



**Western  
Values  
Project**



**Lookback: Four Years Of Trump's  
Corrupt Interior Department  
Has Devastated America's  
Public Lands For The Benefit Of  
Industry And Extremists**

## **SUMMARY:**

The last four years at the Department of the Interior have been a constant barrage of self-dealing, corruption, and rewriting the rules to benefit industry at the expense of America's public lands. Trump has filled the department with political appointees who are too conflicted and out of touch to serve, sometimes bypassing the Senate approval. The Department responsible for protecting America's public lands has become a safe place for anti-public lands extremists.

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# Appointing A Self-Dealing Interior Secretary Who Resigned In Scandal

## **Ryan Zinke, Donald Trump's First Interior Secretary, Resigned In Late 2018 Amid Several Investigations Into His Conduct And Self-Dealing**

**Ryan Zinke Resigned As Interior Secretary While He Was The Subject Of Several Probes Into His Conduct As Interior Secretary.** "Interior Department Secretary Ryan Zinke submitted his resignation to the White House on Saturday, facing intense pressure to step down because of multiple probes tied to his real estate dealings in his home state of Montana and his conduct in office. President Trump announced Zinke's exit via Twitter on Saturday morning and praised the departing Interior chief. 'Secretary of the Interior @RyanZinke will be leaving the Administration at the end of the year after having served for a period of almost two years,' the president tweeted. 'Ryan has accomplished much during his tenure and I want to thank him for his service to our Nation.' Behind the scenes, however, the White House had been pushing Zinke for weeks to resign, administration officials said. Last month, the officials said, Zinke was told he had until the end of the year to leave or be fired." [*Washington Post*, [12/15/18](#)]

- **By The Time Zinke Resigned As Interior Secretary, He Faced At Least Nine Investigations, Some Of Which Were Closed Because Of A Lack Of Cooperation.** "Ryan Zinke, who intends to resign as interior secretary at year's end, faces a number of ethics inquiries related to his leadership at the Interior Department. According to a person familiar with the matter, one of those inquiries – into whether Mr. Zinke stood to benefit from a Montana development deal linked to the energy giant Halliburton – has likely been referred to the Department of Justice for further review. Government investigators have also closed nine inquiries related to Mr. Zinke, in some cases because he was cleared, and in others because of a lack of cooperation." [*New York Times*, [12/15/18](#)]

**Interior's Internal Watchdog Referred An Investigation To The Department Of Justice After Zinke Gave Special Access To Halliburton, Then Appeared To Get A Related Personal Business Deal.** "The Justice Department is investigating whether former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke used personal email accounts for official business, a matter that has become part of a larger criminal probe into the departed official, according to a letter released by House Democrats on Tuesday. The letter is the first public confirmation of a criminal investigation into Zinke, a former Republican congressman from Montana who faced scrutiny about his mixing of official, personal and political business while in President Donald Trump's Cabinet." [*Politico*, [07/30/19](#)]

**Zinke Appeared To Get A Special Business Deal From The Chairman Of Halliburton To Build A Microbrewery Zinke Had Long Wanted In His Hometown.** "A foundation established by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and headed by his wife is playing a key role in a real-estate deal backed by the chairman of Halliburton, the oil-services giant that stands to benefit from any of the Interior Department's decisions to open public lands for oil exploration or change standards for drilling. A group funded by David Lesar, the Halliburton chairman, is planning a large commercial development on a former industrial site near the center of the Zinkes'



hometown of Whitefish, a resort area that has grown increasingly popular with wealthy tourists. The development would include a hotel and retail shops. There also would be a microbrewery – a business first proposed in 2012 by Ryan Zinke and for which he lobbied town officials for half a decade.” [Politico, [06/19/18](#)]

**As Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke is responsible for overseeing decisions on oil and gas exploration on public lands that could directly benefit oil and gas multinational corporation Halliburton.** [Politico, [06/19/18](#)]

**DOI’s Internal Watchdog Found That Zinke Used Taxpayer Dollars To Fly On Charter Planes, Including One Owned By An Oil Executive.** “DOI’s Inspector General investigated Zinke for three taxpayer-funded flights on charter airplanes, including one owned by an oil executive’s plane. Zinke used the plane to travel to Las Vegas to give an “inspirational speech” to a hockey team owned by Bill Foley, a Zinke campaign donor. [CBS News, [04/17/18](#)]

- **Zinke Failed To Cooperate With The Investigation.** The Inspector General determined that Zinke “failed to disclose relevant information to ethics officials when he traveled to Las Vegas to speak to the Golden Knights hockey team.” [Politico, [04/16/18](#)]
- Western Values Project released documents related to these flights and other travel records from Ryan and Lola Zinke’s time at DOI. [Associated Press, [11/20/17](#)]

**The US Office Of Special Counsel Determined That Zinke Violated The Hatch Act By Wearing Campaign Slogans While On Official Business.** Ryan Zinke wore a pair of socks with Donald Trump’s campaign slogan on a work trip in June. He posted a photo of the socks to twitter. “The Western Values Project, a group generally critical of the administration, raised the question of whether the tweet violated the Hatch Act, which bars executive branch employees from partaking in partisan politics. The Office of Special Counsel issued updated guidance earlier this year instructing federal employees not to display that slogan while on duty. Zinke deleted the tweet and posted a new message in which he apologized, saying he had not realized the socks “had what could be viewed as a political slogan.” The new tweet has the same photo of the socks, but with the MAGA slogan obscured and Trump’s face unobstructed.” [Politico, [06/27/18](#)]

**Interior’s Inspector General Investigated Zinke For Potential Blackmail When He Threatened Senator Murkowski If She Voted Against Healthcare Legislation.**

“In a phone call Sen. Murkowski (R-A) made threats to Alaska projects overseen by DOI after Murkowski voted against healthcare legislation. Afterward, Western Values Project sued DOI for records related to this potential blackmail.” [Politico, [07/27/17](#)]

- **Zinke And Murkowski Did Not Cooperate With The Investigation.** The DOI IG investigated whether Zinke blackmailed Sen. Murkowski in a phone call, but dropped the investigation “after Murkowski and Alaska’s other senator, Republican Dan Sullivan, both declined to be interviewed or provide statements on the matter.” [Anchorage Daily News, [12/02/17](#)]



## **Replacing Zinke With David Bernhardt, A Big Oil Lobbyist And The Most Conflicted Interior Secretary Ever**

### **Interior Secretary David Bernhardt Is A "Walking Conflict Of Interest" Who Has Made Dozens Of Policy Changes To Benefit His Former Clients And Obfuscated His Public Calendars**

**An Analysis Of Bernhardt's 27 Clients Shows He Is The Most Conflicted Interior Secretary In History.** "In fact, a Center for American Progress analysis has determined that Bernhardt has the dubious distinction of being the most conflicted of all 31 of President Trump's Cabinet-level nominees. Most are now serving in the Cabinet, while a few withdrew their nominations. Of the 27 former clients and employers with potential conflicts of interest that Bernhardt disclosed on his ethics forms, lobbying disclosure data reveal that 20 have actively lobbied the Department of the Interior since the beginning of 2017. This number dwarfs other Cabinet nominees' known direct conflicts of interest. The analysis also revealed that Bernhardt has more conflicts than Price, Pruitt, Shulkin, and Zinke combined." [Center for American Progress, [3/15/19](#)]

**Bernhardt Had So Many Potential Conflicts of Interest, He Carried List Around With Him.** "Bernhardt's relentless work ethic helps explain how he's managed to advance Trump's pro-industry agenda over the nation's public lands. Having worked for years as a lobbyist representing many of the very businesses he now regulates, he walked into the No. 2 job at Interior with so many potential conflicts of interest he has to carry a small card listing them all." [Washington Post, [11/19/18](#)]

**U.S. Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA) "Bernhardt is a Walking Conflict of Interest."** "Critics say it was inappropriate. 'Bernhardt is a walking conflict of interest,' said Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.), a critic of DOI's approach to California water issues. 'The recusal was a sham, and the fact that they created this plan to spring into action on behalf of all their special interests after his one-year recusal expired doesn't surprise anyone.' Westlands, which did not respond to multiple requests for comment, is one of four organizations from which Bernhardt is no longer recused. These include North Dakota's Garrison Diversion Conservancy District and Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District. And as Bernhardt explained, just because he represented a specific company doesn't mean he can't make policy decisions affecting its industry." [Washington Post, [11/19/18](#)]

**Interior Department Inspector General Announced Ethics Investigation Into David Bernhardt During His First Week As Secretary.** "The Interior Department's internal watchdog has opened an investigation into ethics complaints against the agency's newly installed secretary, David Bernhardt. Mr. Bernhardt, a former lobbyist for the oil and agribusiness industries, was confirmed by the Senate last week to head the agency, which oversees the nation's 500 million acres of public land and vast coastal waters. He has played a central role in crafting policies designed to advance President Trump's policy of "energy dominance" and expanding fossil fuel exploration. He has been dogged by allegations of ethical violations since joining the Trump administration as Interior Department's deputy secretary in 2017." [New York Times, [4/15/19](#)]

### **Interior Repeatedly Overwrote Daily Records Of Bernhardt's Schedule**



**Bernhardt Claimed He Did Not Maintain a Calendar.** “As Democrats in Congress seek to conduct oversight and request more information from the federal agencies, they are running into an odd roadblock at the Interior Department where the acting secretary says he can't provide his calendar to lawmakers because he doesn't have one. In response to questions about the transparency of his government schedule, acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt said he does not personally maintain a calendar and has no legal obligation to do so.” [CNN, [3/8/19](#)]

**Bernhardt Overwrote Detailed Calendars In A Google Document.** “As he prepares for his Senate confirmation hearing on Thursday, acting interior secretary David Bernhardt has come under pressure from House Democrats to explain his unusual method of keeping records of his meetings with his own staffers and those who have business before the agency. The lawmakers are examining Interior’s practice of preparing “a daily card” with Bernhardt’s detailed schedule on a Google document but withholding that information from the public. The detailed accounting of the acting secretary’s meetings is prepared the evening before or at the start of the morning; the document is later overwritten to reflect his appointments for the following day. The public gets to see none of this.” [Washington Post, [03/27/19](#)]

**Daily Cards Showed Meetings with Companies Affiliated With Former Bernhardt Clients.** “Another card for May 23, 2018, shows Bernhardt scheduled to meet with Cimarex Energy, a Denver-based natural gas company and member of the Independent Petroleum Association of America, another former client. And on May 30 he was scheduled to meet with Rick Tallant, vice president of product for Shell Oil, a member of the National Ocean Industries Association, also a former client. The ethics agreement lists CESAR, IPAA and NOIA as the organizations with whom he is not supposed to consult for at least a year after joining the department.” [Roll Call, [4/8/19](#)]

**Interior Acknowledged Leaving Controversial Meetings Off Calendar.** “The Interior Department has acknowledged that Secretary David Bernhardt’s staff intentionally left controversial meetings with representatives of fossil fuel, timber and water interests off his public calendar, citing “internal protocol” governing his schedules. The department also confirmed that Bernhardt used a personal itinerary kept on a single Google document that was regularly overwritten by his scheduling staff and said he is still doing so as House Democrats probe whether the practice adheres to federal records laws.” [Roll Call, [4/16/19](#)]

## **Rampant Corruption And Favors For Secretary Bernhardt’s Former Clients**

### **Bernhardt Has Completed or Moved Forward With at Least 25 Policy Actions To Benefit At Least 16 of His Former Clients**

**While Bernhardt Was Deputy Secretary, The Interior Department Completed or Moved Forward With 25 Policy Actions Requested or Supported By At Least 16 Of His Former Clients.** “An analysis by the Center for Western Priorities finds that during Bernhardt’s tenure as Deputy Interior Secretary, the agency has completed or moved forward with at least 25



policy actions that have been requested or supported by at least 16 of his former clients.”  
[Westwise, [12/17/18](#)]

### **Bernhardt Weakened Protections for Fish to the Benefit of Former Client Westlands Water District**

**Westlands Water District Represented Almond, Cotton, and Tomato Farmers in San Joaquin Valley.** “For decades Westlands Water District, a state-chartered organization covering an area the size of Rhode Island, has fought for river water on behalf of the 700 or so almond, cotton and tomato farmers of California’s arid San Joaquin Valley.” [New York Times, [2/12/19](#)]

**Westland Water District Fought Against Delta Smelt for River Water Access.** “Mr. Bernhardt also worked as a lobbyist and lawyer for the Westlands Water District, which represents California farmers who have been fighting for decades against the delta smelt for access to the river water that both need to survive. The smelt is at the heart of one of the fiercest battles in California’s decades of water wars. It is a fight that pits agribusiness, which needs irrigation to thrive, against environmentalists and commercial fishermen defending the ecosystem of the vast San Francisco Bay Delta, the rivers that drain it, and the stretch of the Pacific Ocean into which it empties.” [New York Times, [02/12/19](#)]

**Westlands Water District Wanted to Weaken ESA Protections for Smelt and Chinook Salmon.** “The farmers’ chief goal in the district has been to weaken the Endangered Species Act protections of the smelt, a silvery, cucumber-scented fish found only in the San Francisco Bay Delta, and its fellow river resident, the winter-run Chinook salmon. The winter-run Chinook salmon is listed as “endangered” and the smelt is “threatened” (one step below endangered), which entitles their watery habitat to federal protection and restricts use of water for irrigation.” [New York Times, [02/12/19](#)]

**Bernhardt Directed Senior DOI Water Official to Weaken Protections for Smelt and Other Fish.** “In an interview, Mr. Bernhardt acknowledged that, in late 2017, four months after joining the Interior Department, he directed David Murillo, a senior water-resources official for the mid-Pacific region, to begin the process of weakening protections for the smelt and another fish, the winter-run Chinook salmon, to free up river water for agriculture. A month later, Mr. Murillo’s office started the process of weakening the protections. Last week it followed up with a more detailed, 871-page proposal on diverting the water. Because Mr. Bernhardt’s actions would disproportionately benefit one of his former clients, independent ethics specialists said that, under the terms of the Trump administration’s ethics pledge, which Mr. Bernhardt signed, he should not have been given clearance to act. Its “revolving door” provision requires former lobbyists to recuse themselves for two years from any particular matter or specific issue on which they lobbied in the two years before joining the administration.” [New York Times, [02/12/19](#)]

- **Bernhardt Talked to Water Official Four Times.** “After his confirmation, Mr. Bernhardt signed the Trump administration’s ethics pledge. Four months later, in November 2017, Mr. Bernhardt’s public records show that he held four phone calls with Mr. Murillo, the Interior Department official with the legal authority to initiate the process to revise protections for the delta smelt and winter-run chinook salmon. Other people were on the calls, as well. The



outcome of those conversations was that Mr. Bernhardt told Mr. Murillo to begin the process of changing the protections for the fish and to finish as quickly as possible, according to three people familiar with the matter. In December, Mr. Murillo began that process." [*New York Times*, [02/12/19](#)]

## **Pushing An Aggressive Deregulatory Agenda And Gutting Our Landmark Conservation Laws**

### **Interior Has Pursued A Massive Policy Of "Energy Dominance," Slashing Regulations That Protect Public Lands To Benefit Industry**

**Interior Is Promoting Drilling For Oil In The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.** "In September 2019, The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) completed an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze potential impacts of the program and proposed to lease the entire 1.57 acres of coastal plain for oil and gas leasing. Subsequently, on August 17, 2020, David Bernhardt, the Secretary of Interior, signed a record decision adopting the EIS recommendation and authorizing the program pursuant to TCJA. This action made the entire program area available for oil and gas leasing, leaving the Refuge vulnerable to future exploration, development, and transportation. On August 24, 2020, environmental and indigenous groups filed lawsuits claiming the federal government did not adequately comply with environmental laws requiring thorough impact assessments." [Brookings, accessed [11/15/20](#)]

**The Trump Administration Tried To Reserve The Obama-Era Methane Rule That Limited Wasting Publicly-Owned Natural Resources.** "On March 28, 2017, President Trump issued Executive Order 13783, which directed the interior secretary to review the rule; the DOI review found that "many provisions of the rule would add regulatory burdens that unnecessarily encumber energy production, constrain economic growth, and prevent job creation." On June 15, 2017, the DOI issued a notice postponing the January 2018 compliance dates, pending judicial review. On October 4, 2017, a U.S. District Court in California issued a ruling vacating the DOI's notice of indefinite suspension, stating that it was in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act." [Brookings, accessed [11/15/20](#)]

**Interior Is Trying To Scrap Regulations Enacted After The Deepwater Horizon Disaster That Made Offshore Drilling Safer.** "On April 29, 2016, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) finalized the Blowout Preventer Systems and Well Control Rule (Well Control Rule), in part as a response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010. The Well Control Rule set standards for blowout preventers (BOP) and well-control activities associated with the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), ensuring their adequate construction, use, and maintenance. The rule implemented a combination of requirements and performance standards to be phased in over time, from July 2016 to April 2023. On May 2, 2019, BSEE finalized a rule revising parts of these requirements and standards." [Brookings, accessed [11/15/20](#)]

**Secretary Zinke Announced Plans To Vastly Expand Drilling In The Outer Continental Shelf, Despite Concerns From Governors.** "In response to an executive order signed by President Trump In April 2017, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke on January 4, 2018 announced plans to vastly expand oil and gas drilling in U.S. continental waters. The Five Year



Draft Proposed Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program would allow drilling in 25 of the 26 areas of the Outer Continental Shelf that were previously off limits to oil and gas exploration, totaling more than a billion acres. It is the largest single expansion of offshore drilling activity ever proposed." [Brookings, accessed [11/15/20](#)]

**Interior Reversed Regulations That Improved Transparency In The Fracking Industry.** "On February 28, 2017, President Trump issued an executive order directing the secretary of the interior to review the Oil and Gas Fracking Rule. In response to this direction, and to resolve issues of pending litigation, the Department of the Interior (DOI) proposed to rescind the rule, noting that it imposes burdensome reporting requirements and other unjustified costs on the oil and gas industry. On December 29, 2017, the DOI rescinded the 2015 rule." [Brookings, accessed [11/15/20](#)]

**Interior Scrapped The Stream Protection Rule, Which Protected Waterways From Surface Mining And Dumped Mining Waste.** "On July 16, 2015, the Department of the Interior (DOI) proposed the Stream Protection Rule, which required that land within 100 feet of a stream could not be disturbed by surface mining activities, including the dumping of mining waste. The regulatory impact analysis was published on November 16, 2016, and the final rule was published on December 20, 2016. The rule was set to go into effect on January 19, 2017, but on January 17, 2017, several coal-producing states filed suit in the D.C. District Court. On January 30, 2017, Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH) introduced a joint resolution of disapproval to nullify the rule under the Congressional Review Act. The resolution passed the House on February 1, and passed the Senate on February 2. On February 16, 2017, the resolution was signed by President Trump and became law, nullifying the rule." [Brookings, accessed [11/15/20](#)]

### **Interior Has Made Major Efforts To Tear Down The National Environmental Policy Act, The Endangered Species Act, And Migratory Bird Treaty Act**

**The Trump Administration Is Trying To Gut NEPA, The Bedrock Environmental Law That Regulates Approval Of Projects On Interior-Managed Public Lands.** "The Trump administration on Thursday unveiled plans to gut one of America's most important environmental laws – a move experts say is as much of a handout to polluting industries as it is a slap in the face to science and local communities. The proposed rules would change how the federal government implements the National Environmental Policy Act, a 50-year-old law that protects air, water and land by requiring federal agencies to conduct detailed environmental assessments of major infrastructure projects. Agencies would no longer be required to consider climate change when evaluating the environmental effects of pipelines, power plants, oil and gas drilling, airports, highways and other development." [High Country News, [01/15/20](#)]

**The Trump Administration Significantly Weakened The Endangered Species Act, Making It Harder To Protect Wildlife And Their Habitat.** "The Trump administration on Monday announced that it would change the way the Endangered Species Act is applied, significantly weakening the nation's bedrock conservation law and making it harder to protect wildlife from the multiple threats posed by climate change. The new rules would make it easier to remove a species from the endangered list and weaken protections for threatened species, the classification one step below endangered. And, for the first time, regulators would be allowed to conduct economic assessments – for instance, estimating lost revenue from a prohibition on



logging in a critical habitat — when deciding whether a species warrants protection. Critically, the changes would also make it more difficult for regulators to factor in the effects of climate change on wildlife when making those decisions because those threats tend to be decades away, not immediate.” [New York Times, [08/12/19](#)]

### **The Trump Administration Tried Remove Fines For When Industry Kills Migratory Birds.**

“The Trump administration on Thursday moved to drop the threat of punishment to oil and gas companies, construction crews and other organizations that kill birds “incidentally,” arguing that businesses that accidentally kill birds ought to be able to operate without fear of prosecution. Conservation groups said the proposed new regulation from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, which operates under the Department of Interior, would substantially weaken the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and put millions of birds in danger. The threat of fines and prosecution has, for decades, helped prod industries to take steps to protect birds, like affixing red lights on communication towers, they say.” [New York Times, [01/30/20](#)]

## **Illegally Enacting The Largest Loss Of Public Lands Protections In History**

### **The Trump Administration Enacted The Largest Reduction Of Federal Land Protection In The Nation’s History**

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke Oversaw “The Largest Reduction Of Federal Protection In The Nation’s History, Including An Effort To Slash The Size Of Bears Ears Monument.” Since he has been Secretary of the Interior, Zinke “has torn up Obama-era rules related to oil, gas and mineral extraction and overseen the largest reduction of federal land protection in the nation’s history, including an effort to slash the size of Bears Ears National Monument.” [New York Times, [04/16/18](#)]

### **Interior Slashed Millions Of Acres From Bears Ears And Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments To Benefit The Oil And Coal Industries**

**The Trump Administration Reduced Bears Ears National Monument By 85 Percent And Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument By 50 Percent.** “In a speech delivered in Salt Lake City on December 4, President Trump announced his intention to sharply reduce two Utah national monuments established by his predecessors. In a move presaged by leaked government documents, Trump announced that he would reduce the 1.35-million acre Bears Ears National Monument, created by President Barack Obama in late 2016, by 85 percent. The president also said he would cut the 1.88-million acre Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, designated by President Bill Clinton in 1996, nearly in half.” [National Geographic, [02/02/18](#)]

**Industry’s “Potential For Oil And Gas Exploration” At Bears Ears National Monument Was “Central” To The Trump Administration’s Slashing Of Monument’s Public Land Protections.** “Even before President Trump officially opened his high-profile review last spring of federal lands protected as national monuments, the Department of Interior was focused on the potential for oil and gas exploration at a protected Utah site, internal agency documents show



[...] The internal Interior Department emails and memos also show the central role that concerns over gaining access to coal reserves played in the decision by the Trump administration to shrink the size of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by about 47 percent, to just over 1 million acres." [*New York Times*, [03/02/18](#)]

## **The Reductions Were Overseen By A Coal Executive's Daughter. Now She Works For BP**

**The Monument Reductions Were Overseen By The Daughter Of A Former Executive Of Coal Giant Peabody Energy.** "This month, on the recommendation of his Interior secretary, President Donald Trump gutted a pair of protected national monuments in Utah, including coal-rich Grand Staircase-Escalante. The decision followed the controversial review of more than two dozen national monuments — a process that public records reveal to have been overseen by the daughter of Frederick Palmer, the former executive of coal giant Peabody Energy and a current senior fellow at the conservative Heartland Institute." [Huffington Post, [12/23/17](#)]

- **Palmer's Daughter Is Downey Magallanes Who Served As Then-Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's Deputy Chief Of Staff For Policy.** Downey Magallanes, Palmer's daughter, is a 2012 graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center who worked for seven years as a staffer for Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and now serves as Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's deputy chief of staff for policy. Magallanes was at Zinke's side throughout his months-long monuments review. And her personal calendar shows she had several one-on-one meetings with Zinke to discuss the review in the days before Aug. 24, when Zinke submitted his draft report to the White House." [Huffington Post, [12/23/17](#)]

**Magallanes Would Leave Interior To Work For BP.** "Downey Magallanes, a Department of Interior official who oversaw the Trump administration's push to shrink two national monuments in Utah last year, has reportedly left the agency and will be working for BP as part of its government affairs team." [*The Hill*, [08/28/18](#)]

## **Interior Pushed To Slash Public Lands Protections Even Farther At More Monuments**

**Zinke Also Recommended Rolling Back "The Boundaries Of A 'Handful Of National Monuments'" In "A Largely Unprecedented Effort To Roll Back Federal Protection For Some Of America's Most Popular Public Lands."** Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced that he is urging President Trump "to change the boundaries of a 'handful of national monuments'" in "a largely unprecedented effort to roll back federal protection for some of America's most popular public lands." [*Desert Sun*, [08/24/17](#)]

## **Cozying Up With Anti-Public Land Extremists**

### **High-Level Appointments Went To Anti-Public Lands Extremists Like William Perry Pendley And Karen Budd-Fallen**



**Interior Secretary David Bernhardt Appointed William Perry Pendley To Acting Director Of The Bureau Of Land Management (BLM) Through September 30th.** “Interior Secretary David Bernhardt last month appointed conservative lawyer William Perry Pendley — an avowed sagebrush rebel who served as a top official under Reagan administration Interior Secretary James Watt — to temporarily lead the Bureau of Land Management through Sept. 30.” [E&E, [08/06/19](#)]

- **Pendley Is Long-Time Advocate Of Eliminating America’s Public Lands.** “But it’s Pendley’s view of the federal estate that has conservationists most alarmed. He believes public lands shouldn’t exist at all. ‘Founding Fathers intended all lands owned by the federal government to be sold,’ he wrote in a January 2016 op-ed published by The National Review. Pendley wrote several books about land issues in the West, including one titled Sagebrush Rebel, a reference to the Sagebrush Rebellion movement of the 1970s and ‘80s that sought to free lands from federal control.” [*High Country News*, [08/08/19](#)]

**Bernhardt Also Added Karen Budd-Fallen, An Advocate For Private Property Rights, As Interior’s Deputy Solicitor For Fish, Wildlife And Parks.** “Other recent additions include Karen Budd-Falen, an advocate for private property rights and an attorney who currently serves as the Interior Department's deputy solicitor for fish, wildlife and parks. For a brief stint in June, Bernhardt elevated Budd-Falen to acting Interior assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks — a key position that oversees the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service. Trump nominated Robert Wallace in May to fill the position, and the Senate confirmed him in June.” [E&E, [08/06/19](#)]

- **Both Budd-Fallen And Pendley Appointments Have “Sparked Alarm” That They Will Dismantle Their Respective Agencies And Shift Ownership Of Public Lands To The States.** “Budd-Falen, and especially Pendley, have sparked alarm among some Interior observers, including former senior BLM officials, as well as conservation and sporting groups who worry that their goal is to dismantle the agencies they serve and shift ownership of public lands to the states.” [E&E, [08/06/19](#)]

### **At An Interior-Hosted Event, Anti-Public Lands Radicals Called For Public Land To Be Privatized, Which They Said Is The “Ultimate Solution”**

A DOI-Hosted Event Featured Anti-Public Lands Extremists Myron Ebell And Harriet Hageman, Loud Proponents Of Privatizing America’s Public Lands. At The Event, Myron Ebell Said That “The Real Solution” For Federal Public Lands Is “To Privatize Them.” Myron Ebell said, “So I think the real solution to the federal lands is eventually to either transfer them to the states or, and I know Ken Ivory and Jennifer Fielder won’t like to hear me say this, or to privatize them. Put them into private ownership.” [2019 American Agri-Women Symposium, 06/10/19 (00:44:02)]

**Myron Ebell Praised The American Lands Council For Its Efforts To Transfer Federal Public Land To States And Called Privatization “The Ultimate Solution.”** Myron Ebell said, “The ultimate solution for the federal lands, I think many of you are familiar with Ken Ivory, a state legislator in Utah, and the American Lands Council. It’s now headed by a state senator in



Montana, Jennifer Fielder. The American Lands Council, in the state of Utah, put together legislation that actually passed in Utah, to transfer the federal lands to the states [...] to transfer those lands so the state could manage them better, the state could manage them more cheaply, better environmental values, and they could also make those lands much more productive.” [2019 American Agri-Women Symposium, 06/10/19 (00:42:58)]

## **Proposing Budgets To Gut Land and Water Conservation Fund**

### **The Trump Administration Proposed Devastating Cuts To The Land And Water Conservation Fund—Up To 98 Percent Of Its Budget**

**While David Bernhardt was Deputy Secretary of the Interior, DOI defended Donald Trump’s restrictive budget request.** “Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke on Tuesday defended the \$1.6 billion in funding cuts that President Trump has proposed for his department, telling a Senate hearing that ‘this is what a balanced budget looks like.’” [*The Washington Post*, [06/21/17](#)]

**Donald Trump’s FY 2018 Budget Request Would Have Cut LWCF By 84 Percent.** “Trump’s budget makes deep cuts to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. LWCF uses a tax on federal offshore oil- and gas leases for recreation projects and to create parks. The program has raised more than \$3 billion over more than a half-century and enjoys wide bipartisan support. ‘Trump’s budget proposes to cut LWCF by 84 percent, from \$400 million down to \$64 million.’” [*Outside*, [06/02/17](#)]

**Donald Trump’s FY 2019 Budget Request Went Even Further-- It Would Have Cut LWCF By 98 Percent.** “The proposed budget would cut LWCF to \$8 million, down 98 percent from the \$400 million earmarked in Fiscal Year 2017 and less than 1 percent of the maximum authorized annually under full funding, which is \$900 million...the Trump administration’s budget request has drawn criticism from a host of influential conservation groups and elected leaders who worry the Interior Secretary’s support is eroding, and they’ve zeroed in on the proposed cuts as evidence that critical funding for air and water quality, which prop up Montana’s economy and are ingrained in its values, are in jeopardy.” [*The Flathead Beacon*, [02/18/18](#)]

**“The Department Of Interior’s 2020 Budget Cuts Federal Funding For LWCF By 95 Percent And Would Devastate The National Park Service By Eliminating Hundreds Of Jobs From Park Operations And Cutting Major Funds From Maintenance And Park Management,’** Neguse wrote in a statement to the Summit Daily. ‘The president’s budget does not represent the interests of Coloradans and would have a detrimental impact on our economy, our public lands and the American people.’” [*Summit Daily*, [03/15/19](#)]



# **Pushing Irresponsible Resource Development Plans That Would Tilt The Scales Of Land Management Toward Industry For Decades**

## **Interior Is Following Through With Controversial Resource Management Plans That Favor Industry Over Public Lands Conservation**

**BLM Is Moving Forward With Its Lewiston Field Office RMP In Montana.** “On Valentines Day 2020, the BLM released its proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Lewistown area, a four-volume document detailing how the agency will prioritize its management of the area's land, water, wildlife and mineral resources in the decades to come. The RMP was immediately and forcefully criticized by environmental organizations for its realignment of priorities, placing more emphasis on expanding resource extraction opportunities than preserving landscape conservation practices.” [*Great Falls Tribune*, [03/23/20](#)]

### **Conservationists Say The RMP Favors Oil And Gas Development Too Much.**

“Environmentalists take exception to several provisions within in the new RMP. Among them are the BLM's decision to not include any of the 27 stream segments nominated for inclusion within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, eliminating protections on six of the eight areas previously designated as being of critical environmental concern (ACECs), and offering no additional protections for the 200,000 acres the BLM identified in 2016 as having wilderness characteristics. Their sharpest criticism, however, has been leveled at the potential of unfettered development of oil and gas reserves within the federal mineral estate.” [*Great Falls Tribune*, [03/23/20](#)]

**BLM Is Moving Forward With Its Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan.** “The U.S. Bureau of Land Management in early May aims to release its final plan for 4.6 million acres of BLM-managed land in Oregon. The district in 2019 took comments on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan Amendment, BLM Vale District Manager Don Gonzalez said.” [*Capital Press*, [03/16/20](#)]

**Despite Public Comments Concerned About Preserving Land With Wilderness Characteristics, BLM's Preferred Alternative Will Not Designate Special Management Considerations For Wilderness.** “Gonzalez said some people commenting on the draft EIS wanted to preserve wilderness characteristics on lands deemed to have them. Others expressed concerns about potential development of power-transmission lines and pipelines, and the availability of grazing permits. Vale BLM in the draft EIS preferred the alternative that does not designate any special management considerations for lands found to have wilderness characteristics. These are separate from Wilderness Study Areas that await management decisions by Congress.” [*Capital Press*, [03/16/20](#)]

## **Even During A Global Pandemic, Interior Is Still Prioritizing The Approval Of Mine Expansions**



**BLM Approved An Expansion Of A Gold And Silver Mine In Arizona To Include 497 New Acres Of Public Land And An Open Pit.** “The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has approved the proposed expansion of Moss Mine east of Bullhead City. The announcement Wednesday by the BLM’s Kingman Field Office clears the way for expansion that will allow mining operations and exploration on about 497 acres of public land in Mohave County, adjacent to Golden Vertex Corp.’s current gold and silver mining operations taking place on 254 acres of private land about five miles east of Bullhead City in the foothills of the Black Mountains. Operations, according to a request submitted last year by Golden Vertex, would include an open pit mine, an expanded heap leach pad, rock stockpiles, solution ponds, buildings and associated roads and infrastructure. In addition, it will permit the company to conduct exploratory drilling on the property.” [*Mohave Valley Daily News*, [03/18/20](#)]

**BLM Is Moving Forward Through With A Proposal To Open A Gold Mine In Nevada.** “The Bureau of Land Management, Tonopah Field Office, has prepared an Environmental Assessment for the proposed Mother Lode Exploration Plan of Operations, located seven miles east of Beatty in Nye County. The comment period will be from March 25 to April 23, 2020. Corvus Gold Nevada Inc. proposes to continue exploring the 261-acre Mother Lode Project area for gold. These activities would create up to 145 acres of total ground disturbance. In addition to exploration, CGN has applied for a right of way grant to utilize and maintain the Fluorspar Canyon Road (used to access the project), and to operate and use three existing groundwater wells for water needs associated with the project.” [*Elko Daily Free Press*, [03/25/20](#)]

## **Needlessly Moving BLM’s Headquarters And Eliminating Key Professional Staff, Then Refusing To Tell Congress Why**

### **Interior Moved BLM’s Headquarters To A Building In Colorado Occupied By Oil Companies, And Refused To Give Congress Justification**

**As Part Of A “Reorganization Effort,” David Bernhardt Moved BLM’s Headquarters To An Office Building In Colorado Shared With Big Oil Corporations.** “The Bureau of Land Management has selected a site for its new headquarters in Grand Junction, Colo. — and it’s in a building that also serves as the home to a Chevron corporate office, a state oil and gas association and an independent natural gas exploration company. Trump officials decided in July to move the BLM — which oversees energy leasing, grazing and other activities on federal land — out of the District of Columbia. The move is to be completed by the end of next year. While the Interior Department is dispersing the employees to several states, the bureau’s top leadership will move to Grand Junction.” [*Washington Post*, [09/21/19](#)]

**Most Bureau Of Land Management (BLM) Employees Will Be Required To Leave Washington, D.C. By The End of 2020.** “In an all-employee meeting Tuesday, senior Trump officials told Bureau of Land Management staffers that most of them must leave D.C. by the end of next year, under the Interior Department’s reorganization plan.” [*Washington Post*, [07/16/19](#)]

### **Bernhardt Relocated BLM Over Concerns From Congress That The Move Would Be Harmful To Diversity**



**Appropriations Democrats Formally Objected To The Bureau Of Land Management's (BLM) Proposed Relocation Plans To Move Agency To Colorado.** "Appropriations Democrats tasked with overseeing the Department of the Interior formally objected to the agency's plans to move the headquarters for one of its Washington-based agencies to Colorado. Interior announced in July it would create a new headquarters for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Grand Junction, Colo., and scatter another roughly 300 D.C.-based employees at other offices throughout the West. "Based on the incomplete and superficial information that you provided, it appears that the proposal to relocate Bureau headquarters is not based on rigorous financial and organizational analysis, nor is it intended to increase the Bureau's accountability and improve the management of our nation's public lands," Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) and Rep. Betty McCollum (D-Minn.), both chairs of the Appropriation subcommittee that oversee Interior, wrote in a letter asking the agency to suspend the move. The move has set up a showdown between Congress and Interior." [*The Hill*, [08/23/19](#)]

- **Lawmakers Wrote They "Oppose Any Further Action" By Interior To Relocate BLM.** "McCollum and Udall's letter raises questions about how much power lawmakers have to stop the relocation. 'Although it was made clear that the Department intends to proceed with the relocation of the Bureau – regardless of our position – we oppose any further action by the Department to implement this proposal. We call on the Department to immediately suspend its efforts to relocate,' the two wrote." [*The Hill*, [08/23/19](#)]

**Arizona Rep. Raúl Grijalva Warned The Bureau Of Land Management (BLM) Could Cause Agency To See A Decrease In Its Diversity Of Employees And Open Agency To Lawsuits.** "A top House Democrat on Wednesday warned the Trump administration that a decision to relocate Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staffers from D.C. would decrease diversity and likely open the agency to discrimination lawsuits. In a [letter](#) to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) warned that by failing to study how a forced relocation of staff could impact the agency's diversity, the BLM was opening itself up to a legal challenge." [*The Hill*, [12/04/19](#)]

- **Grijalva Claimed That Black Employees Make Up Less Than 3.5 Of BLM's Workforce And 41 Percent Of Those Employees Are Located In Washington, D.C.** "Grijalva, Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, argued the oversight was 'reckless' and said the charge would already be supported by current agency staffing numbers. Office of Personnel Management data shows that black employees make up less than 3.5 percent of the agency's workforce and of that number, 41 percent are located in D.C., Grijalva said.'" [*The Hill*, [12/04/19](#)]
- **Grijalva Claimed BLM "Would Be Exposed To Significant Legal Liability That Could Rival The Cost Of The Entire Relocation."** "With a significant portion of D.C.-based employees [expected](#) to reject the job transfer and instead leave BLM, he argued that diversity at the agency will plummet. 'If there is a disparate impact on any protected class of employees, the agency would be exposed to significant legal liability that could rival the cost of the entire relocation,' Grijalva wrote." [*The Hill*, [12/04/19](#)]
- **Grijalva Claimed Interior Would Be "Reckless" For Not Performing An Analysis On Diversity Impacts Of BLM's Reorganization.** "DOI could be sued by its own employees



under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," he continued. 'Without an analysis showing the proposed reorganization would not have a disparate impact, or would serve a legitimate, non-discriminatory business need, BLM's vulnerability to a successful lawsuit would increase dramatically. 'It would be reckless for DOI to fail to perform such an analysis,'" he added.'" [*The Hill*, [12/04/19](#)]

## **The Interior Inspector General Found Officials Misled Congress On The Headquarters Relocation Costs**

### **Interior's Inspector General Found That Officials Misled Congress On The BLM Headquarters Relocation By Overemphasizing How Much Cost Factored Into The Decision.**

Trump administration officials misled Congress in justifying the relocation of an Interior Department component outside of Washington, a government watchdog found on Tuesday, with the agency overemphasizing the extent to which cost factored into the decision. The Bureau of Land Management opened its headquarters in Grand Junction, Colorado, earlier this year and moved hundreds of employees out of the capital region and into western states. BLM told Congress it had to leave its Washington headquarters near the U.S. Capitol Building, which the agency leased from a private owner, because the space became too expensive. Interior's inspector general, however, found BLM never verified the cost exceeded a government-wide cap and misrepresented the true cause for its planned relocation. Interior and BLM's 'representations that cost was the reason for not renewing the lease were misleading,' the IG said." [Government Executive, [09/01/20](#)]

## **Trying To Dismantle Cooperative Obama-Era Sage Grouse Plans**

### **Interior Is Still Trying To Gut Obama-Era Sage Grouse Management Plans, Despite A Federal Court Injunction**

**Despite A Federal Court Injunction, BLM Is Accepting Comments On Six Draft Environmental Impact Statements For Sage-Grouse Management Plans Until April 6, 2020.** "The BLM has published six draft supplemental environmental impact statements (SEIS) for management of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat on public lands. The draft SEISs address issues identified in an October 16, 2019, Order issued by the U.S. District Court for Idaho that placed a preliminary injunction suspending implementation of sage-grouse plans the BLM adopted in March 2019. You can view or download the state's documents using the links below. The preliminary injunction affects BLM sage-grouse plans in Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada/northeastern California, and Oregon. Draft SEISs for these states are all available for review and comment online through April 6, 2020. Click on the link for each State to reach the respective Documents page. Until the injunction is lifted, the BLM is implementing the plans adopted in 2015 for the affected areas. These plans are also available on the Documents and Reports page for each State, at the links provided above." [BLM ePlanning, accessed [03/26/20](#)]

**A Federal Court Halted Interior's Sage Grouse Plans That Would Ease Restrictions On Oil Companies Drilling In Sage Grouse Habitat After Finding That BLM Hadn't Adequately Considered How The Plans Would Harm The Grouse.** "The Interior Department, Idaho and



Wyoming are appealing a court ruling that halted a Trump administration plan to ease land-use restrictions in seven Western states that protect struggling sage grouse. The notices filed Monday say the agency and states will seek a review by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals of an October ruling temporarily preventing the U.S. Bureau of Land Management from carrying out the plan. Idaho and Wyoming back the Trump administration plan that eases restrictions on energy companies and other industries put in place by the Obama administration. U.S. District Court Judge B. Lynn Winmill in October said the U.S. Bureau of Land Management hadn't adequately considered how the Trump administration plan could harm sage grouse. He granted a preliminary injunction sought by Western Watersheds Project and other environmental groups until he could rule on the merits of the case." [Associated Press, [12/17/19](#)]

## Appointing Conflicted Deputies

### **Land Transfer Champion William Perry Pendley, Who Sued Interior Multiple Times Was Named Acting Director Of BLM....**

Interior Secretary David Bernhardt Signed Order Making William Perry Pendley, Former Mountain States Legal Foundation (MSLF) Lawyer, The Acting Director Of The Bureau Of Land Management (BLM). This week, Trump's Interior Secretary David Bernhardt signed an order making the Wyoming native William Perry Pendley the acting director of the Bureau of Land Management. Pendley, former president of the Mountain States Legal Foundation, was a senior official in Ronald Reagan's administration. The appointment comes as a critical time for the BLM, which manages more than a tenth of the nation's land and oversees the federal government's oil, gas and coal leasing program. Two weeks ago, Interior officials announced the department would reassign 84 percent of the bureau's D.C. staff out West by the end of next year. Only a few dozen employees, including Pendley, would remain in Washington." [Washington Post, [07/31/19](#)]

- Pendley Is a "Longtime Crusader For Curtailing The Federal Government's Control Of Public Lands." "After more than two and-a-half years in office, Trump has yet to nominate a permanent director for BLM. By placing Pendley in charge of the agency, Bernhardt has installed a longtime crusader for curtailing the federal government's control of public lands." [Washington Post, [07/31/19](#)]

### **...Despite Having a 17-Page Long Recusal List That Has Meant He Has Not Been Briefed On Many Issues And Requires BLM Employees To Review The List Before Discussing Particular Matters With Him.**

Pendley Claimed He Hasn't Briefed On A Number Of Topics Because Of His Recusals. "When pressed on the effects of climate change on federal lands, Pendley said he hadn't yet been briefed on the issue. 'There's a ton of topics I haven't been briefed on and one of the reasons is all of my recusals.'" [Bloomberg, [10/11/19](#)]

Pendley Asked BLM Employees To Review His 17-Page Recusal List "Before Discussing A Particular Matter With Me." "In an email to BLM employees last month, Pendley asked agency



employees to review a 17-page list of recusals ‘before discussing a particular matter with me. I understand that preserving a culture of ethical compliance within the BLM begins with me, and I must set the example for the Bureau,’ Pendley wrote in the email.” [E&E, [10/16/19](#)]

### **The Interior Inspector General’s Investigation On Assistant Secretary Doug Domenech Found Violated Federal Ethics Rules By Meeting His Former Employer, The Koch-Backed Texas Public Policy Foundation....**

**Interior Assistant Secretary Doug Domenech Met With His Former Employer, The Koch-Backed Texas Public Policy Foundation.** “In April of this year, the United States Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General opened an investigation into allegations that six top political appointees at the agency had engaged in violations of federal ethics rules. One of the officials caught up in the cloud of scandal is Doug Domenech, an assistant secretary at the Department and a close friend and lieutenant of Interior Secretary David Bernhardt. Domenech came under scrutiny after Pacific Standard and the *Guardian* together revealed last year that he had met twice with his former employer, a Koch-backed research and education think tank called the Texas Public Policy Foundation, during the early days of the Trump administration. According to Domenech's official calendar, he took two back-to-back meetings with his former employer in April of 2017 to discuss a pair of lawsuits that the Texas-based think tank had filed against the Department of the Interior.” [*Pacific Standard*, [07/16/19](#)]

- **Domenech Appear To Have Violated Ethics Rules.** “Under federal ethics rules, and specifically the White House's own ethics pledge, executive branch appointees are generally prohibited from participating in closed meetings or communications with former employers about various official matters for a period of two years from the date of their appointment. In meeting with the Texas Public Policy Foundation, Domenech, who joined the Department of the Interior in January of 2017, appeared to violate those rules.” [*Pacific Standard*, [07/16/19](#)]

### **...Which Was Part Of A Larger Investigation That Included Five Other Interior Political Appointees.**

**Interior Department Inspector General Opened An Investigation Into Six Appointees.** “The Interior Department’s Office of Inspector General has opened an investigation into whether six of President Trump’s appointees have violated federal ethics rules by engaging with their former employers or clients on department-related business....The new inquiry, which the office confirmed in an April 18 letter to the nonprofit Campaign Legal Center, is looking into senior Interior officials, including Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Doug Domenech, White House liaison Lori Mashburn, three top staffers at the Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, and the department’s former energy policy adviser. The Campaign Legal Center detailed the officials’ actions in a Feb. 20 letter to the inspector general’s office, suggesting a probe is warranted.” [*Washington Post*, [04/23/19](#)]

- **Domenech Met With Texas Public Policy Foundation on Endangered Species Listing and Property Dispute.** “Domenech’s calendars indicated that he twice met with representatives from the Austin-based Texas Public Policy Foundation on an endangered species listing and a property dispute. The group had lawsuits pending with Interior over both issues and



resolved the fight over private property near Texas's Red River six months after the meeting with Domenech." [*Washington Post*, [04/23/19](#)]

- **Former National Rifle Association Lobbyist Benjamin Cassidy Participated In Meeting On National Monuments Despite Being Prohibited On Engaging On Such Matters.** "Benjamin Cassidy, a former lobbyist for the National Rifle Association, has also attracted significant attention since joining the department's Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs for his work on gun-related issues....Calendars released by Interior show Cassidy participating in a December 2017 meeting regarding Trump's decision to scale back two national monuments in Utah, even though Cassidy had lobbied Congress on a bill addressing the president's ability to establish national monuments just months earlier. This activity, first reported by HuffPost, could violate the federal ethics pledge because Cassidy was prohibited from engaging in particular matters on which he had lobbied during the two years before joining the department." [*Washington Post*, [04/23/19](#)]
- **Cassidy Had Also Been In Contact With A Current NRA Lobbyist.** "Cassidy had also been in contact with a current NRA lobbyist, Susan Recce, about opening up Bureau of Land Management lands in Arizona and Utah to recreational shooting. Interior ultimately decided to allow recreational shooting in the Sonoran Desert National Monument, the option endorsed by the NRA." [*Washington Post*, [04/23/19](#)]
- **White House Liaison Lori Mashburn Violated Ethics Pledge By Attending Multiple Private Events Held By Her Previous Employer, The Heritage Foundation.** "The center also alleges that Mashburn, a former associate director at the conservative Heritage Foundation, violated her ethics pledge by attending multiple private events held by her former employer." [*Washington Post*, [04/23/19](#)]
- **Office Of Intergovernmental And External Affairs Officials Todd Wynn And Timothy Williams Are Also Investigation.** "The other two senior officials with the Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs now under investigation are Todd Wynn and Timothy Williams. All of the officials named in the complaint continue to work at Interior, except for Vincent DeVito, who left his job as the department energy policy counselor in August to join an offshore oil drilling firm." [*Washington Post*, [04/23/19](#)]

### **Numerous Political Appointees Have Industry Or Lobbyist Ties.**

**26 Interior Political Appointees Have Lobbying Ties.** [Department of Influence Political Appointee Breakdown, accessed [09/10/20](#)]

**35 Interior Political Appointees Have Industry Ties.** Department of Influence Political Appointee Breakdown, accessed [09/10/20](#)]



## **Violating The Constitution And The Vacancies Reform Act By Continually Naming Acting Directors Of Agencies**

### **In Four Years, Trump Has Not Gotten One Nominee Confirmed As Director Of The Bureau Of Land Management Or The National Park Service**

**Interior Has Circumvented The Constitution And The Vacancies Reform Act By Continually Redelegating Acting Authority To Agency Heads, Circumventing The Senate's Confirmation Process.** "The speeches were focused on William Perry Pendley, the de-facto head of the public lands agency who has long opposed federal ownership of them. Though his nomination was withdrawn earlier this month after a letter of opposition from the entire Democratic caucus showed Republicans they had little wiggle room for a vote, Pendley remains in office through a series of orders being challenged in two different lawsuits. 'Let's get one thing straight. This title has no basis in law. He's serving as acting BLM director under temporary appointments that the Secretary [of Interior] keeps renewing in a cynical ploy to evade the Constitution, the Federal Vacancies Reform Act and the judgment of the Senate,' said Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.), a vocal critic of Pendley's. 'Mr. Pendley's record on conservation is so bad, so antithetical to the agency he oversees the Trump administration knew he wouldn't survive a Senate confirmation. So instead, they've concocted this shell game,' Udall continued." [*The Hill*, [09/15/20](#)]

**Interior Has Relied On Temporary Power Delegations To Allow Officials Like William Perry Pendley To Remain At The Head Of Agencies.** "The Department of Interior previously had relied on a series of temporary delegations of power to keep [BLM Head William Perry] Pendley and other Interior officials in office, even though they have not been confirmed by the Senate." [*The Hill*, [08/29/20](#)]

- **Neither The Bureau Of Land Management Nor The National Park Service Have Had A Permanent Director Throughout The Entire Trump Administration.** "The May order mandates that if there is no BLM director, the next person in line, who gets to exercise the "authority of the director," or act in that role, is the deputy director of policy and programs, which is the job Pendley officially holds. A June order lays out a similar policy for the National Park Service (NPS). Neither agency's director position has been filled throughout the entirety of the administration." [*The Hill*, [08/29/20](#)]

## **Suppressing Science**

### **A Report Outlining The Potential Harm To Several Species Protected By The Endangered Species Act Was "Suppressed" by Federal Officials**

**1,100-Plus Page Report Detailing How Several Species Currently Protected By The Endangered Species Act (ESA) Could Be Imperiled By Trump Plans Was "Suppressed."** "Federal officials suppressed a lengthy environmental document that details how one of California's unique salmon runs would be imperiled by Trump administration plans to deliver more water to Central Valley farms. The July 1 assessment, obtained by The Times, outlines how proposed changes in government water operations would harm several



species protected by the Endangered Species Act, including perilously low populations of winter-run salmon, as well as steelhead trout and killer whales, which feed on salmon. But the 1,123-page document was never released." [[Los Angeles Times](#), 08/21/19]

- **Biological Opinion Was Pulled Two Days After Scientists Submitted Their Review.** "Two days after federal scientists submitted their review, called a biological opinion, a regional fisheries official pulled the document and replaced the team that wrote it with a new group tasked with revising it, as The Times reported in July." [*Los Angeles Times*, [08/21/19](#)]
- **The Revision Is Viewed As Another Example Of The Trump Administration's Interference.** "Had the opinion been adopted and released, it would have interfered with efforts to ramp up irrigation deliveries to powerful California farm interests with ties to the Trump administration. The revision, critics say, is another example of the administration intervening to weaken environmental protections and reverse the findings of federal scientists." [*Los Angeles Times*, [08/21/19](#)]
- **The Report Clearly Concludes Increasing Water Deliveries Would Pose Danger To Existence Of Threatened And Endangered Species.** "In the report, the National Marine Fisheries Service unequivocally concludes that increasing water deliveries would likely jeopardize the continued existence of endangered winter-run Chinook salmon, threatened spring-run Chinook and threatened Central Valley steelhead, as well as endangered Southern Resident killer whales that dine on salmon." [*Los Angeles Times*, [08/21/19](#)]

## Politicizing Interior's FOIA Program To Keep Important Records Under Wraps

### **Trump's Interior Put The Department's FOIA Program Under A Political Appointee And Created An "Awareness Review" That Allowed Interior To Effectively Censor FOIA Responses**

Trump's Interior Department Placed The FOIA Program Agency-Wide In The Charge Of Daniel Jorjani, A Political Appointee. "Former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke initiated an overhaul of the department's FOIA program in late 2018, shifting responsibility for public records requests from Interior's chief information officer to its top attorney. Interior officials have argued that the change was prompted by a 'dramatic increase' in demands for public records during the Trump administration. But the realignment also shifted responsibility for FOIA requests from a career post to a political one, currently held by Interior Solicitor Daniel Jorjani." [E&E, [01/08/20](#)]

Bernhardt Later Signed A Secretarial Order That Allowed Jorjani To "Assert Control Over Any Aspect Of Any FOIA Request." "The Interior Department plans to establish a new 'litigation unit' to consolidate legal challenges over Freedom of Information Act requests, part of the agency's ongoing overhaul of its handling of public records demands. Interior Secretary David Bernhardt signed off on the new legal team yesterday in Secretarial Order 3378. [...] The order also puts all FOIA personnel — identified as Interior employees who have any role in



processing, preparing or reviewing public records requests, whether full time or as a 'collateral duty' – under the direct authority of the new office.' In addition, the order states that the FOIA office can "assert control over any aspect of any FOIA request." [E&E, [01/08/20](#)]

## **DOI Put 117 FOIA Requests From Media And Government Watchdogs Through An Arbitrary "Political Awareness Process"**

**DOI Has Sent At Least 117 FOIA Requests Through Political Awareness Review.** The responsive documents from OS-2018-00959 (an EarthJustice FOIA) and OS-2019-00906 (a Western Values Project FOIA) show that the political leadership at the Department of Interior has put at least 117 FOIAs through the Political Awareness Review process. [FOIA Documents from [OS-2018-00959 CE](#) & [CF](#) and [OS-2019-00906](#), accessed 12/12/19 – spreadsheet of FOIAs available upon request]

**FOIAs Sent By Reporters From the *Washington Post*, *CNN*, *Mashable*, *Politico*, *Documented*, *E & E News*, *ProPublica*, *The Hill*, *Vice*, And *The Wall Street Journal* Were Sent Through Political Awareness Review.** [Documents responsive to [OS-2018-00959cf](#); [OS-2018-00959ce](#); and OS-2019-00906]

**The Awareness Review Process Delayed A Number Of These FOIAs, Including One To *The Washington Post* By At Least Four Days.** The exchange re: Cason's FOIA (NPS-2019-00354) begins Tuesday December 18 and ends after they decided to release the memo Friday December 21, delaying a response at least four days. [Documents responsive to NPS-2019-01004, pages 53-60]

**FOIAs Filed By Western Values Project, The Sierra Club, American Oversight, Democracy Forward, The Buffalo Field Campaign, American Bridge, And The Democratic National Committee Were All Subjected To The Political Awareness Process.** [Documents responsive to NPS-2019-01004; [OS-2018-00959cf](#); and [OS-2018-00959ce](#)]

**A FOIA Filed By Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) Was Subjected To The "Awareness Review" Process; Randal Bowman Attempted to Remove Responsive Documents During the Review, But Was Not Successful.** Special Assistant to the National Park Service's Deputy Director Randal Bowman asked for a Sept 2018 DOI memo to be taken out of documents responsive to NPS-2019-00237, filed by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). "The Assistant Secretary's office is concerned that the material proposed for release may be deliberative." NPS FOIA officer McHugh seems to push back with the Solicitor's office, and Bowman seems to back down. [Documents responsive to NPS-2019-01004, pages 12-13; *Washington Post*, [3/26/2018](#)]

## **Jorjani Was Investigated For Perjury And His Role In Blocking Public Records Requests**

**Senator Ron Wyden Of Oregon Announced He Placed A Hold On The Nomination Of Daniel Jorjani As The Interior Department's Top Lawyer.** "Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) on Wednesday announced that he has placed a hold on the nomination of Daniel Jorjani to serve as the Interior Department's top lawyer, citing concerns that the political appointee possibly lied to



lawmakers about his role in reviewing public information requests submitted to the agency.” [Huffington Post, [07/31/19](#)]

- **Wyden Called Upon The Department Of Justice To Investigate Whether Jorjani Perjured Himself During His Confirmation Hearing.** “Wyden also called on the Department of Justice to investigate whether Jorjani perjured himself during his May confirmation hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.” [Huffington Post, [07/31/19](#)]
- **Interior’s Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) Policy Was Specifically Cited By Wyden.** “The Interior’s FOIA policy is already the subject of an inquiry by the department’s internal ethics watchdog, the Office of Inspector General, The New York Times reported last week. ‘I believe Department documents made public through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) show Mr. Jorjani may have knowingly misled members of the Committee about the Department’s adherence to laws meant to ensure transparency and accountability in government,’” Wyden wrote Tuesday in a letter to the acting head of the DOJ’s public integrity division.” [Huffington Post, [07/31/19](#)]
- **Wyden Asked In A Separate Letter To Interior’s Inspector General Asking What Role Jorjani Played In Department’s FOIA Policy.** “In a separate letter to Interior’s Office of Inspector General, Wyden asked the internal watchdog to expand the scope of its ongoing probe to include what role Jorjani played in establishing the agency’s controversial FOIA policy and what he knew about it prior to appearing before the committee in May.” [Huffington Post, [07/31/19](#)]

