

November 18, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Manchin and Members of the Committee on Energy & Natural Resources:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our millions of members and supporters across the country, we write to urge you to oppose the nomination of Katharine MacGregor for Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior (DOI). Ms. MacGregor's track record driving a so-called "energy dominance" agenda for DOI, her troubling anti-conservation views, and a demonstrated bias in favor of extractive industries make her unqualified for the role of Deputy Secretary.

Since 2017, MacGregor has occupied senior roles at DOI helping to oversee the Trump Administration's reckless "energy dominance" agenda. This agenda encompassed unprecedented rollbacks of public lands and health protections, such as eliminating over two million acres of national monument protections, opening tens of millions of acres of Sage Grouse habitat to development, rampant expansion of energy leasing in wildlife migration corridors, attempts to lift protections and open areas of the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans to new drilling, and much more.

Ms. MacGregor even pushed to gut the Bureau of Land Management's common-sense rule to limit methane waste on public lands. Immediately after a bipartisan Senate vote that blocked the elimination of this rule, MacGregor announced that the Department would not be deterred from revoking the rule -- which she described as having "real and harmful impacts on onshore energy development" -- despite the fact that the agency had not begun a rulemaking process or conducted the required analysis to make a determination.¹ In another example of political meddling on behalf of extractive industries, MacGregor played a significant role in halting an independent study of the

¹ *Interior Statement on Venting and Flaring Rule Vote*. (2017). United States Department of the Interior. <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-statement-venting-and-flaring-rule-vote>

health impacts of mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. In the months leading up to the decision, she reportedly met at least six times with some of the country's most powerful mining interests, including the National Mining Association and Arch Coal, a long-time practitioner of mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia.²

In fact, MacGregor's deep ties with industry and bias in favor of drilling and mining are a common theme throughout her work. According to recent reporting by the Center for Investigative Reporting based on internal DOI documents and correspondence, Ms. McGregor personally intervened on behalf of politically connected oil and gas companies to fast track permits on their request, including permits initially rejected by career experts for being incomplete and deficient.³ Between January 2017 and January 2018, MacGregor participated in over 100 meetings with extractive industry groups and representatives, including with companies and organizations who benefited directly by subsequent agency decisions, while in that same time period taking less than 10 meetings with conservation organizations.⁴

Consistent with her actions at DOI, MacGregor also publicly embraces troubling and extreme views on conservation and public lands. In her personal capacity, she has expressed opposition to clean energy⁵, attacked a University's decision to divest from coal⁶, and denigrated the Antiquities Act and referred to national monument designations as land seizures.⁷ She also repeatedly embraced criticisms of the Land and Water Conservation (LWCF) that referred to the popular conservation funding program as a "government land grab" and likened it to the Titanic.⁸ These views are out of step with the broad, bipartisan public support for LWCF but are unfortunately in line with the Administration's approach. While the Administration claims to support LWCF, the President's budgets during Ms. MacGregor's tenure have repeatedly proposed to zero out its funding.

² Tobias, Jimmy. *A Top DOI Official Had at Least Six Meetings with the Mining Industry. She Then Helped Cancel a Study on the Public-Health Effects of Mining.* (2018). Pacific Standard. <https://psmag.com/environment/a-top-doi-official-had-at-least-six-meetings-with-the-mining-industry-she-then-helped-cancel-a-study-on-the-public-health-effects-of-mining>

³ Williams, Lance. *Trump Interior nominee fast-tracked a 'deficient' drilling permit.* (2019). Center for Investigative Reporting. <https://www.revealnews.org/article/trump-interior-nominee-fast-tracked-a-deficient-drilling-permit/>

⁴ See footnote 2

⁵ Twitter post by Grover Norquist (10/9/16) retweeted by Kate MacGregor: <https://twitter.com/GroverNorquist/status/785307606617362432?s=20>

⁶ Twitter post by Kate MacGregor on 6/4/15: <https://twitter.com/kmac7210/status/606561469325406208>

⁷ Twitter post from Natural Resources Committee retweeted by Kate MacGregor (<https://twitter.com/NatResources/status/740638261811548160?s=20>) and Facebook post by Congressional Western Caucus liked by Kate MacGregor: <https://www.facebook.com/congressionalwesterncaucus/posts/10152539865303352>

⁸ Twitter post by Kate MacGregor. (11/03/15) and retweet by Kate MacGregor. *LWCF: As Told by the Titanic.* (11/20/15). <https://twitter.com/NatResources/status/667784018453258241>

Based on her disturbing track record and views regarding the public lands the Department of the Interior is supposed to steward on behalf of the American people, we urge you to oppose the nomination of Katharine MacGregor to serve as Deputy Secretary.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League
Center for Biological Diversity
Delaware Ecumenical Council
Earthjustice
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Protection Information Center
Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges
Friends of the Earth US
Greenpeace
League of Conservation Voters
Los Padres ForestWatch
Maryland United for Peace and Justice
Natural Resources Defense Council
NY4WHALES
Predator Defense
Public Citizen
Seeding Sovereignty
Sierra Club
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
The Wilderness Society
Unexpected Wildlife Refuge
Western Values Project
Western Watersheds Project
WildEarth Guardians