for expensive renovations in order to comply with the plan.



Tribes

Conflicts of interest in the Trump administration are worsening long-running problems on American Indian reservations across Arizona. Families, water, and wildlife are all suffering because Trump operatives are using their government service to help powerful, global corporations have their way with tribal resources.

Rosemont Mine employed the current Interior Secretary

Trump's Interior Department gave the green light to the Rosemont Mine, which poses grave threats to the reservation. This has allowed Rosemont Mine, which used to employ Secretary Bernhardt as a consultant to endanger critical wildlife habitat and water resources on the Tohono O'odham reservation.

Trump-backed coal-powered facility threatened the Navajo reservation

Many members of the Navajo Nation have been diagnosed with black lung after working the Peabody Energy coal mine to supply the Navajo Generating Station (NGS). Emissions from that plant are believed to be the cause behind "severe" neurological issues in Navajo children. The plant also produced 1.3 million tons of solid waste and pulled 9 billion gallons of water from Lake Powell per year.

A number of administration appointees have ties to Peabody, NGS or any of the many owners and suppliers with equities in the project.

Havasupai threatened by Trump-connected mine near the Grand Canyon

Canyon Mine previously sprayed contaminated water into the Kaibab National Forest in 2017, and may be contaminating the "sole water source" for the Havasupai Nation. It is owned by Energy Fuels International, which was a client of Trump EPA administrator Andrew Wheeler, who lobbied the Trump administration to expand mining nearing the Grand Canyon.

Copper Mine threatens the San Carlos Apache's water

John Tashuda III, Counselor to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, previously consulted for BHP Billiton, which owns a 45 percent stake in the proposed Resolution Copper Mine. Its operations "would also consume close to 600,000 acre-feet of water," which is "enough water for 186,000 homes over 40 years."

Borderlands

Members of the Tohono O'odham nation say they face "daily" instances of harassment at the hands of border patrol agents, and cannot leave or enter their reservation lands without "[going through a checkpoint and being questioned.](#)"



What's more, the President's border wall "[could damage](#) — or even destroy — up to 22 archaeological sites at the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Arizona," including an "abundance of natural and cultural resources unique to the Sonoran Desert."

Trump allies have stood to profit from wall construction

The construction of Trump's proposed border wall construction could enrich one of his cabinet members at the cost of the Tohono O'odham cultural resources.

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao was a former member of the Board of Directors and an investor in Vulcan Materials, one of the companies "[poised to profit from the Trump border wall.](#)" Vulcan Materials, a concrete company, stands to profit from the construction of the wall.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection is currently paying Israeli defense

firm Elbit Systems \$26 million to build ten 160-foot surveillance towers on the Nation's reservation. [Thomas Carter](#), a Trump appointee at the Department of State, previously "served as Elbit Systems of America's principal contact in Washington, DC for overall interface with the US government."

Tohono O'odham land endangered by pipeline

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), whose members are appointed by Trump, is poised to approve a pipeline to benefit giant energy corporation Kinder Morgan, which has extensive ties to the Trump administration.

The pipeline could lead to "increased smuggling and erosion and damage to sites sacred to the Tohono O'odham."

A number of administration officials have Kinder Morgan assets, which is the company that owns the pipeline, including Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, and senior officials at the departments of Transportation and Energy. Interior Secretary Bernhardt received income in excess of \$5,000 for "legal services" from Sempra Energy, which may use the pipeline.

Arizona's leaders must hold the administration accountable

Arizona's public lands cannot afford any more corruption from the Trump administration. It is time for Arizona's elected leaders to stand up to the special interests that have infiltrated the executive branch of government under President Trump. They must flex their oversight muscles and bring the lobbyists and corrupt government officials before official bodies to account for the damage they've done to the state's outdoor heritage.

To learn more and for full backup for the claims made in this report, [click here](#).

