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HEARING ON THE NOMINATIONS OF AURELIA SKIPWITH TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AND KATHERINE LEMOS TO BE MEMBER AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE CHEMICAL SAFETY AND HAZARD INVESTIGATION BOARD

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:13 a.m. in room 406, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John Barrasso (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Barrasso, Carper, Cramer, Braun, Rounds, Sullivan, Boozman, Ernst, Cardin, Whitehouse, Gillibrand, and Van Hollen.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BARRASSO, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WYOMING

Senator BARRASSO. Good morning. I call this hearing to order.

Today, we are going to consider the nominations of Aurelia Skipwith to be the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Katherine Lemos to be a Member and the Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

Ms. Skipwith has served as the Department of Interior's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks for the past 2 years. In this role, she has helped to oversee both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service.

In her new role as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ms. Skipwith will work closely with the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Rob Wallace, with this Committee and who the full Senate recently confirmed by voice vote. Ms. Skipwith will be in charge of managing fish and wildlife for the American public. That includes combating invasive species, recovering endangered species, protecting migratory birds, restoring fisheries, and conserving and enhancing wildlife habitat.

She earned a degree in biology from Howard University, molecular genetics from Purdue University, and a law degree from the University of Kentucky.

More than 80 groups and individuals have written in support of Ms. Skipwith's nomination. Scott Vance, the CEO and executive director of the Union Sportsmen's Alliance, whose members include

the Nation's most prominent unions, has written, "We believe it is vitally important that the next director of the Fish and Wildlife Service not only possess strong leadership skills and the ability to form public and private partnerships, but also the education and critical decisionmaking skills required to enact policies based on scientific principles free from political and bureaucratic interference. Ms. Skipwith meets," as he says, "and surpasses these qualifications, and we urge you to approve her nomination."

Dan Ashe, who was the former Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under President Obama and is now president and CEO of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, has noted, "In a field where diversity is sorely needed, it is encouraging to see a woman and person of color nominated to this important and prominent leadership position."

Confirming Ms. Skipwith is important to the work of this Committee. We have jurisdiction over fish and wildlife policy, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Earlier this year, Congress enacted the WILD Act, Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver Act, to combat invasive species, prevent wildlife poaching and trafficking, to promote wildlife conservation, and to protect endangered species. I look forward to working with Ms. Skipwith to implement the WILD Act.

The Committee also has oversight over the Endangered Species Act. I have worked with the Western Governors' Association, with State fish and wildlife agencies, with conservation organizations, with ranchers, with farmers, and energy producers, to update the Act so that it works better for species and for people. I look forward to working with Ms. Skipwith on modernizing this important law.

President Trump has also nominated Katherine Lemos to serve as Member and Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. Dr. Lemos has substantial experience in the fields of incident investigation, accident reconstruction, safety engineering, and human factors.

She has demonstrated strong leadership in these areas at the National Transportation Safety Board, at the Federal Aviation Administration, at Northrop Grumman, and in academia. Her knowledge and background make her a strong candidate to lead the Chemical Safety Board in its mission to investigate industrial chemical accidents.

The former Executive Director and current Deputy Executive Director of the Federal Aviation Administration's Accident Investigation and Prevention Office has written in support of Dr. Lemos' nomination: "As a consummate safety professional with the ability to adapt and apply her knowledge across domains, her tenacity, and her leadership skills in engaging and drawing every resource, Katherine is the ideal candidate for this role."

Getting her confirmed is a priority. In December of this year, the Chemical Safety Board will be down to one member. I have called on the Administration to fill both current and future vacancies at the agencies, and I do so again. We cannot allow the agency to lose its quorum.

I look forward to hearing both of our nominees' testimony.

I will now turn to Ranking Member Carper for his statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS R. CARPER, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Senator CARPER. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, one and all.

I am especially happy to see Congressman Clay with us this day. Thank you so much for coming. We know you are busy. Once you have finished your introduction, if you would like to spend the next 3 hours with us, that would be great. If you decide you want to go back to work, we will understand that, too.

[Laughter.]

Senator CARPER. I had a chance to meet the family members for both of our nominees, and it is a real pleasure to meet spouses and fiancés and mothers and aunts and even some sisters in the house. We are glad you all could make it.

Was your father Bill Clay? OK, I served with your dad, and it was a real honor, and I know he is very proud of you, very proud of you.

Dr. Lemos, you pronounce your name Lemos, not Lemos, right? Lemos?

Ms. LEMOS. Yes.

Senator CARPER. OK, like in lemon.

Ms. LEMOS. Yes, sir.

Senator CARPER. Dr. Lemos has been nominated to serve on the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, an independent Federal agency that's charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents. The board has investigated everything from the BP oil spill to fatal refinery accidents to chemical explosions caused by flooding during, I think it was Hurricane Harvey. Regrettably, though, President Trump has not treated this important agency with the respect that its mission deserves. In fact, the President's budget proposals have repeatedly called for the board's elimination.

Moreover, Dr. Lemos is the first nominee to the board we have seen during this Administration, if I'm not mistaken. While I am encouraged that Dr. Lemos appears to be a well qualified nominee, it is my hope that she can assure the Committee of her strong commitment to both the board's mission and to its budget.

I also hope to learn more about the Trump administration's support for additional board nominations or renominations since the terms of its current board members will all expire in the next year or so.

I want to say just as a side note, we face a situation where this President, this Administration has not been a real supporter for another agency called the Economic Development Administration, that we think—most of us, Democrats and Republicans—think, serves a vital role. But they nominated somebody to head the agency who actually is a former Congressman; he is a doctor, but he is a former Congressman. And he had as a Congressman voted repeatedly to de-fund the Economic Development Administration. And then this President nominated him to head that agency. And we have a situation here where this Administration has also called for basically de-funding the panel, the commission that you would be nominated to lead. And Dr. Fleming's changed his mind, since he has been confirmed to head up EDA. He thinks it is a good organization, and he is trying to make it better.

I think one of the things for you is that we need to hear from you your strong commitment to actually not just keeping this entity alive but also to actually make it stronger and better. So we are going to be looking to you for that.

I want to just set that aside and say to, with regard to Ms. Aurelia Skipwith has been nominated, as we know, to lead the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, our Nation's oldest Federal conservation agency. The Service is responsible for enforcing wildlife protection laws, restoring habitat, and assisting foreign governments with international conservation efforts.

In Delaware, the First State, we take great pride in our two national wildlife refuges, as we spoke about yesterday, which are home to threatened and endangered species, including the piping plovers, the red knot, and others. These two migratory birds attract literally thousands—maybe tens of thousands—of visitors to our State every year. They come from all over the world. The national wildlife refuges are not just a source of pride for Delawareans, they are a source of economic prosperity and I think pride for our Nation.

Unfortunately, over the last couple of years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has taken actions that jeopardize our Nation's wildlife, despite widespread opposition. The Administration recently finalized regulations that will dramatically alter implementation of the Endangered Species Act, one of our Nation's most popular and actually most revered environmental laws. These regulations could undermine the Service that is supposed to both underpin and drive species protection decisions.

In 2017, this Administration also adopted an unprecedented legal opinion relative to the Migratory Bird Treaty, a stance that every former top Department of Interior official since President Nixon's administration, both Republican and Democrat alike, has vehemently opposed. Now, the Department in which Ms. Skipwith currently serves is pursuing regulations to codify this controversial bird Migratory Treaty Act opinion.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration has also been rushing down what many Americans regard as a misguided path to develop our Nation's public lands, particularly in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and in core sage grouse habitat, at the expense of a thorough public process, transparency, and science.

Ms. Skipwith, as our Committee considers your nomination, I hope you will clearly convey a willingness to revisit some of these troubling policy decisions.

Let me end with this. Thank you so much for visiting with me yesterday, both of you; thank you for visiting with me, Dr. Lemos, a couple of weeks ago. Almost 2 weeks ago, on August 29th, I sent Ms. Skipwith a letter, we talked about this yesterday, asking her to provide answers about her interests with former employers and the extent to which she's tried to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

And again, we met yesterday; I appreciate that. I told her, I told you how disappointed I was that less than 24 hours before your confirmation hearing, I still had not received a response to the letter that I had sent almost 2 weeks ago. We had that conversation yesterday. Last night, just hours before the hearing, we finally re-

ceived a response. I am told the response is incomplete. That is just not acceptable.

I sincerely hope that it is not an indication of how you would respond to future legitimate inquiries from members of this Congress, be they Democrat or Republican or Independent, should you be confirmed.

Part of our responsibility on this Committee, on the Environment and Public Works Committee, is to conduct oversight over the executive branch of our Government, and that includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We need your cooperation in order for us to meet our responsibilities under the Constitution. Should you be confirmed, I hope we will have it.

Thank you again for joining us today. We look forward to hearing from both of you for your testimonies, and right now, we look forward to hearing from our friend Lacy Clay.

Welcome.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much, Senator Carper.

You are absolutely right, we are grateful to be joined today by Congressman William Lacy Clay, who will introduce, in a second, Ms. Skipwith. Congressman Clay represents Missouri's First Congressional District, based in St. Louis. You will note, if you Google L-A-C-Y, it immediately goes to Lacy Clay. It doesn't go to Carper, it doesn't go to Barrasso, like I said, it goes right to Lacy Clay.

[Laughter.]

Senator BARRASSO. So that is quite a distinction.

We want to thank you for taking the time to be here today, to join us. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM LACY CLAY, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Representative CLAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Carper. Thank you for allowing me to come before you today.

And as an aside, Senator Carper, yes, I did succeed my father, Bill Clay, 18 years ago. He and my mom live happily in Senator Cardin's great State of Maryland.

Senator CARPER. Please give him my best.

Representative CLAY. I will.

Senator CARPER. Tell him I said the apple didn't fall too far from the tree.

[Laughter.]

Representative CLAY. This morning, I have the honor to present for your consideration a remarkable American woman, who has been nominated to serve as the new Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, my highly talented constituent, Ms. Aurelia Skipwith.

Welcome, Aurelia, to you and your family who are here with us today.

To state the facts plainly, Ms. Skipwith is one of the most talented, hardest working, and driven persons that I have ever known.

Allow me to share with you a bit of information about her. Ms. Skipwith grew up in Indianapolis, Indiana, and first attended Morehead State University in Kentucky. While there, she was

awarded a full scholarship to attend Howard University, one of our Nation's top historically black universities, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in science. As you are aware, that science degree satisfies the requirement for appointment to this vital position in the Administration.

Ms. Skipwith went on to attend Purdue University, where she earned a master's degree in animal sciences, with an emphasis on molecular genetics. In 2005, she became my constituent when she and her family moved to St. Louis, where her family still resides.

I first met Ms. Skipwith in 2008, while she was employed as a scientist at Monsanto, which is now Bayer.

While employed at Monsanto, Ms. Skipwith excelled. She was awarded the Monsanto Sustainable Pledge award for her groundbreaking crop research. Ms. Skipwith was also recognized by the Missouri State legislature as a global leader in advancing sustainable agriculture.

Ms. Skipwith also won the Monsanto Global RGGI award for her extensive work to help feed the world by developing a new soybean that contained less saturated fatty acids.

After 8 years in St. Louis, she moved to the University of Kentucky's College of Law, and became the President of the International Law Society and was the Vice President of the ONE Campaign, which focuses on fighting poverty and preventable diseases in Africa.

She and I reconnected again in DC. Over the last several years, I have worked closely with her on important issues, and I can tell you that she cares. She listens, and she works hard for the American people.

Ms. Skipwith has some tremendous value at the Department of Interior. Most recently, she was designated by the Secretary of the Interior to represent the Administration at a truly historic moment in St. Louis, the induction of the historic Shelley House as the first unit in Missouri to be included on the new African American Civil Rights Network. The African American Civil Rights Network is an important new National Park Service asset established by legislation that I authored in the U.S. House.

For those of you who may not know the history, the Shelley House was at the center of the landmark 1948 U.S. Supreme Court decision, Shelley v. Kraemer, which outlawed restrictive housing covenants across this country. This case stood for the principle that equal protection under the law applied to housing and included the rights to acquire, enjoy, own, and dispose of property. The Shelley case was a heartening signal for African Americans in St. Louis and across the country that positive social change could be achieved through law and the courts.

Ms. Skipwith worked closely with my staff and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus, preservationists, and civil rights advocates, to make the African American Civil Rights Network a reality. She took a personal interest and advocated for the network, knowing its impact on future generations and the importance of all aspects of the American experience being told.

I think that it is fitting that Ms. Skipwith was chosen to represent the Administration on that historic occasion because her nomination that you are considering today offers the U.S. Senate

another historic opportunity for progress and equality. If confirmed, Aurelia Skipwith would become the first African American to head the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This is a historical nomination.

Ms. Skipwith is what we call in our community a true success story. We encourage our little black girls to take the road less traveled and embrace science, technology, engineering, and math, a field that is male dominated.

Ms. Skipwith embraced the challenge and found tremendous success. I am proud to be with her and her family today and providing today's introduction, as she is the embodiment of what we instruct our children to do and be: educated, hard working, excelling in their designated profession, and contributing good to the world.

I, along with the citizens of Missouri's First Congressional District, am proud to present one of our own. I respectfully request your favorable consideration and confirmation for this exceptional nominee, improving public service.

I thank the Committee for your gracious time this morning.

Senator BARRASSO. Well, thank you so very much, Congressman Clay, for this wonderful introduction of an incredible nominee. We know you have pressing responsibilities and duties in the House. You are welcome to stay as long as you like. We are grateful for the time you are here.

Representative CLAY. I am sure Speaker Pelosi is looking for me. [Laughter.]

Representative CLAY. Thank you so much.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

Now I would like to welcome our nominees to come forward and take your seats.

We have joining us Aurelia Skipwith, who is the nominee to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Katherine Lemos, who is the nominee to be the Member and Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

I want to remind both of you that your full written testimony will be made a part of the record. We look forward to hearing that testimony. We like to start, if we may, with an introduction of the family with each of the nominees.

With that, we will go first to Ms. Skipwith and then to her testimony, and then to Dr. Lemos to introduce her family and her testimony.

Ms. Skipwith, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF AURELIA SKIPWITH, NOMINEE TO BE DIRECTOR, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ms. SKIPWITH. Thank you very much, Chairman. It is an honor to be here today, and I am so excited that my family is here, so I will quickly do an introduction.

I have my Aunt Sally, who came from Columbus, Mississippi. Next to her is my mom, Lily Skipwith.

Senator CARPER. Could I ask, just raise your hand as you are introduced, please.

Ms. SKIPWITH. My sister, Angel Waray, from St. Louis, Missouri. My Aunt Kathy from Sugarland, Texas. My Aunt Vonda Kay from Sugarland. Ms. Altamese Thompson from Indianapolis, and then I

have my Aunt Brenda and Uncle Eugene from Columbus, Mississippi. And then in the back, I have my fiancé, Leo Giacometto.

Senator CARPER. Would your mother raise her hand again, your mom?

Senator BARRASSO. Mom's in the right, there.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. I said earlier when we were talking to the nominee's family, I said I will be watching your mother to see if her lips move when her daughter speaks.

[Laughter.]

Senator BARRASSO. Please proceed with your testimony.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and members of the Committee, it is an honor to be here today as President Trump's nominee to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I am deeply appreciative of Secretary Bernhardt's confidence in me. Today, I am requesting your support for my nomination.

I want to acknowledge my mother. She has always been my cheerleader. My fiancé, my sister, my aunts and uncle, and the dear friends that have come here today to show their support. I want to thank Congressman Lacy Clay, who was my Congressman for many years, for that introduction. It means a lot to me, because I still call Missouri home, and I still have properties there today.

My mother picked cotton on her way to college to become one of the first black women to graduate from The W in Columbus, Mississippi. Today, she continues to work as a public school teacher in Indianapolis. And my father, who right out of high school, during the Vietnam war, joined the Navy and retired as an Army Master Sergeant with 34 years of service.

My respect for the outdoors and wildlife began at an early age. My summers were spent in Mississippi where I helped my grandpa on the hog farm, in his garden, and with the hunting dogs. I began my college in Kentucky at Morehead State, where I studied animal science. But it was my time at Howard University that exposed me to biological research, and that spurred my intrigue to discover and test new technologies, to challenge the status quo, and to bring forth new, innovative technologies to better our world. That desire continued as I earned my master's degree in Molecular Biology and Genetics from Purdue University.

In the private sector, I led teams to develop new crops to improve productivity for farmers, environmentalists, and consumers around the world. I love biology and science, and I learned a lot from being in the lab and being in the field. However, I grew to recognize that one may have the best intentions and the best available science, but without fair and balanced regulations and laws, one's future can be stifled. I saw those stifling effects first hand when managing a project to develop new corn to address the drought in Africa. I knew what I needed to do. I went to the University of Kentucky to pursue my law degree.

After graduating, I was the legal advisor for an all natural animal nutrition company, responsible for the research, development, and the approval of their first all natural pesticide. I understand the necessary balance of natural resources among various user groups and that conservation is at the core of it all. That is what led me here today.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, I have had the pleasure to work with the Service's finest professionals. That, with my past, has prepared me well to lead the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I view the 567 refuges within the Service as our Nation's crown jewels. They are stopovers in flyway zones, home to endangered species, and they are places where people can hunt, fish, and recreate.

The Service and I are committed to align the Endangered Species Act with the letter of the law, providing transparency and consistency in actions from the public and from our Federal partners. More than 60 percent of the lands in the United States are privately owned, both inland and coastal. It is a priority of mine to work with the private landowners and States, so that lands stay productive for all the species and for the people that own them. By bridging the gap with workable solutions, as well as leveraging the expertise of others, we can accomplish so much more.

This is truly an exciting time to lead the path forward. I will continue to have my open door policy, to hear all sides in order to make an informed decision. That decision will be based on the best available science, within the realm of the law, all intertwined with common sense.

My mom taught me that it didn't matter where you started from, but it mattered where you were headed. She made sure that my education was a big part of that, and instilled in me to go further after what I believed was right. And my father taught me about service to our country and implanted structure and accountability. With these teachings at the forefront of my mind, I sit here today, a product of the American dream.

I truly feel honored and humbled by this experience. And the same time, it is motivating for me to seek the responsibility and tradition of excellence that this role, as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, demands. I am committed to give my all.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Skipwith follows:]

Aurelia Skipwith
Deputy Assistant Secretary
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

In April 2017, Aurelia Skipwith was appointed to the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks in the Department of the Interior. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks is responsible for ensuring the protection and stewardship of lands and waters within the national park and wildlife refuge systems.

Skipwith has worked to increase access to public lands and conservation of our wildlife species and preservation of natural resources for both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. National Park Service.

The FWS is dedicated to the management of fish, wildlife and natural habitats. Its mission is "working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people." The FWS employs about 8,000 employees and manages over 855 million acres of land and water. The NPS is charged with preserving the ecological and historical integrity of the places entrusted to its management, while also making them available and accessible for public use and enjoyment. The NPS employs over 20,000 employees, who protect and preserve 417 units encompassing over 85 million acres.

Ms. Skipwith graduated from the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities in Muncie, Indiana. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Howard University and a Master's Degree in Molecular Genetics from Purdue University. In 2015, she obtained her law degree from the University of Kentucky College of Law and is licensed to practice in Kentucky and Washington, D.C.

Prior to joining the Department of the Interior, from June 2014 to April 2017, Ms. Skipwith served as Co-Founder and General Counsel of AVC Global, an agriculture value chain company. AVC Global unites farmers in developing countries with agriculture extension services, financing and multinational buyers. From August 2015 to August 2016, she served as Assistant Corporate Counsel at Alltech, Inc., an international animal feed and agriculture corporation in Nicholasville, Kentucky. She was the legal contact for Alltech's Crop Science Division, which focused on soil and crop health.

During the 2013 and 2014 summer sessions of law school, Ms. Skipwith gained experience in policy development by working in two federal agencies focused on agricultural and economic development for US producers. From June 2014 to October 2014, she was a consultant to the US Agency for International Development providing support on issues of ownership rights in intellectual property and biosafety regulations. From May 2013 to August 2013, at the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), she reviewed cooperative and license agreements enabling the private sector to advance

USDA technology prototypes. She also supported in projects on compliance procedures for genetically-engineered U.S. commodity crops intended for international trade markets.

In June 2006, Ms. Skipwith started as a lab technician at Monsanto Company, St. Louis, MO. She progressed to the position of Study Director and managed a team of scientists, who were responsible for bringing new agricultural products to commercial markets. In 2011, she was promoted to the Corporate Affairs Department, where she managed international development projects in Africa, as well as a $13 million Ph.D. scholarship program focused on rice and wheat breeding.

Ms. Skipwith is an avid runner. She is from Indianapolis, Indiana and her family hails from Columbus, Mississippi.

STATEMENT OF AURELIA SKIPWITH
NOMINEE FOR
DIRECTOR,
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and members of the Committee. It is an honor to be here today as President Trump's nominee to be the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I am deeply appreciative of Secretary Bernhardt's confidence in me. Today, I am requesting your support for my nomination.

I want to acknowledge Mrs. Lillie Bell Skipwith, my mother, who has always been my cheerleader; Leo Giacometto, my fiancé, who has managed to survive all of my endeavors; and my sister, my aunts and uncles and dear friends who have come here today to show their support.

I also want to thank Congressman Lacy Clay, who was my representative in Congress for many years, for his introduction; it means a lot to me because I still call Missouri my home and I still have ties there today.

My mother picked cotton on her way to becoming one of the first Black women to graduate from THE W in Columbus, Mississippi. Today, she continues to work as a public-school teacher in Indianapolis. And my father joined the Navy right out of high school, during the Vietnam War, and retired as an Army Master Sargent with 34 years of service.

My respect for the outdoors and wildlife began at an early age. My summers were spent in Mississippi where I helped my grandpa on the hog farm, in his garden, and with the hound dogs. I studied animal science at Morehead State University, and biology and research at Howard University, which spurred my intrigue in discovering and testing new theories, to challenge the status quo and to bring forth new innovative technologies to better our world. After receiving my degree from Howard University, this interest continued as I pursued and obtained my Masters of Science degree in Molecular Biology and Genetics in Animal Sciences from Purdue University in Indiana.

With this knowledge, I led teams to develop new crops to improve productivity for farmers that benefited the natural environment and consumers around the world. I love biology and science, and I learned a lot from being in the lab and being in the field.

Through this experience, I grew to recognize that one may have the best intentions and the best available science, but without fair and balanced regulations and laws, one's future can still be stifled. I saw those stifling effects first hand when managing a team to adapt a new corn to address the drought in Africa. I knew what I needed to do. I enrolled at the University of Kentucky to pursue my law degree.

After graduating law school, I was the legal advisor for an all-natural animal nutrition company, responsible for research, development, and the approval for their first all-natural pesticide.

I understand the necessary balance of natural resources among the different user groups and conservation is at the core of it all. That is what has led me here today.

For over two years, I have served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Fish Wildlife and Parks and I have had the pleasure to work with the Service's professionals, an experience that, coupled with my scientific and legal background, has prepared me well to lead the Fish and Wildlife Service.

I view the 567 refuges within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as our Nation's crown jewels. These jewels are stopovers in flyway zones, they are home to endangered species, they are places where people can hunt, fish, and recreate. They are truly living classrooms.

The Service and I are committed to align regulations and policies with laws that govern the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, providing transparency and consistency in actions from for the public and our federal partners.

More than 70 percent of lands in the United States, both coastal and inland, are privately owned. If confirmed, it will be a priority of mine to work closely with private landowners, states, tribes and federal partners so that our decisions as stewards of public resources are mutually beneficial to trust species, the land owners and the American public. By connecting people with the natural environment and leveraging expertise and innovation through partnerships, we can accomplish so much more.

This is truly an exciting time to be nominated to lead the dedicated career professionals of the Fish and Wildlife Service forward in pursuit of common sense solutions to 21st century conservation challenges. I will continue to have my open-door policy, to hear all sides in order to make an informed decision; that decision will be based on the best available science, within the realm of the law, and all intertwined with common sense. Above all, I will continue to take the public trust very seriously and believe trust and accountability are essential for success. In that spirit, I am committed to leading the agency with the highest ethical standards and to ensuring that professional ethics are maintained throughout the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

My mom taught me that it did not matter where you started from, but where you were headed. She made sure my education was a big part of that and instilled in me the drive to go after what I believed was right. My father taught me the importance of service to our country and instilled an ethic of personal discipline and accountability.

With these teachings in the forefront of my mind, I am honored and humbled to appear before you today, a product of the American Dream. I am motivated and inspired to take on this leadership responsibility and to continuing the tradition of excellence of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I am committed to give my all.

Thank you.

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Confirmation Hearing for Aurelia Skipwith
September 11, 2019

Question from Chairman Barrasso:

1. Under the leadership of this committee, the reauthorization of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program was enacted into law in March. That voluntary program encourages the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and private landowners to work together on habitat conservation and restoration projects.

   In your opinion, how important are proactive, voluntary conservation efforts by landowners and private entities when it comes to protecting wildlife and their habitats?

   Response: I agree that proactive, voluntary conservation efforts by landowners and private entities are critical to protect wildlife and their habitats. If confirmed I look forward to working closely with you to strengthen these efforts.

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Questions from Ranking Member Carper:

2. On August 29, 2019, I sent you a letter asking for information and documentation regarding your previous employment, steps you have taken to manage potential conflicts of interest, and appointments or meetings you have taken with individuals or groups beyond those within government agencies. The response I received from you on September 10, 2019 is incomplete and inadequate. It entirely fails to address one of my requests, and much of the information you do provide either fails to sufficiently or specifically answer my questions or contradicts information you have submitted in your financial disclosures during your two and a half years at the Department of Interior.

    a. In my letter to you, I requested: "Copies of all your calendar entries since you joined the Department in April 2017 that included meeting, communicating, or coordinating with non-governmental parties. In responding to this request, please explain the topic of each appointment, a list of all participants involved (and affiliations thereof), along with an explanation of any agreements or action items that came out of the appointments." Your answer provides no records in response to my request nor does it even acknowledge the request. Please provide those records as part of your response to these questions.

Response: I appreciate your questions and have made a good faith effort to respond to them. I will attempt to further clarify here the information I previously provided to you regarding my former employment. My letter did not address your request for government records because I am not in control of those records. Similarly I am not able to provide government records in response to this question. I am informed that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee may seek any available responsive departmental records from the Department's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs through the established oversight process. The Department also makes public records available through the Freedom of Information Act and has released and made publicly available calendar documents related to my official activities in response to Freedom of Information Act requests at: https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/aurelia_skipwiths_calendars_april_18_thru_june_6th_-_17-00687ca_redacted.pdf

    b. With respect to your association with AVC Global, I asked you to provide a detailed explanation of AVC's business. In plain English, please more clearly explain how AVC Global conducts or proposes to conduct its business. Please give an example of one of AVC's customers or potential customers, tell us the specific type of commerce that the customer engages in, how AVC's goods or services affects or would affect that customer's business operations, and how that business transacts or would transact with AVC Global to provide AVC Global revenue.

Response: As I indicated in my letter to you, prior to joining the Department, I stopped all work at AVC Global Corporation (AVC Global). When I left, AVC Global had still not received sufficient investment funding to operate. At that point AVC Global was in a concept and development stage and did not have any customers or revenue.

From its inception to March 2017, I can say that AVC Global focused on working with non-profit organizations that specialized in microfinancing, agriculture supply chain, and smallholder (underprivileged) farmers in India and Africa. While aiming to provide transparency in the agricultural food supply chain from farm to market, AVC Global's goal was to develop a technology platform that enabled smallholder farmers in India and African countries and their co-operatives to access agricultural inputs, such as financing and agriculture extension services and identified export buyers and connected them with the smallholder farmers. It was envisioned as a liaison to move crops and fruits from these farms, especially in remote areas, to buyers or multinational markets without involving the many intermediary brokers; thereby, increasing revenue for the farmers and transparency for the buyer of the source of the food. As I stated previously, I am not now involved in AVC Global.

c. With respect to your financial interest in AVC Global, how did you come to understand that you "would potentially receive stock options for [your...] role at the company"? If you never had any ownership interest in the company, what precisely did you mean when you stated on the employment record that you provided to this committee that you were a co-founder of the company?

Response: I and other individuals came up with the concept for AVC Global. As a typical start-up with no money, the concept of the company was presented to investors in order to obtain funding to build the product, which was a technology platform. It is common for many startup companies to take years to acquire enough funding to build and operate. The co-founders were allocated a percentage of the company based on their involvement; it was verbally agreed that I would receive 1% equity in AVC Global. The co-founders agreed to receive rights to stock options in lieu of shares for their equity in the company.

d. You state in your letter, "In March 2017, I stepped away from my role and relinquished any rights to stock or stock options in the company." This statement contradicts the financial disclosure (OGE Form 278e) that you signed on May 19, 2017, in which you list AVC stock options as a current asset. Which statement is accurate, and what is your explanation for the apparent discrepancy?

Response: As I stated in my response to you, while I understood that I would potentially receive stock options for my role at the company, I was never issued any stock or stock options. Out of an abundance of caution I opted to over-report and listed the value of that 1% assumed ownership on my form based on the company representation for the average value for similar companies. When I relinquished the rights to stock or stock options in the company, it was my understanding that relinquishing these rights did not meet the definition of a reportable transaction for my financial disclosure reporting obligations, so I did not list this event as a transaction on subsequent reports.

e. In your role at Gage International, what specific work did you do? Please provide examples of projects that you worked on, explain your contribution to those projects, and list which clients you served during your time as Of Counsel and Senior Advisor between May 2013 and April 2017.

Response: My role as an unpaid advisor consisted of reviewing and editing standard boilerplate contracts and assisting with editing business plans for legal compliance. I worked on two projects:

- **United Needs Corporation, where my work included reviewing Articles of Incorporation and by-laws, and help in editing business plans;**
- **AVC Global Corporation, discussed above, where my work included reviewing Articles of Incorporation and by-laws, and help in editing business plans.**

3. Yes or No: Do you commit to this Committee that, if confirmed, you will not directly or indirectly interfere with or undermine climate science?

Response: As a scientist I have the greatest respect for the work the Department's scientists carry out. There is no question that scientific integrity, transparency, and independence should underpin agency actions and, if confirmed, I will work to ensure that.

4. As Director of the FWS, what will you do to make our Refuges more resilient to climate change? What will you do to help mitigate the effects of climate change on our nation's fish and wildlife?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the FWS is using the best available science to maintain healthy ecosystems to support the fish, wildlife, and other species that depend on these areas. I am committed to building

and maintaining partnerships to address the challenges facing our national refuges.

5. On September 1, 2019, President Trump made the false claim that Hurricane Dorian would hit the state of Alabama "harder than anticipated." The National Weather Service's Birmingham office quickly corrected the President, tweeting that the state would not see any impacts. In the days following this tweet, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Weather Service's parent agency, issued several agency-wide directives warning agency staff not to contradict or speak out against President Trump. In fact, reports claim that the Secretary of Commerce threatened to fire agency staff if NOAA's acting administrator did not address the agency's perceived slight to the President. These incidents are extremely troubling, yet hardly unusual in this Administration. In many agencies, including the Department of the Interior, this Administration has repeatedly worked to undermine and silence nonpartisan science, which is critical to protecting our health, economy, and environment. Like NOAA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is a science-driven agency. Can you please respond to the following questions with 'Yes' or 'No'? If 'no', why not? As Director of the FWS, would you ever tell career scientists that they should not share scientific information with the public? Would you ever tell career scientists not to contradict the President or other political appointees when they have their scientific facts wrong?

   Response: I believe that scientific integrity, transparency, and independence should underpin agency actions. I have the greatest respect for the work that Department scientists carry out. Like Secretary Bernhardt, it is my view that agency decisions should follow the law and be predicated on the best information, including the best available science.

6. In recognition of the foundational role that strong science plays in managing and protecting our country's fish, wildlife, and natural resources, the last Director of the FWS supported an initiative to reintegrate a science division back into the FWS through the establishment of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). He also committed the Service's support for the U.S. Geological Survey's Climate Adaptation Science Centers. As Director of the FWS, would you continue to support these programs and expand the Service's scientific capacity? Why or why not?

   Response: I have the greatest respect for the work that Department scientists carry out, and I believe that scientific integrity, transparency, and independence should underpin agency actions. Regarding these specific initiatives, I will work with the FWS and the Department to better understand what these two programs entail.

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7. Last month, the Department of the Interior announced final Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulations, which opponents believe would make it more difficult for the FWS to consider the expected longer-term effects of climate change when deciding whether to list species as threatened under the Act. Do you agree with this criticism, and do you believe that the effects of climate change should, in fact, be considered? Do you believe that the polar bear, which is protected under the ESA largely due to the long-term impacts of climate change, would have been designated as threatened if these new rules had been in effect?

   Response: The revision to portions of the ESA implementing regulations is to clarify the meaning of certain ambiguous terms that are in the ESA itself but not defined in the Act. The effects of a changing climate, invasive species, and habitat loss are just a few of the many stressors that the FWS must evaluate and manage using the best available science when protecting valuable resources. These rules seek to improve implementation of the ESA through consistency, reliability, and clarity.

8. One of the ESA regulations finalized last month changed the way threatened species managed by the FWS would receive "take" protections. Before this new regulation, threatened species would automatically receive the same protection as endangered species until the Service wrote a special rule, known as a "4(d) rule," to customize protections. Under the new regulation, threatened species receive zero protections until the Service writes a 4(d) rule. Opponents of this regulation believe that the Trump Administration will simply decline to write 4(d) rules, minimizing protections for our nation's imperiled species. Would you assure the Committee that the FWS, under your leadership, would write 4(d) rules for all threatened species? If not, please explain why not.

   Response: This aligns the Service's rules to the approach that the National Marine Fisheries Service has long implemented. Under this approach, FWS will craft species-specific 4(d) rules for each future threatened species determination as it is deemed necessary and advisable for the conservation of the species. It will ensure that newly listed threatened species receive appropriate protections tailored to their needs. The Service intends to finalize species specific 4(d) rules with every final threatened listing.

9. As you know, strong mitigation requirements are an essential tool as we seek to prevent species from requiring protections under the ESA, as seen with recent efforts to conserve sage-grouse. However, this Administration has been hostile towards the idea of compensatory habitat mitigation. Do you support the Department of the Interior requiring compensatory habitat mitigation? If so, what do you believe are the next steps the Department should take regarding a compensatory habitat mitigation policy? If not, why not?

Response: While I cannot speak for the Department or other bureaus, when done correctly, such actions can have positive benefits for both species and landowners. If confirmed, I would work with the appropriate senior staff at the Department on next steps.

10. In 2015, Governors across the American West, working with state and local elected officials, sportsmen, farmers and ranchers, conservationists and the oil and gas industry worked together to find a solution to keep the sage-grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem healthy and robust. The conservation plans that came out of that collaborative process were the result of a years-long effort that had an ultimate goal of protecting the bird's critical habitat and making an ESA listing unnecessary. Nevertheless, the Department has spent the last two years working to change those collaborative conservation plans and sowed confusion and uncertainty in the process. Many of these changes, which were announced on March 15, will set back effective multiple-use management of the sagebrush landscapes, prioritize oil and gas development in areas previously designated as vital for sage-grouse, and put the species on the path towards an ESA listing – exactly the outcome that the 2015 cooperative plans had sought to avoid. Leading sage-grouse scientists have criticized many of these changes, arguing they "could result in the ineffective management of the landscapes required to conserve sage-grouse populations." What peer-reviewed scientific analysis did the Department rely upon when deciding to reopen the 2015 conservation plans? Would you explain how the changes the Department of Interior made in these plans will help ensure that the sage-grouse remains not warranted for listing under the ESA?

    Response: I understand that the range-specific modifications were developed in collaboration with governors and state wildlife agency professionals in the seven affected states, as well as with other stakeholders, with the goal of better aligning the Bureau of Land Management's plans with state management plans for the species.

11. According to a recent report, the seven states with the most sage-grouse habitat on federal land documented a major increase in both leasing and drilling sage-grouse habitat in just the first two years of this Administration despite commitments in the plans to prioritize leasing and drilling outside of habitat. Habitat leased per month was three times higher, and ten times higher for designated priority habitat; the Administration also approved twice as many drilling permits per month in habitat and seven times more in priority habitat. While the amendments removed this standard for some states, other plans, such as Colorado's, have retained this requirement. Ongoing lease sales continue to propose hundreds of thousands of acres in sage-grouse habitat. Would you explain how this is consistent with the prioritization commitments?

    Response: I understand that the range-specific modifications were developed in collaboration with governors and state wildlife agency professionals in the

seven affected states, as well as with other stakeholders, with the goal of better aligning BLM's plans with state management plans for the species. The Service will continue to assist as BLM and state fish and wildlife agencies assess the status of the sage-grouse, while maintaining a goal of a working landscape for wildlife and people.

12. Are you aware of the FWS initiative called "Conservation without Conflict?" This initiative is intended to prevent new species from requiring protections under the ESA, while keeping working lands working. Landowners and conservation organizations, as well as members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, have hailed this initiative as a great success. Do you support Conservation without Conflict, and as Director of the FWS, will you help grow this initiative?

    Response: Yes, I support working with partners on initiatives such as this, which advance conservation through cooperative and voluntary efforts.

13. In January 2018, 17 former senior Department of Interior officials, from every Republican and Democratic administration since President Nixon, wrote a letter to Secretary Zinke opposing the Administration's new M-Opinion regarding incidental take under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Subsequently, the Central Flyway, Mississippi Flyway and Atlantic Flyway Councils wrote letters expressing serious concerns and requesting that the M-Opinion be suspended. Finally, I sent a letter to Secretary Zinke in April 2018, signed by all Democratic members of this Committee, opposing the M-Opinion and requesting an opportunity to meet and discuss a better path forward. To my knowledge, the Department has not responded to any of these letters and instead intends to issue a regulation to codify this misguided M-Opinion. Would you explain why the Department ignored these bipartisan concerns and requests and instead plans to double down? If confirmed, would you re-explore this issue?

    Response: As discussed at the hearing, the M-Opinion was developed by the Department's Solicitor after extensive legal research of prior case law and the opinion is consistent with the purpose of the MBTA. The M-Opinion clarified that the MBTA does not prohibit incidental take and there are other laws that may apply in those instances. I also understand a response to your letter was sent by the Department's Congressional and Legislative Affairs Office in July 2018.

14. Science shows that our nation is facing a global wildlife crisis that will require significant international coordination and cooperation. Yet, the Department of the Interior issued the most significant rollback in history of our international treaty commitments for protecting migratory birds – a legal opinion that would prevent the FWS from interpreting the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to include "incidental take." I understand you were involved in this effort. How much scientific analysis was undertaken to study the impacts to migratory birds that may result from

rolling back the Migratory Bird Treaty Act? Did the Department consult with scientific experts before issuing the M-Opinion? If so, which ones, and if not, why not? Did experts, inside or outside of the Department, raise objections over this abrupt change in policy, and if so, what were they and why has the Department doubled down on its position?

Response: The Department's Solicitor looked at the law and developed the M-Opinion that clarified that the MBTA does not prohibit incidental take and that there are other laws that may apply in those instances. This legal opinion is to be based on the law, and not on outside influences.

15. A 2011 FWS report[1] estimates that 46.7 million Americans watch birds and generate a total industry output of $107 billion that employs over 650,000 people – not to mention billions more dollars in benefits to agriculture. Has the Department studied the potential impacts of this policy on the economic benefits that birds provide? If so, please provide that analysis. If not, why not? Do you believe the net result of the M-Opinion will be beneficial to the country's bird populations, or is it reasonable to think it's likely to diminish conservation efforts for migratory birds? How does the M-Opinion help carry out the purpose of the MBTA and the mission of the FWS?

    Response: It is not anticipated that implementation of the M-Opinion will cause significant changes in population trends. The large majority of incidental take of migratory birds is caused by cats, and collisions with buildings and vehicular traffic, none of which are affected by implementation of the M-Opinion.

16. People travel from around the world to view birds and other wildlife at Delaware's two national wildlife refuges – Bombay Hook and Prime Hook. These special refuges employ less than a dozen people, and the staff works hard to maintain the refuges and make sure they remain accessible to the public. Among other important positions, our refuges have a visitor services coordinator and a law enforcement official. As the Trump Administration continues Department of the Interior reorganization efforts, would you commit to me that refuge complexes like Delaware's will not lose critical staff as a result? How have you worked with refuge managers and project leaders to make sure their staffing needs are met, and how will you continue to do so as Director of the FWS?

    Response: We have talked about the important place that the National Wildlife Refuge System plays for conservation, sportsmen, and the public. If confirmed as Director, I will work with senior leaders in the FWS to ensure

[1] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis. Addendum to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* (2011).

the care and best management of these crown jewels of our public lands. It will be one of my highest priorities.

17. There is huge bipartisan opposition to expanded offshore drilling off of the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Coastal refuges, such as Prime Hook and Bombay Hook in Delaware, are home to threatened and endangered species that the FWS is charged with protecting. Given the potential impact of drilling to our nation's Refuge System and species that the FWS is charged with protecting, how will you ensure the risks to refuges and wildlife are protected when this Administration returns to pushing for expanded offshore drilling?

    Response: Resource development on the outer continental shelf does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Director of the FWS. However, Secretary Bernhardt has made it clear that development of our important energy resources must be carried out responsibly. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the FWS is effectively coordinating with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

18. On October 19, 2018, Secretary Zinke issued Secretarial Order (SO) 3370 to improve conservation stewardship of and increase public access to Urban National Wildlife Refuges. In the SO, Secretary Zinke directed Urban National Wildlife Refuges to cultivate partnerships with target communities, address barriers to public access and recreation on refuges, and work with States and other partners to expand recreational and educational opportunities for non-traditional communities. If you are confirmed as Director of the FWS, how specifically do you plan to continue implementing this SO? Can you please describe other ways that you would enhance educational and recreational opportunities throughout the Refuge System for non-traditional or underserved communities?

    Response: I was one of the main authors for that Secretarial Order and, as I stated at my confirmation hearing, I believe that engaging with nontraditional audiences is vitally import to ensuring that conservation stewardship lasts beyond this generation.

    If confirmed as Director, I will vigorously implement the goals of that Secretarial Order. I will work with the leaders of the FWS's National Wildlife Refuge System and other programs to identify ways to expand our outreach and value to local urban communities. Consistent with the Secretarial Order and the FWS's mission, I will direct the FWS to continue to work with states and others to introduce nontraditional audiences to hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities conducted at local refuges or in neighboring communities. Through such partnerships efforts, I intend for the FWS to deliver more relevant programs both onsite and at accessible locations within the local communities.

I will also work to expand the relationship that the FWS has with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to offer greater opportunities through urban national wildlife refuges to build the next generation of conservation leadership that is more reflective of our changing demographic in the United States.

19. Will you commit to work with this Committee to ensure that rules governing the Duck Stamp program are designed to encourage the broadest possible participation in the program, and that any changes to such program are designed to lead increased sales of the Duck Stamp?

    Response: Yes.

20. At your nomination hearing, I asked you which conservation-focused scientist has been most influential in your career and to explain how his or her work has shaped your approach to fisheries and wildlife management. You mentioned Rob Frazier and explained how you appreciated his ability to balance the environment with the need for crop productivity for people. I am unfamiliar with Rob Frazier's work; would you please elaborate on his background, career, and contributions to fish and wildlife conservation? As Director of the FWS, how would his advancements in conservation-focused science influence your ability to protect and recover our nation's fish and wildlife species, which are more vulnerable than ever due to the threats of climate change, habitat loss, and invasive species?

    Response: While I mispronounced his name at the hearing, the scientist who was most influential to me in my career was former Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer of Monsanto, Dr. Robert Fraley. Dr. Fraley is well known in the conservation arena for developing and promoting the use of innovative technologies from genetics to engineering and taking these technologies from theory to application in the field.

    President Clinton awarded Dr. Fraley the National Medal of Technology in 1999. In 2013, he was awarded the Food Prize for "breakthrough achievements in founding, developing, and applying modern agricultural biotechnology" and, also in 2013, the National Academy of Science Award for the Industrial Application of Science.

    Under his approach, the application of new technologies has resulted in a reduced environmental footprint of agriculture production, making more land and water available for species and their habitat. The advancements led by Dr. Fraley completely changed the approach and idea of conservation in America. With the majority of the land in the United States in private ownership, he formed, in my mind, the foundation that collaboratively working with landowners and organizations, is imperative to ensure protection of our Nation's biodiversity and natural resources and that

decisions are based on sound science. I've learned that mandating activities may solve some problems, but willing and voluntary actions allow success to occur much quicker and to be sustainable. As stated by Assistant Secretary Rob Wallace "bipartisan solutions are the lasting ones" - the lasting change is the one that happen through partnerships.

21. Since your appointment as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks in April 2017, you have delivered a number of speeches in your official capacity. In the completed questionnaire that you submitted to the Committee in consideration of your nomination, you listed 18 events in which you delivered remarks. Please provide the Committee written copies of your prepared remarks along with any other supplemental materials that were presented for each of these events. These events are as follows:

    a. Prevention of Aquatic Invasive Species in Columbia River Basin; Montana, June 28, 2017
    b. DOI position on Wild Horses and Burros; Salt Lake City, UT; August 23, 2017
    c. DOI position on Wild Horses and Burros; Flagstaff, AZ; September 22, 2017
    d. DOI priorities and ESA; Independent Petroleum Association of America; Washington, DC; October 17, 2017
    e. DOI and Fish and Wildlife Service role in protecting the bison; 5th Annual National Bison Day Celebration
    Wildlife Conservation Society; Washington, DC; November 2, 2017
    f. DOI priorities, Compensatory Mitigation, and ESA; Environmental Law and Policy Council; Washington, DC; November 29, 2017
    g. DOI priorities and Fish and Wildlife Service Activities and Economics specific to South Dakota; South Dakota; Chamber of Commerce; Pierre, SD; February 22, 2018
    h. DOI priorities, ESA, MBTA, cormorants and black vultures; American Sheep Industry Association – Spring 2018 Legislative Day; Washington, DC; March 6, 2018
    i. Presentation of Dingell-Johnson I Pittman-Robertson Grants to Ohio DNR; Cortland, OH; March 19, 2018
    j. DOI priorities, ESA, and Migratory Birds; Public Lands Council Legislative Day; Washington, DC; April 10, 2018
    k. DOI priorities and importance of public-private partnership; Southern Company's 15th Annual Stewardship Meeting; Biloxi, MS; May 16, 2018
    l. DOI priorities, ESA, MBTA and impact to construction industry; The Associated General Contractors of America - 2018 Construction Environmental Conference; September 12, 2018
    m. DOI priorities, ESA, MBTA, mitigation policy and impact to public land users; Public Lands Council Annual Meeting; Park City, UT; September 27, 2018

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n. Urban National Wildlife Refuge Day; John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Philadelphia, PA, September 29,2018
o. DOI priorities, ESA, MBTA, wolves and impact to public lands; Public Lands Council Legislative Day; Washington, DC; April 1, 2019
p. Provide US Country Report at US/Canada/Mexico Trilateral Meeting for Wildlife an Ecosystem Conservation and Management; Victoria, British Columbia, Canada; April 11, 2019
q. DOI priorities, ESA, MBTA, wolves, bears and impact to public land users; Treasure State Resource Association Annual Meeting; Missoula, MT; June 19, 2019
r. Presentation of Military Conservation Partnership Steward Award to Fort McCoy; Fort McCoy, Wisconsin; July 11, 2019

Response: A majority of the speaking engagements I have participated in as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks in the past two years were public events and have been recorded or posted to various social media platforms.

22. As you know, American Indians and Alaska Natives share a unique relationship with the federal government. As part of that relationship, the federal government has a duty to perform meaningful consultation with Indian Tribes and Alaska Native villages regarding issues that affect tribal communities and tribal members. Do you commit to engaging in essential and honest consultation with tribes and tribal governments?

    Response: Yes, if confirmed I will work closely with the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs to maintain strong and productive government-to-government relationships with tribes and tribal governments.

23. Do you agree to provide complete, accurate, and timely responses to requests for information submitted to you by any Member of the Environment and Public Works Committee? If not, why not?

    Response: If confirmed, I commit to working with you and the Committee to respond to requests for information consistent with the Department's constitutional and statutory responsibilities.

24. Will you commit to providing me with materials responsive to my oversight letters at the same time or earlier than they are provided to House Committee Chairs or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requesters? If not, please explain why not.

    Response: If confirmed, I commit to working with you and the Committee to respond to requests for information, in as timely a manner as possible,

consistent with the Department's constitutional and statutory responsibilities.

25. For decades, both Republican and Democratic administrations alike have had written policies limiting White House contacts with agencies that have investigatory and enforcement responsibilities. These policies have recognized that even a simple phone call from the White House to an agency inquiring about or flagging a specific matter can upset the evenhanded application of the law. Do you agree that it is essential that in making decisions, the FWS must be shielded from political influence and spared even the appearance of being subject to political influence or considerations?

    Response: As I stated in my hearing, I take ethics seriously and will continue to do so. If confirmed, you have my full commitment that I will make every effort to ensure my actions and decisions as a leader within FWS are in compliance with my professional ethics obligations and promote a culture of compliance with the highest ethical standards.

26. Will you commit to notifying this Committee within one week if any inappropriate communications from White House staff to FWS staff, including you, occur?

    Response: If confirmed, I commit to protecting the rights of the employees that I will be managing and to following the law.

27. Whistleblower laws protect the right of federal employees to make lawful disclosures to agency management officials, the Inspector General, and the Office of Special Counsel. They also have the right to make disclosures to Congress. Specifically, 5 U.S.C. § 7211 states that the "right of employees, individually or collectively, to petition Congress or a Member of Congress or to furnish information to either House of Congress, or to a committee or Member thereof, may not be interfered with or denied." Further, 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(8), makes it a violation of federal law to retaliate against whistleblower because of "(A) any disclosure of information by an employee or applicant which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences- (i) a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or (ii) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, any disclosure to the Special Counsel, or to the Inspector General of an agency or another employee designated by the head of the agency to receive such disclosures, of information which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences a violation of any law, rule, or regulation ... " In addition, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1505, it is against federal law to interfere with a Congressional inquiry. If you are confirmed, will you commit to protect the rights of all FWS career employees to make lawful disclosures, including their right to speak with

Congress? Will you commit to communicate employees' whistleblower right via email to all FWS employees within one week of being sworn in?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to protecting the rights of the employees that I will be managing and to following the law.

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Senator Booker:

28. It has come to my attention that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) authorized a kill order for one or more Mexican wolves as a result of livestock depredations. I also understand that nonlethal measures such as turbo fladry, livestock grazing rotations, exclusionary fencing, livestock guardian dogs, and radio telemetry equipment were not attempted prior to this order.

    a. If confirmed, will you commit that under your leadership FWS will always utilize all potentially viable nonlethal management techniques prior to issuing any such kill order?

    Response: The FWS is working with partners and stakeholders on Mexican gray wolf recovery. I am not aware of this authorization. If confirmed, I commit to working with the appropriate staff in FWS and other federal agencies to find workable management strategies to address conflicts such as this.

29. The FWS and National Park Service have been working for years on a proposal to restore the grizzly bear population in the North Cascades. The restoration plan received significant support from the public in the comment period and Secretary Zinke supported the plan moving forward. Yet we are still waiting on the next phase of the planning process and the comment period for environmental review has been reopened.

    a. Do you support the plan to restore grizzlies to the North Cascades?
    b. Why was the comment period reopened?
    c. If confirmed, can you commit to ensuring that the planning process moves forward expeditiously?

    Response: Like Secretary Bernhardt, I believe that the public benefits from grizzly bear conservation, but that efforts to introduce bears must fully address the impacts to people and communities from such efforts. In accordance with the Congressional Report language, the National Park Service and FWS reopened the comment period to allow additional opportunity for public input. A public meeting is to be held in October.

30. The FWS has a number of large-scale, complicated ESA reviews underway including the greater sage-grouse, the Lesser Prairie Chicken, and a large, multi-species listing proposal and timeline for species in the Southeastern United States. If confirmed, you would have a leading role in the decision-making and next steps for multiple species reviews and determining whether species should be listed under the ESA.

a. Please describe in detail your experience with the ESA throughout your career.
b. If confirmed, how would you make decisions regarding whether a species should be listed as threatened or endangered?

Response: Though a trained scientist and lawyer by education and experience, while at the Department I have worked in a senior role as deputy assistant secretary and have spent a great deal of time on the ground and in the field. I have gained valuable experience and understanding directly from resource managers of how the FWS works and how it uses the many tools it has. Regarding decision-making under the ESA, the statute is clear that listing determinations must be made solely on the best available science. If confirmed, I will ensure that FWS will continue to follow the law and the science.

31. While the Lesser Prairie Chicken is currently not listed under the ESA, a large-scale, multi-state range-wide conservation plan for the species is currently within an audit status by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

a. What is your position on this audit?
b. As the range-wide conservation plan was one of the factors the FWS used in making a decision not to list the Lesser Prairie Chicken, if confirmed, how would you handle concerns related to mismanagement of this plan?

Response: It is important to recognize that the FWS cannot save species without the help of our partners. I am aware of and applaud the commitments from states, private landowners, industry, and other partners to conserve the lesser prairie-chicken for future generations. If confirmed as Director, I will ensure that the conservation efforts of stakeholders in the range of the lesser prairie chicken are fully considered.

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Senator Cardin:

32. The most recent Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service put in place an order to phase in steel shot and other nontoxic ammunition and fishing tackle on National Wildlife Refuges and other lands managed by the Service. Although the science is clear that lead is a neurotoxin that causes significant harm to people and wildlife, former Interior Secretary Zinke rescinded that order.

    a. Do you agree with that decision?
    b. If so, why?
    c. As Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, what would you do to eliminate the toxic effects of lead ammunition and tackle on wildlife, ecosystems, and people from lands and waters managed by the Service?

    Response: I commit to following the law and ensuring that my decisions, should I be confirmed, will be supported by the best available science. I also believe that hunting and fishing on refuge lands should be aligned with state regulations, as appropriate, and compatible with the conservation purposes of an individual refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System mission.

33. Secretarial Order 3360 rescinded Departmental Manual Part 523, Chapter 1: Climate Change Policy, dated, December 20, 2012.

    a. Do you agree with the rescinding of the climate change chapter of the Interior Department's manual?
    b. If so, why?
    c. As Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, would you ensure that management plans are grounded in the best available science and understanding of climate change risks, impacts, and vulnerabilities, incorporating traditional knowledge where available?

    Response: It is my understanding that Secretary's Order 3360 rescinded several policies and documents that were based on authorities revoked by the President, as a result of Executive Order 13783, and the Secretary, through Secretary's Order 3349. As I indicated at my hearing, I recognize that the climate is changing, man is contributing to that change, and the science indicates there is uncertainty in projecting future climate conditions. A changing climate is one of many stressors, such as invasive species and habitat loss, that the FWS has the responsibility to evaluate and follow the science to implement management decisions that protect these valuable resources. I agree that the impacts of a changing climate need to be understood and addressed smf the Department of the Interior's role is to follow the law in carrying out our responsibilities.

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Senator Cramer:

34. When Secretary Bernhardt and Assistant Secretary Wallace were going through their confirmation processes, we discussed FWS WPA easements. There is particular concern back home in how the FWS is enforcing these easements. Their enforcement is haphazard at best, but the current guidelines have fostered a culture of intimidation and resulted in a de facto land taking from North Dakotans. The status quo is unacceptable. I have appreciated the Department's work thus far, but nothing has been finalized. When we met, we covered three specific issues. 1. Review and update FWS guidance to provide greater clarity and consistency in the enforcement of easements 2. Establish an effective appeals process for landowners if they disagree with FWS determinations 3. Finish updated and modern easement maps so landowners have a clear and accurate understanding of the easements on their property. I have frequently stated that the most successful conservation programs are those that are done with the cooperation of the private landowner. Anything else creates a culture of resentment and conflict. That is where we are today in North Dakota. As the Chairman of the subcommittee of jurisdiction, will you commit to working with me to promptly address the issues above?

    Response: As I indicated during our exchange at the hearing, I know that these are important issues to you and welcome the opportunity and commit to work with you. It is my belief that states, tribes, and private landowners, as well as Congress, are all important partners to ensure successful conservation efforts.

35. Ms. Skipwith, I have a pending request with the FWS. I recently sent another inquiry to Asst. Sec. Wallace regarding 39 Limited Interest Refuges in North Dakota. These "refuges" are actually easements that FWS purchased on private land. In 2008, the FWS finalized the CCP for these easements. Throughout that process, they decided to bar all hunting and fishing access unless the private landowner granted access to the general public, essentially holding landowners' recreational access hostage unless they consented to public access to their property. This is what the FWS reiterated to me last year: "In 2008, a comprehensive conservation plan for all ND Limited Interest Easement Refuges was completed, and at that time, a decision was made to open these areas to hunting only if they were open to the public. To date none of the easement refuges have been opened for public for hunting." I have appreciated the Department's emphasis on increasing sportsmen's access on public lands, particularly within the public refuge system, however, this is unacceptable. These families have hunted and fished on their own property for generations and they ought to that access restored as soon as possible. Ms. Skipwith, would you agree that private property rights are of the utmost importance? With that in mind and considering the Administration's emphasis on Sportsmen's access, would you commit to working through the administrative process to restore these landowners' hunting and

fishing rights in a timely fashion so they do not have to sit through another hunting season without access to their own property?

Response: I agree that it is important to respect private property rights, and I know that the issue of landowners hunting on their land is important to you. If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to work with you to better understand your constituents' issues and find a solution to their concerns in accordance with the law.

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Senator Gillibrand:

36. During your confirmation hearing, I asked you about your involvement in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's August 2018 reversal of an Obama-era ban on the use of neonics and GMOs in the National Wildlife Refuge System. You responded that you had not been involved in the decision. However, public records clearly indicate that you were included on email chains regarding this topic. An email dated October 5, 2017 sent to you from the Chief of Staff to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows you received materials on this issue "as requested." Again, I would like to ask you to describe in detail what role you played in this reversal.

    a. If you were involved in the reversal or a party to any internal agency discussions regarding the reversal: Given your extensive background in the agrichemical industry, can you please explain why you did not recuse yourself from this issue to prevent a conflict of interest?
    b. If you were not involved in the reversal: Can you please explain why the Fish and Wildlife Service has refused to answer FOIA requests for documents related to the reversal submitted by the Center for Biological Diversity and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility?

    Response: As I stated at the hearing, I was not involved in the decision-making process for this matter. I consulted with the Department's Ethics Office and there was no conflict of interest. I take compliance with ethics requirements seriously and I have actively sought and consulted with the Department of the Interior's designated ethics officials for advice, as appropriate. If confirmed, I will ensure that the FWS FOIA program is as responsive and timely as possible.

37. I am also troubled by the substance of your answer to my question on pesticides. You responded that neonic pesticides and GMOs "actually provides an advantage for our wildlife."

    a. What responsibility does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have to protect pollinators and birds residing in or migrating through our National Wildlife Refuges?
    b. How is that responsibility compatible with the use of neonic pesticides?
    c. What is the scientific basis for your assertion that neonic pesticides and GMOs are advantageous to use in our National Wildlife Refuges over other alternatives?
    d. A memorandum issued by James Kurth, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, dated July 17, 2014, states that 'prophylactic use of neonicotinoid pesticides that can distribute systemically in a plant and can potentially affect a broad spectrum of non-target species is not consistent with Service policy." Can you provide data that demonstrates the use of

neonicotinoids – as seed treatments and as foliar applications – is consistent with the Service's longstanding commitment to Integrated Pest Management practices or the process by which a decision was made to abandon IPM principles in Refuges?

Response: As I indicated at the hearing, GMO crops have long been used on some National Wildlife Refuges to help FWS meet its wildlife forage goals. These crops have the advantage of producing higher yields and can, when appropriate, provide additional food for wildlife. If confirmed as Director, I would, consistent with current policy, continue to direct FWS to review the use of GM crops on refuges on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with all relevant laws, policies, and court orders.

38. In response to my questions regarding the Hudson River, you responded that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service serves as an "advisor" to the EPA. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a Natural Resources Trustee acting on behalf of the public under CERCLA, and has a responsibility to assess the injury caused by PCB pollution in the Hudson River. You indicated in the hearing that in your present capacity, you were in meetings involving EPA on the decision to issue a Certificate of Completion. Did you at any point advise the EPA that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's science indicated that additional remediation is necessary achieve the goals of the cleanup?

    Response: As I indicated at the hearing, if confirmed I would seek additional briefing on this matter in order to appropriately address the questions you raise.

39. If confirmed as Director, what is your plan to familiarize yourself with Lyme disease in wildlife populations?

    Response: I know that dealing with the impacts of Lyme disease is an issue of great importance to many states. I would plan to discuss this matter with career experts within FWS and it would be important to get input from impacted states, as well.

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Senator Markey:

Arctic Refuge

40. I am deeply concerned about credible reports that the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management are suppressing science and truncating public process in order to rush through a leasing decision for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

    a. Do you agree that the Interior Department should be relying on expert scientific analysis from the Fish and Wildlife Service for the Environmental Impact Statement for the Coastal Plain leasing process?
    b. What specifically have you done as the Deputy Assistant Secretary to ensure the science produced by and opinions of FWS staff are not being suppressed or altered in the context of any decisions related to the Arctic Refuge?
    c. If confirmed, what would you do as Director to ensure the science produced by and opinions of FWS staff are not being suppressed or altered in the context of any decisions related to the Arctic Refuge?
    d. What specifically have you done as the Deputy Assistant Secretary to ensure timely and full response to FOIA requests, particularly those concerning controversial and fast-tracked agency decision process such as that for the Arctic Refuge oil and gas activities?
    e. What would you do as Director, if confirmed, to ensure timely and full response to FOIA requests, particularly those concerning controversial and fast-tracked agency decision process such as that for the Arctic Refuge oil and gas activities?

    Response: Yes, the FWS is providing valuable information through research and assessments related to the Coastal Plain. I believe that scientific integrity, transparency, and independence should underpin agency actions. I have the greatest respect for the work that Department of the Interior scientists carry out. If confirmed, I will ensure that agency decisions follow the law and are predicated on the best information, including the best available science. I will also ensure that the FWS FOIA program is as responsive and timely as possible.

41. To comply with the Refuge Administration Act, the FWS must do compatibility determinations prior to any oil and gas or other activities, and it is a vitally important role for the Service to identify parameters for activities to ensure protection of refuge resources.

    a. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring these compatibility determinations required by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act are completed in a timely fashion for the many

activities that it is considering under the oil and gas program in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

b. In undertaking compatibility determinations, will FWS identify and impose enforceable parameters for activities to ensure the continued integrity of all of the Arctic Refuge purposes and the protection of its non-oil and gas resources?

Response: If confirmed as Director, I will ensure that all laws within my purview are followed, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the ESA, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act.

42. Under the Refuge Administration Law and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), it is clear that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) is the superior and primary manager of the Refuge. A fundamental requirement of FWS's management is determining if uses and activities in Refuges are compatible with the Refuge and Refuge System's purposes. However, the Bureau of Land Management states in the Final EIS that its own "Authorized Officer" will make decisions about what terms and conditions apply to oil and gas activity.

    a. What specifically have you done as Deputy Assistant Secretary to ensure FWS has the lead role in decisions related to the Arctic Refuge?
    b. What would you do as Director, if confirmed, to ensure FWS has the lead role in decisions related to the Arctic Refuge?
    c. Will FWS allow an Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain oil and gas program to negatively impact the opportunity for Alaska Native people to continue their subsistence uses of resources such as the Porcupine caribou herd?
    d. If confirmed, how will you ensure that the incremental development that may ensue from an Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain oil and gas program does not erode Alaska Native cultural connections to the Arctic Refuge and the land used by the Porcupine caribou herd?

Response: The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 directs the Secretary, through the Bureau of Land Management, to establish and administer a competitive oil and gas program in the Coastal Plain. If confirmed as Director, I will ensure that all laws within my purview are followed, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the ESA, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act.

43. On July 24, 2019, the Department of the Interior signed a new land exchange agreement aimed at constructing a road through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. While former Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke originally signed a land exchange deal in January 2018, the U.S. District Court ruled in March 2018

that Zinke had acted illegally. This latest Izembek land exchange agreement was signed without any process or notice to the public and no new evaluation of impacts of the exchange to Refuge wildlife or resources.

a. Were you aware that this new agreement was being considered?
b. If yes, what role did you have in drafting, reviewing, or advising on the agreement? If no, why weren't you involved?

Response: I was not involved in the process or aware that a new agreement was being considered.

44. Polar bears are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and are also federally protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The Southern Beaufort Sea (SBS) population of polar bears is the most likely to use the Coastal Plain. The majority of the Coastal Plain (approximately 77 percent) is designated as critical habitat under the ESA because of its use by threatened polar bears for denning habitat. In a Feb. 2018 memo, the USFWS has identified "Priority Information Needs for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge 1002 Area." In the memo, USFWS officials identified specific studies that are necessary for "meeting near-term regulatory requirements" and for "informing the BLM-led Environmental Impact Statement for the 1002 area." Among its priority information needs, the USFWS includes FY 2018 activities related to studying Human-Polar Bear Interactions and Polar Bear Den Detection and Monitoring, which can be used to assess the effectiveness of den detection survey methods.

a. Are you aware of whether these studies been conducted? If they have not been conducted, will you commit, if confirmed, to ensuring that they are conducted?
b. If confirmed, would you commit to conducting all of the studies listed in this memo to ensure that DOI has the best scientific information available in order to comply with the ESA's regulatory requirements, before any steps are taken to lease or allow any activities on the Coastal Plain?

Response: The analysis in the Coastal Plain Leasing EIS incorporates the substantial body of known and relevant scientific literature on the polar bear. With regard to the specific studies referenced in the question, I understand that the FWS has completed the preliminary polar bear den detection study and that FWS is in the process of funding and initiating other projects for FY 2019.

45. I am concerned that the Leasing EIS does not describe how Interior will set lease terms and conditions in a way that will allow the agencies to comply with the ESA if and when proposals for exploration and development are brought before the agency. An important way Interior could ensure ESA compliance is by

including terms in any Coastal Plain leases giving BLM the full authority to preclude any and all activities on its leases.

a. If confirmed, would you ensure BLM guarantees any leases reserve such authority for BLM and FWS?

Response: If confirmed I commit to following the law and ensuring that decisions will be supported by the best available science.

46. To avoid or reduce impacts to polar bears, industry typically tries to identify locations of dens before conducting activities. Once dens are identified, permittees will generally observe established "buffer zones" around dens. Existing North Slope oil fields den detection methods have had only about a 50% success rate in identifying polar bear dens.

    a. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that more robust detection measures are used to ensure that polar bear populations are accurately counted and protected?

Response: If confirmed, I will ensure that the best available information is used in evaluating and making determinations related to proposed activities in the Coastal Plain as the Department complies with the requirements in the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the ESA, and other relevant laws.

Monomoy Refuge

47. In 2015, the Fish and Wildlife Service finalized a revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, which the Town of Chatham believes cuts them out of the stewardship of waters that it has historically managed. The Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Robert Wallace, committed to me at his confirmation hearing in June that he would work with me on this issue and visit Monomoy.

    a. If confirmed, will you also commit to working with me to ensure public access while also protecting the environment of the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge?
    b. Will you also commit to joining Mr. Wallace on this visit to Monomoy and visit before the end of the year?
    c. You met with the town of Chatham in 2017 and agreed that there were issues with the management of the refuge, but no action was taken. Why?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and with the new Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Rob Wallace, on this issue.

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Senator Merkley:

48. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services recently reported that one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, more than at any time in human history. The report named climate change as the third most important driver of species extinction, and one that will likely become increasingly important as an extinction driver.

    a. Do you agree with the expert consensus that climate chaos is a major factor driving the rate of extinction among wildlife?

    Response: Between habitat loss, wildlife trafficking, a changing planet, and other threats, the world's biodiversity is at great risk. This reinforces for me the importance of the work of the FWS as a global leader in the effort to combat extinction.

49. If confirmed, what practices and policies would you champion to fulfill the Service's obligation to protect declining species and their habitats—particularly those that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?

    Response: If confirmed, I will continue to work to safeguard our valuable natural resources for the American people and the communities that depend on them. I will uphold and implement the conservation laws that drive the FWS and use the best available science to do so. I will also strive to do my best to promote the mission of the FWS, working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

50. The new implementing regulations for the Endangered Species Act (ESA), published by the Administration in August, gives the Service significant discretion in how it will evaluate the impacts of climate chaos.

    a. If confirmed, will you commit to always considering the impacts of climate chaos when deciding whether to list or delist a species under the ESA, as well as when deciding how they should be protected?

    Response: The update to the rules demonstrated the Department's commitment to strengthening conservation efforts. The rules did not change the law or the requirement to use the best available science. The FWS will continue to use the best available science in listing decisions, which includes considering the effects of climate change and other stressors, when applicable.

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51. When the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made the finding in 2015 that a Greater sage-grouse listing was not warranted due to updated land-use plans, they said they would do a status review of the grouse in 2020 to see if the plans were meeting their objectives. The Trump Administration has made significant alterations to these plans.

    a. Will you commit to ensuring the Service will complete the 2020 status review?

Response: If confirmed, I will ensure that the FWS continues to be an active partner in these efforts.

    b. Do you believe that the Service should be monitoring the effectiveness of these plans?

Response: Yes. If confirmed, I will ensure that the FWS continues to monitor the effectiveness of these plans.

    c. What other types of collaboration do you see contributing to the survival of the Greater sage-grouse and the other 350-plus species dependent on this habitat?

Response: FWS staff are actively engaged in the development of a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy. This effort is led by the states through the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and will outline tactics to address threats to the Sagebrush ecosystem that could compromise the viability of the Greater sage-grouse and the other 350 species that rely on it. Increased collaboration between local, state, and federal entities around research and targeted management actions to stop the spread of invasives, which often can lead to destructive rangeland fires, is critical. In addition, the FWS continues to collaborate with states and other partners to ensure that migration corridors for mule deer and pronghorn remain intact and functional. If confirmed as Director, I would look forward to supporting these collaborative efforts.

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Senator Sullivan:

52. How would you ensure that Title V of the Marine Mammal Protection Act is implemented so that the Alaska Native polar bear co-management organization is properly delegated the authority and is allocated the resources to implement a local, civil- based co-management regime for Chukchi Sea polar bears?

    Response: I know that this is an issue of importance for both the State and Alaska Natives in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to discussing this important issue with you.

53. How would you ensure Alaska Native marine mammal organizations are adequately funded to carry out co-management activities under the Marine Mammal Protection Act?

    Response: I believe that coordination with and input from states, partners, and stakeholders is an important part of developing a successful conservation program. I would make that a priority as I make decisions for allocating available funding. If confirmed, I look forward to discussing this important issue with you.

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Senator Whitehouse:

54. Describe your experience in the process that led to your nomination for this position, from beginning to end (including the circumstances which led to your nomination and any interviews in which you participated). List all interviews or communications you had with anyone in the Executive Office of the President, the Office of Presidential Personnel, or any other executive branch agencies or offices. Additionally, list all interviews or communications you had regarding your nomination or your potential nomination by the current President with outside organizations or individuals at the behest of anyone in the executive branch. List all persons present, participating, or otherwise involved in such interviews or communications. Do not include any contacts with Federal Bureau of Investigation personnel concerning your nomination.

    Response: Because this is the only position to which I have been nominated, I do not have anything to compare it to. However, I do not believe that the process that I went through is any different than that of a typical nominee in this or the previous administration that has appeared before your Committee. I have provided a significant amount of information to the Committee about my background and philosophy. It is also my understanding that background information collected by the FBI has been provided to the Chairman.

55. Please list any members of the Trump administration, Trump campaign, or outside groups supporting President Trump's reelection efforts with whom you were in contact regarding donating to the Trump campaign. Please describe the content of any conversations or other contacts you may have had with any such parties regarding the subject of donating to the Trump campaign.

    Response: I donated to the campaign in my capacity as a public citizen, just as any other member of the public would have done. I have not been in contact with any parties relating to the President's reelection effort.

56. Giving a political contribution to the President two days after he nominated you to, the only time you've given money to a candidate in the last 10 years, demonstrates poor judgment for someone we are being asked to confirm to a position of public trust. What assurances can you provide that your decisions as FWS director will be based on the best available science and professional expertise, and not on a desire to stay in the good graces of the President's political team?

    Response: I was initially nominated by President Trump to be the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service in November, 2018, and was renominated to the

position by the President in July of this year. I support President Trump and the work of this Administration. Furthermore, as a scientist and a lawyer, I am committed to following all applicable laws and to ensuring that decisions of the FWS are made in accordance with applicable laws, using the best available science. This will not change if confirmed as Director.

57. If confirmed, how will you prioritize readying coastal National Wildlife Refuges for sea level rise, increased storm frequency and intensity, and other climate change-driven changes?

    Response: If confirmed as Director, I will ensure that the FWS fulfills its mission and statutory obligations to help fish and wildlife adapt to the impact of climate change and to moderate impacts through the application of sound science in management species and habitat.

58. The USFWS's "Planning for Sea Level Rise" document is no longer available on the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System climate change page. Is the Service still using this planning document?

    Response: Although I am not familiar with the document that you are referencing, a top priority of mine, if confirmed, will be to support the Department's efforts to increase Americans' access to their public lands. National wildlife refuges offer affordable world-class recreational opportunities for the public, and ensuring that appropriate tools are in place to address the stressors on these lands, including impacts of climate change, is of critical importance.

59. Under the new regulation implementing the Endangered Species Act, how will you ensure climate change is still considered in listing a species as "threatened" or "endangered," and providing the necessary protections for those species?

    Response: Under the revised rule, FWS will continue to use the best available science in listing decisions. This includes considering the effects of climate change, when applicable.

60. Do you trust peer-reviewed climate research?

    Response: As I stated at my hearing, I believe that climate change is real, and that humans have an impact. If confirmed as Director, I am committed to ensuring that decisions of the FWS are made in accordance with applicable laws, using the best available science, which can include peer-reviewed climate research.

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61. How will you ensure the USFWS is using the latest science, including climate science, in its ESA determinations?

    Response: As a scientist, I recognize the importance of objective research and free scientific inquiry. Science plays a critical role in decision-making, as does the law. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that FWS follows all applicable laws in the most ethical manner and using the best available science.

62. Do you believe climate change is human-driven?

    Response: As I stated at my hearing, I believe climate change is real and that humans have an impact.

63. Under your leadership, how would the USFWS collect, interpret, and consider climate science in determining migratory bird protections and management decisions?

    Response: If confirmed as Director, I would ensure the agency fulfills its mission and statutory obligations to help fish and wildlife adapt to the impact of climate change and to moderate impacts through the application of sound science in management species and habitat.

64. If confirmed, will you work with your counterparts in other relevant countries to manage migratory species with long-term conservation under a changing climate?

    Response: If confirmed, I will continue to work to safeguard migratory species in a changing climate and work with my counterparts.

65. Please describe your experience in fisheries and wildlife management prior to your 2017 nomination by President Trump.

    Response: Prior to 2017, my career experience was in environmental issues involving healthy soils and habitat, effects on fish and wildlife, as well as improving aquaculture productivity. I was initially nominated by President Trump to be the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service in November, 2018, and was renominated to the position by the President in July of this year. As a trained scientist and lawyer by education and experience, while at the Department I have worked in a senior role as deputy assistant secretary and have spent a great deal of time on the ground and in the field. I have gained valuable experience and understanding directly from resource managers of how the FWS works and how it uses the many tools it has to forward its mission.

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66. The Trump administration has proposed downlisting the American burying beetle, the state insect of Rhode Island, from endangered to threatened status. Under the new ESA regulations from USFWS, the "threatened" status severely limits conservation efforts available to the beetle's conservation. Please explain the USFWS's reasoning for downlisting the beetle and scientific evidence in support of this downlisting.

    Response: FWS proposed to downlist the American Burying Beetle from endangered to threatened, including a proposed 4(d) rule to tailor ESA protections to only those the beetle needs for recovery. The rule recognizes that the beetle faces different threats across its range and tailors take prohibitions to accommodate regional differences. Thanks to the efforts of a wide array of partners, including states and private landowners, across its range, the beetle is more abundant than it was at the time it was listed.

67. The USFWS has scheduled a public hearing in Oklahoma to receive comments on the proposed downlisting of the American burying beetle. Will a public hearing be held in Rhode Island as well?

    Response: I am not aware that a public hearing has been scheduled for Rhode Island.

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Senator Wicker:

68. How does the Fish and Wildlife Service vet the scientific experts that the agency consults for a Biological Opinion or Coordination Act Report? Does the Fish and Wildlife Service allow an outside researcher or scientist to be used in the development of a Biological Opinion or Coordination Act Report on a project that the outside researcher or scientist has a record of opposing? How does the Fish and Wildlife Service address potential conflicts of interest from an outside researcher or scientist?

    Response: My understanding is that FWS follows the guidelines for federal agencies spelled out in the Office of Management and Budget "Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review", which was issued in December 2004, to ensure that their work products maintain high standards for quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of the information relied upon and conveyed to the public. When FWS engages scientific experts from outside the agency it follows that OMB guidance and stepdown guidance from the Department and their own Manual to assess objectivity and the potential for bias or conflict of interest.

69. Under federal regulations, the Fish and Wildlife Service can use up to 135 days to consult on a project. How do you interpret congressional language regarding "expedited review" of project information? Do you believe that the Fish and Wildlife Service should not use the maximum time of 135 days if conducting an "expedited review"?

    Response: I believe the consultation process under Section 7 of the ESA should be as efficient and consistent as possible, without compromising conservation of listed species. The final joint regulations issued by the FWS and NMFS codify alternative consultation processes to preserve existing consultation efficiencies and also establish a deadline for informal consultations to provide greater certainty for timely decisions.

70. Cormorants are a predatory bird that can decimate fish populations, which makes them particularly concerning for aquaculture producers. However, double-crested cormorants are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and authorization from the Fish and Wildlife Service is required to lethally remove these predators. In 2016, a federal judge halted lethal removal programs of the double-crested cormorant until an environmental assessment was completed. The Fish and Wildlife Service issued its environmental assessment and created rules for lethally removing cormorants in 2017, but the agency has not moved forward with reinstating the national depredation order for aquaculture or natural resources. When does the Fish and Wildlife Service anticipate announcing its decision to reinstate these critical control measures?

Response: I understand cormorants can pose serious conflicts with property owners and aquaculture farmers - as well as others, and FWS currently provides relief by issuing individual depredation permits for the take of cormorants as expeditiously as possible. I know the Service is working with stakeholders and conservation partners to provide long-term solutions within the legal framework of the MBTA and existing court orders and settlements. I understand that FWS plans to initiate a review process under NEPA to evaluate comprehensive, nation-wide cormorant management options.

71. Black vultures are another predatory bird that can decimate livestock populations, particularly cattle, and damage infrastructure. However, these birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Individuals seeking to remove black vultures from their property must first purchase an annual depredation permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Recently, the Fish and Wildlife Service allowed certain groups to obtain statewide depredation permits. These groups could then issue sub-permits to farmers. How is the Fish and Wildlife Service ensuring that farmers and other individuals have the flexibility needed to remove these predatory birds from their property in a timely manner? Will the Fish and Wildlife Service continue its program that issued statewide depredation permits for black vultures to certain groups?

    Response: I understand that black vultures can pose serious conflicts with ranchers, and FWS currently prioritizes and provides relief to ranchers, and attempts to process and issue black vulture depredation permits as expeditiously as possible. If confirmed as Director, I would be happy to work closely with you to ensure we are working as efficiently as possible to continue to review and issue these permits.

72. In 2014, the Fish and Wildlife Service issued a memorandum banning the use of genetically engineered crops on national wildlife refuges. Last year, the memo was withdrawn. However, genetically engineered crops were still prohibited from being planted in 2019. What action is the Fish and Wildlife Service taking to ensure that farmers will be able to plant their crops on national wildlife refuges in 2020?

    Response: Genetically modified crops have long been used on some National Wildlife Refuges to help the Service provide adequate forage for migratory birds. As stated at my hearing, FWS reviews the use of genetically modified crops on refuges on a case-by-case basis, and in accordance with all relevant laws, policies, and court orders.

Senator BARRASSO. Well, thank you so very much for that testimony. I will tell you, your mom was taking copious notes, and then she stopped and looked up with great pride and did that for a while, then she wiped a tear from her eye. Thank you for your wonderful testimony.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Dr. Lemos, it is now your turn. Would you like to introduce your family and then proceed with your testimony?

STATEMENT OF KATHERINE LEMOS, NOMINEE TO BE CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBER, U.S. CHEMICAL SAFETY AND HAZARD INVESTIGATION BOARD

Ms. LEMOS. This is Carlos Lemos, my husband, who came all the way from California with myself. My father, John Curtis and my mother, Laura Curtis. They came from Florida. And I am thankful to say, many good friends who support me behind, who have been supportive through all the many endeavors in my life.

Senator BARRASSO. Welcome to all of you, and please proceed.

Ms. LEMOS. Thank you, Chairman Barrasso, Senator Carper, and distinguished members of this Committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be Chairman and Member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. I am grateful to President Trump for the confidence he has placed in me to lead the CSB through a time of transition and change.

Mr. Chairman, the chemical industry is vital to our economy and to our national well being. Maintaining integrity in our chemical production, process, handling, and storage is therefore essential to the health of our Nation.

The CSB's mandate is to investigate accidental chemical releases at fixed facilities that result in a fatality, a serious injury, or substantial property damage. Through the course of investigations and conducting preventive research, the CSB makes recommendations for improvement to a range of stakeholders to prevent the likelihood of any future incident.

I am here today before you for three reasons. I am a safety professional deeply committed to the well being of people and of our environment. I believe the CSB has a critical role to play in these safety outcomes, and because my experience and objectives are in strong alignment with those required to lead the CSB.

Prioritizing safety was a part of my childhood, and leading this commitment was my father, behind me, a military pilot for the Air Force and Air National Guard, and then a commercial airline pilot for 35 years. When I started flight lessons at the age of 14, he required—he mandated—that I subscribe to and read and discuss with him the NTSB Monthly Reporter, where they provided incidents and accidents, lessons learned, and what went wrong.

Senator BARRASSO. It was at the age of 14 he made you do this?

Ms. LEMOS. That is when I started flight lessons.

Senator CARPER. Did most of your classmates in school also read that publication?

[Laughter.]

Ms. LEMOS. In my career, I have been privileged to work as a safety leader across stakeholder domains and communities, that

provides me with an enterprise level perspective of safety. As an academic, I studied new technology and decisionmaking in high risk and in complex environments. I taught on the topics of accident investigation, human factors engineering, and safety management systems.

As a career Government employee for the NTSB, I first served as an accident investigator on the front lines of aviation safety. I also served as a Special Assistant to the Vice Chairman of the Board, supporting review and critical decisions on investigations and recommendations across transportation domains. So on our launch to a pipeline explosion in Mississippi, that was instrumental to my appreciating and understanding the similarities across domains in terms of accident investigation, human factors, safety and risk management, and the long lasting impact of catastrophic events. They go across domains.

As a career Government employee for the FAA, I served as the regulator in analyzing, developing, and implementing policy, as well as monitoring the outcomes. That provided me a unique experience in visualizing and quantifying the entire life cycle of events, from research to design, prototype testing, engineering, manufacturing, and on to implementation and sustainment.

Now in industry, I am an executive charged with balancing competing pressures for multiple programs, developing and delivering the quality products and systems that perform as promised, on schedule, within budget, but above all, safely. Taken together, my combined experiences across the safety landscape allows me to be effective at promoting and ensuring the balance needed and brought by each stakeholder.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you to enable and empower the CSB to fulfill its mission to prevent chemical accidents and maintain the trust and confidence in the public that we serve. If confirmed, I commit to leading the agency by example, holding myself accountable, as well as each employee, to you and the American public, in delivering objective, thorough, actionable, timely investigative reports to protect workers and our communities.

If confirmed, I pledge to work in a collaborative manner with board members, staff, stakeholders, and this Committee to enhance the safety culture of the entire chemical industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to answering your questions today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lemos follows:]

Katherine A. Lemos, Ph.D.
Director of Programs, Aerospace
Northrop Grumman Corporation

Katherine A. Lemos, Ph.D. of California is a Director of Programs for Northrop Grumman Corporation's Aerospace Sector. Before joining Northrop in 2014, she worked at the Federal Aviation Administration, and previous to this at the National Transportation Safety Board. Dr. Lemos has a distinguished background in system safety, accident investigation, human factors, and advanced technology research and integration, and has broad experience across the product lifecycle in analyzing and promoting product, process and operational performance.

Dr. Lemos is currently a Director for Northrop Grumman Corporation's Aerospace Sector, driving performance improvements across the product lifecycle with a focus on engagement early in the value stream.

As an expert in accident investigation, human decision-making and safety management, she is known for her innovative and strategic approaches leveraging advances in analytics and autonomy. She has a documented record of turning new technologies into solutions trusted by operators, overseers, and the public they serve.

Before joining Northrop Grumman in 2014, Dr. Lemos worked at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a technical leader and program manager in Aircraft Certification and Aviation Safety. Prior to this she worked for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) as a Senior Human Performance Investigator in Aviation Safety, and then as Special Assistant to Vice Chairman of the Board.

In academia Dr. Lemos focused her research on decision-making, studying the influence of information and technology on beliefs and behaviors to more reliably yield safe outcomes during risky and uncertain conditions. In aviation, Dr. Lemos conducted applied research to balance the strengths of technology and humans for optimal performance. Dr. Lemos earned a B.B.A. from Belmont University, a M.S. from California Lutheran University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa.

Throughout her career, Dr. Lemos has focused on improving safety and efficiency at the level of the individual and the organization. She has contributed individually as a researcher, professor and technical expert, and also contributed as a leader in managing programs and initiatives, bringing consensus and order to efforts that result in tangible safety and efficiency outcomes.

Prepared Statement of Katherine A. Lemos, Nominated as Chairperson and Member of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board

Thank you, Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the Committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be Chairperson and Member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB).

I am grateful to President Trump for the confidence he has placed in me to lead the CSB through a period of transition and growth.

Before going further, I would like to introduce my husband, Carlos, and my parents, John and Laura.

Mr. Chairman, the chemical industry is vital to our economy and national well-being. Maintaining integrity in our chemical production, process, handling and storage is therefore essential to the health of our nation.

The CSB's mandate is to investigate accidental chemical releases at fixed facilities that result in a fatality, serious injury or substantial property damage. Through the course of investigations and conducting preventive research, the CSB makes recommendations for improvement to a range of stakeholders to reduce the likelihood of future events.

I'm here before you today because I'm a Safety Professional deeply committed to the well-being of people and our environment, I believe the CSB has a critical role to play in these safety outcomes, and my experience and objectives are in strong alignment with that required to lead the CSB.

Prioritizing safety was a part of my childhood. Leading this commitment was my father, a military pilot for the Air Force and Air National Guard, followed by a 35-year career as a commercial airline pilot. When I started flight lessons at the age of 14, he insisted that I subscribe to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Reporter, a monthly magazine that exposed me to numerous examples of "what went wrong" and lessons learned.

In my career I've been privileged to work as a safety leader across stakeholder communities, permitting an enterprise level understanding of safety.

As an academic, I studied new technology and decision-making in high-risk and complex environments, and I taught on the topics of accident investigation, human factors engineering and safety management systems.

As a career government employee for the NTSB, I first served as an accident investigator on the front lines of aviation safety. I also served as Special Assistant to the Vice Chairman of the Board, supporting review and critical decisions on investigations and recommendations across transportation modes.

Our launch to a pipeline explosion in Mississippi was instrumental in my appreciating the similarities across domains in accident investigation, human factors, safety management principles, and the long-lasting impact of catastrophic events.

As a career government employee for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I served as the regulator in analyzing, developing, and implementing policy, as well as monitoring the outcomes. This provided a unique experience in visualizing and quantifying the entire life cycle of a system, from research to design, prototype testing, engineering, manufacturing, and on to implementation and sustainment.

Now in industry, I'm an executive charged with balancing competing pressures for multiple programs, developing and delivering quality products and systems that perform as promised, on schedule, within budget – and above all, safely.

In summary, my combined experiences across the safety landscape allow me to be effective at promoting and ensuring the balance needed and brought by each stakeholder.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you to enable and empower the CSB to fulfill its mission to prevent chemical accidents and maintain the trust and confidence of the public we serve.

If confirmed, I commit to leading the agency by example, and to holding myself and each employee accountable to you and to the American public in delivering objective, thorough, and timely investigative reports to protect workers and our communities.

If confirmed, I pledge to work in a collaborative manner with board members, staff, stakeholders and this committee to enhance the safety culture of the chemical industry.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Hearing entitled, *"Hearing on the Nominations of Aurelia Skipwith to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Katherine Lemos to be Member and Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board."*
September 11, 2019
Questions for the Record for Dr. Lemos

Chairman Barrasso:

1. **Under the Clean Air Act, members of the Chemical Safety Board are permitted to utilize the expertise and experience of other federal agencies. If confirmed as Chairperson, to what extent do you commit to keeping lines of communication open with outside federal agencies to better inform your decision-making?**

   Working productively with other federal agencies is critical to the success of the CSB, and especially with key agencies with whom it shares a Memorandum of Understanding, such as EPA, OSHA and NTSB.

   Per CSB's enabling legislation, "The CSB is required to coordinate its activities with investigations and studies conducted by other U.S. agencies having a responsibility to protect public health and safety." At times, the CSB will utilize the expertise of other agencies.

   If confirmed, I commit to strong collaboration with other federal agencies, maintaining or establishing regular dialogue and productive interaction towards more informed decision-making.

2. **What do you anticipate being the biggest issues and challenges you will face if confirmed as Chairperson?**

   If confirmed as Chairperson, the most significant challenge will be working quickly to status and prioritize a growing number of concurrent issues. Of immediate importance will be to improve the workplace environment and fulfill open vacancies. I believe these challenges can be successfully addressed.

   If confirmed, I will provide the stable and consistent leadership that is required to bring the agency through this time of change and growth.

3. **If confirmed, how will you ensure the Chemical Safety Board is attracting the talent it needs to be sufficiently staffed?**

   To attract and retain talent, the agency needs to be a place where people want to work. This comes about because employees are committed to the mission and its impact, they

are valued by their colleagues and the leadership, and their goals align with the direction and vision moving forward.

If confirmed, I will focus on creating an environment where collaboration is valued and accountability is the standard, and I will develop a human capital plan in alignment with our direction, operational vision and priorities.

If confirmed, I look forward to re-energizing the agency in both leveraging current talent and aggressively seeking new talent.

4. **Can you describe the importance of adhering to standardized processes, protocols, and procedures when conducting root-cause investigations for the Chemical Safety Board?**

   Root cause investigations, regardless of the domain, follow a consistent path of independently collecting, validating, analyzing and coming to conclusion on relevant data. This requires being informed by and coordination between a range of experts to apply the science to the case at hand.

   Adhering to standardized processes, protocols and procedures throughout the course of an investigation is critical to the integrity of the findings and recommendations of any individual investigation, and to the integrity of the agency.

5. **In April of this year, the Chemical Safety Board asked the Environmental Protection Agency to review and update its 1993 study on the use of hydrofluoric acid. About 50 of our nation's refineries use hydrofluoric acid when making high octane gasoline. Many other industries use it as well. The Board made this request following two refinery accidents where an explosion elevated the threat of a possible release of this chemical.**

   a. **How familiar are you with the issue of hydrofluoric acid and the Board's request?**

      I am aware that CSB has several ongoing investigations at plants where hydrofluoric acid (HF) is utilized, and wrote the EPA in April 2019 urging them to initiate a review and update of its 1993 HF study to determine whether risk management plans at two of the refineries utilizing HF are sufficient to prevent catastrophic releases, and to determine whether there are commercially viable, inherently safer alkylation technologies for use in petroleum refineries.

      I am also aware of the Senate letter in July 2019 calling for the EPA to review the continued use of HF in the refinery process, and to review the adequacy of risk management plans to protect refinery workers and nearby communities for refineries in the nation that still use HF.

b. **If confirmed how do you intend to approach this issue?**

If confirmed, I commit to receiving a full brief to understand the issue and the options, and, if requested, coming back to you with my findings.

6. **If confirmed, one issue you may encounter with investigating chemical and industrial accidents is a class of chemicals known as PFAS. Firefighting foam with PFAS is the most effective means to fight petroleum-based fires. It can also be the source of ground water and drinking water contamination. In June, this Committee unanimously passed PFAS legislation to address this pollution. It was included in the Senate's bipartisan defense authorization bill, which passed 86 to 8.**

   If confirmed, how might you approach concerns about PFAS in firefighting foam?

   To the best of my knowledge, the CSB does not currently have any recommendations related to PFAS.

   If confirmed, I commit to receiving full briefings (both internal to the CSB and with other relevant Federal agencies) to understand the issue and the options. At your request, I will commit to reporting back with my findings.

Ranking Member Carper:

7. **During the hearing, I asked you "Do you agree that climate change is real and is caused primarily, not entirely, but primarily by humans? Just yes or no." You initially stated that you could only say 'yes' to the first part of my question. Please clarify this response.**

   As stated at the hearing, I agree that climate change is real, and that human behavior contributes to climate change in many ways.

8. **The Fourth National Climate Assessment was published in 2018, during the Trump Administration. This report was mandated by the Global Change Research Act of 1990, which called on the U.S. Global Change Research Program to deliver a report to Congress and the President no less than every four years that "1) integrates, evaluates, and interprets the findings of the Program...; 2) analyzes the effects of global change on the natural environment, agriculture, energy production and use, land and water resources, transportation, human health and welfare, human social systems, and biological diversity; and 3) analyzes current trends in global change, both human-induced and natural, and projects major trends for the subsequent 25 to 100 years." For each of the following statements drawn verbatim from the**

report, please indicate, yes or no, whether you agree. If you do not agree, please explain with specificity why not.

I have not read this report, and therefore am unable to comment. As stated at the hearing, I agree that climate change is real, and that human behavior contributes to climate change in many ways. I am a strong supporter of science.

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this report, continuing to learn from climate scientists, and to working with stakeholders to make sound recommendations supported by science to prevent the likelihood or severity of future accidental chemical releases.

a. **Global climate is changing rapidly compared to the pace of natural variations in climate that have occurred throughout Earth's history. Global average temperature has increased by about 1.8 ° F from 1901 to 2016, and observational evidence does not support any credible natural explanations for this amount of warming; instead, the evidence consistently points to human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse or heat-trapping gases, as the dominant cause.**

b. **Without substantial and sustained global mitigation and regional adaptation efforts, climate change is expected to cause growing losses to American infrastructure and property and impede the rate of economic growth over this century.**

c. **Our Nation's aging and deteriorating infrastructure is further stressed by increases in heavy precipitation events, coastal flooding, heat, wildfires, and other extreme events, as well as changes to average precipitation and temperature. Without adaptation, climate change will continue to degrade infrastructure performance over the rest of the century, with the potential for cascading impacts that threaten our economy, national security, essential services, and health and well-being.**

d. **Climate change and extreme weather events are expected to increasingly disrupt our Nation's energy and transportation systems, threatening more frequent and longer-lasting power outages, fuel shortages, and service disruptions, with cascading impacts on other critical sectors. Infrastructure currently designed for historical climate conditions is more vulnerable to future weather extremes and climate change.... Expected increases in the severity and frequency of heavy precipitation events will affect inland infrastructure in every region, including access to roads, the viability of bridges, and the safety of pipelines. Flooding from heavy rainfall, storm surge, and rising high tides is expected to compound existing issues with aging infrastructure in the Northeast. Increased drought risk will threaten oil and gas drilling and refining, as well as electricity generation from power plants that rely on surface water for cooling. Forward-looking infrastructure design, planning, and operational measures and standards can reduce**

exposure and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and reduce energy use while providing additional near-term benefits, including reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

9. **Whistleblower laws protect the right of federal employees to make lawful** disclosures to agency management officials, the Inspector General, and the Office of Special Counsel. They also have the right to make disclosures to Congress.

   Specifically, 5 U.S.C. § 7211 states that the "right of employees, individually or collectively, to petition Congress or a Member of Congress or to furnish information to either House of Congress, or to a committee or Member thereof, may not be interfered with or denied." Further, 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(8), makes it a violation of **federal law to retaliate against whistleblower because of "(A) any disclosure of information by an employee or applicant which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences- (i) a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or (ii) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a** substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, any disclosure to the **Special Counsel, or to the Inspector General of an agency or another employee designated by the head of the agency to receive such disclosures, of information which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences a violation of any law, rule, or regulation..." In addition, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1505, it is against** federal law to interfere with a Congressional inquiry.

   Will you commit to communicate employees' whistleblower rights via email to all U.S. Chemical and Safety and Hazard Investigations Board (CSB) employees within a week of being sworn in?

   If confirmed, I will ensure that all CSB employees are made aware of their rights in a timely manner, to include whistleblower rights.

10. **Do you agree to provide complete, accurate and timely responses to requests for information submitted to you by any Member of the Environment and Public Works Committee? If not, why not?**

    Yes, I am committed to cooperating with the committee on requests for information, and I look forward to maintaining an open and transparent dialogue.

11. **Will you commit to providing me with materials responsive to my oversight letters at the same time or earlier than they are provided to House Committee Chairs or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requestors? If not, please explain why not.**

    Yes.

12. **For decades, both Republican and Democratic administrations alike have had written policies limiting White House contacts with agencies that have investigatory and enforcement responsibilities. These policies have recognized that even a simple phone call from the White House to an agency inquiring about or flagging a specific matter can upset the evenhanded application of the law.**

    Note: No question detected. I have responded to questions 13 and 14 with the assumption that they are a part of #12.

13. **Do you agree that it is essential that in making decisions, CSB must be shielded from political influence and spared even the appearance of being subject to political influence or considerations?**

    Yes.

14. **Will you commit to notifying this Committee within one week if any inappropriate communications from White House staff to CSB staff, including you, occur?**

    Yes.

15. **In May 2018, CSB employees voted to unionize, but a collective bargaining agreement is still not in place. It is my understanding that CSB employees proposed a standard agreement that is also used at the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Can you commit to finalizing a collective bargaining agreement within 60 days of your confirmation? If not, why not?**

    If confirmed, I commit to prioritizing this topic, and will receive a briefing to understand the status, challenges, and what it will take to bring this issue to closure, within 60 days after being sworn in, if possible.

16. **There have been reports for years of morale, personnel and retaliatory complaints at the CSB, which has resulted in a loss of many of the Board's expert investigators. What will you do, if confirmed, to resolve any open discrimination or harassment investigations at the Board, or to resolve new such complaints should they arise after your confirmation? What steps will you take to improve morale at the Board?**

    If confirmed, I commit to being briefed on and addressing any open employment issues, to include any discrimination or harassment investigations, at the Board in a timely manner, and to communicating to the entire agency the government's zero tolerance policy for discrimination or harassment.

    To improve morale, if confirmed as Chairperson, I will need to work efficiently to stabilize the agency, leading this charge with integrity.

17. **All three of the terms of the current Board Members expire in less than a year. If all of their terms expire without some or all of their re-nominations and confirmations (or the nomination and confirmation of new Board Members), the CSB will be left without a quorum and perhaps without a single member who is familiar with the way the Board operates. Do you agree that the Board would function most effectively with five qualified, committed Board Members confirmed and in place, and, if so, will you do what you can to advocate for such an outcome?**

    I agree that the board would function most effectively with a full complement of qualified and committed board members confirmed and in place, and, if confirmed, I would advocate for such.

Senator Merkley:

18. **The Chemical Safety Board (CSB) is tasked with reviewing chemical accidents, finding cause, and making recommendations to prevent future accidents. Industrial and chemical plants are required under the Clean Air Act to have a Risk Management Plan with Release Prevention Requirements, and the role of the CSB is to recommend preventative measures to reduce the incidence of chemical accidents. Extreme weather events are becoming more and more common given climate chaos, and have caused chemical safety accidents during Hurricanes Katrina and Harvey.**

    a. **Will you commit to including climate change and resiliency as a factor for industrial facilities to consider in accident prevention?**

       Yes.

Senator Whitehouse:

19. **The CSB is an independent agency. By design, it is supposed to be insulated from political and industry influence. Unfortunately, we have seen this administration attempt to politicize decision making at agencies that are supposed to be apolitical. President Trump has repeatedly pressured the Federal Reserve on monetary policy. The Department of Justice appears to have been ordered to initiate a phony anti-trust investigation into four automakers that had the temerity to conclude a deal with California to raise fuel economy standards. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration was ordered by the Secretary of Commerce to support counterfactual claims about Hurricane Dorian's path made by the President. What commitment can you give the members of this committee that if the administration or an industry group with the administration's ear demands you to do something that you will ignore this pressure?**

If confirmed, you and the members of the committee have my full commitment to carry out the mission of the CSB in such a way as to maintain and protect the agency's independence and integrity, and that the agency will not be compromised by pressure from any interest group, including elected or appointed government officials at the Federal, state or local level, or any business or industry group or other stakeholders.

20. During your confirmation hearing, you were repeatedly asked whether or not you accepted the overwhelming scientific consensus that the climate change we are observing today is primarily driven by human activity. You were unable to definitively state that you do accept the science, presumably because the president who nominated you does not accept the science. Your seeming inability to break with the President on this issue does not inspire confidence that you will ensure that the CSB remains free from political interference. In light of this, why should we believe that you will not bend to pressure from the administration once confirmed?

If confirmed, you and the members of the committee have my full commitment to carry out the mission of the CSB in such a way as to maintain and protect the agency's independence and integrity, and that the agency will not be compromised by pressure from any interest group, including elected or appointed government officials at the Federal, state or local level, or any business or industry group or other stakeholders.

As stated at the hearing, I agree that climate change is real, and that human behavior contributes to climate change in many ways. I am a strong supporter of science.

21. We have seen an increasing number of extreme weather events. The science tells us that climate change is responsible for this increase, and that we should expect a continued increase in extreme weather events in the future. Do you agree that climate change will cause more extreme weather events, and that industry should be required to assess their risks and prepare for them?

As indicated at the hearing, I support recommendations made by CSB for the Arkema Inc. Chemical Plant Fire investigation on the topic of assessing and mitigating the risk of extreme weather.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much for your testimony as well. Your father looked on with great pride, and was shaking his head up and down with a big smile the whole time.

Throughout this hearing, and with questions for the record, the Committee members are now going to have an opportunity to learn more about the commitment of both of you to public service, and to the great Nation that we have. So I am going to ask that throughout this hearing, you please try to respond to the questions today, and then some members who may not be able to be here or stay through the whole hearing may ask questions in writing.

We do have a series of votes that are going to start in about 20 minutes, so there may be members coming and going, just so you will notice, if you see people leaving, that they are going to vote and then come back if necessary.

So I have to ask the following questions that we ask of all nominees on behalf of the Committee. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee or designated members of the Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes.

Ms. LEMOS. Absolutely, yes.

Senator BARRASSO. Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, documents, and electronic and other forms of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate committees in a timely manner?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes.

Ms. LEMOS. Yes.

Senator BARRASSO. Do you know of any matters which you may or may not have already disclosed that might place you in any conflict of interest if you are confirmed?

Ms. LEMOS. No.

Ms. SKIPWITH. No, I do not.

Senator BARRASSO. OK. So now I am going to begin with a round of questions, and then we will go back and forth between different members of the Committee.

Let me start with Ms. Skipwith, if I could start with you. This Committee has led the enactment of something called the WILD Act, which stands for Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver Act. The WILD Act established the Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize. These are prizes, it is a series of cash prizes to be awarded each year for technological innovation in wildlife conservation and in the management of invasive species.

I believe that technology and technological innovation can solve some of our most challenging wildlife problems. That seems to be the reason that you went on to get that master's degree in the first place.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Exactly.

Senator BARRASSO. So whether it is addressing the threat of invasive species, combating wildlife trafficking. So if confirmed as Director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife, will you commit to prioritizing implementation of the Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prizes in order to stimulate technological innovation in both wildlife conservation and in invasive species management?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your office to prioritize the implementation. What I will also add to that is, I commend the Committee for the passage of the WILD Act and the implementation is a priority at the Department. Already, Secretary Bernhardt has issued a secretarial order in order to facilitate a timely implementation.

Senator BARRASSO. Good.

Dr. Lemos, this Committee strongly supports the mission of the Chemical Safety Board. Would you share with us your commitment to this agency and its values? Additionally, would you commit to fulfilling the 5 year term, if confirmed?

Ms. LEMOS. Thank you, Senator. Yes, I am fully committed to the mission of the Chemical Safety Board, as in promoting and driving chemical safety change. The reason that I am interested and that I am here today is because I know that I can make a difference, and I am committed to making that difference and providing the stable and consistent leadership that is requested of me and needed by this agency.

If confirmed, I intend to serve the entire, full, 5 year commitment.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you.

Ms. Skipwith, Wyoming is no stranger to the challenges that States face when courts intervene in conservation decisions. Despite Fish and Wildlife Service's best efforts, both this Administration and the Obama administration, and the Bush administration, it took years to de-list the gray wolf in Wyoming and to return it to State management following a full recovery of the species. As you know, the courts have now forced the grizzly bear to be relisted in spite of the efforts of Fish and Wildlife.

In your opinion, does it hurt State and local recovery efforts if courts prevent or delay the de-listing of species that Fish and Wildlife clearly says are recovered?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, thank you very much for that question. The science shows that the grizzly bear and the gray wolves are biologically recovered. To reach that status, it employs working with States, working with private landowners and other organizations to reach that goal. That is truly a success of the Endangered Species Act.

Knowing that those species are still on the list, that ends up directing resources to work on that instead of focusing on imperiled species that really need recovery efforts.

Senator BARRASSO. So when the courts intervene, to overdo what you have done, what the agency has done, that is detrimental to recovery of other species as well as to the States where those species are?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes, Mr. Chairman, it does.

Senator BARRASSO. Dr. Lemos, the Chemical Safety Board is an independent Federal agency charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents. Please explain how your past work at the National Transportation Safety Board, the Federal Aviation Administration—you talked about your license at age 14, and the journal that you were reading to look into those sorts of things that had to do with aviation, but how is your past work there as well as

your past work in academia and the private sector going to help you succeed as Chair here, if confirmed?

Ms. LEMOS. Thank you, Senator. Three things. First and foremost, I have the leadership skills to move this agency forward. If confirmed, this will be essential to my success as Chair. Over the years, I have demonstrated success as a leader in managing people, large programs, initiatives; but especially those that required significant change management, restructuring, and bringing together diverse groups of stakeholders.

Equally important, I have the subject matter expertise that is employed and used by the Chemical Safety Board, and I say safety transcends domains. That specific expertise, again, is in accident investigation and reconstruction, and human factors engineering, and in safety management and risk assessments.

For example, at the NTSB, I was—in 2005, you might recall, the Southwest Midway accident which overran the runway in wintery conditions, led to the fatality, unfortunately, of a young child. So I have hands on experience with this type of work, and the process is the same.

Finally, if confirmed, my broader understanding of how the safety community works together to be accountable to Congress and the American people will help me to succeed as Chair.

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Carper.

Senator CARPER. In my conversations with both of you, and your testimony today, Ms. Skipwith, you have mentioned that you feel you should be guided by science. I think it is fair to say that both of you feel that way.

My first question, I am going to ask a lot of yes or no questions. I am going to start off with a yes or no question.

It is the same question for both of you. Do you agree with the world's leading scientists, including those within the Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency, who have concluded that climate change is real and is caused primarily by humans? Do you agree with that?

I am just looking for a yes or no, and if you can't say yes or no, I will be very disappointed.

Ms. LEMOS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CARPER. And I am not looking for a "thank you, Senator." I am looking for a yes or no. And it is a simple question. Do you agree that climate change is real and is caused primarily, not entirely, but primarily by humans? Just yes or no.

Ms. LEMOS. I can tell you yes to the first part.

Senator CARPER. That is it, thank you.

Ms. Skipwith, your turn.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes, I believe in climate change, and humans have an impact.

Senator CARPER. Thank you.

Ms. Skipwith, let's talk about the letter that I sent to you 2 weeks ago. One of our jobs—as I said earlier, we are an oversight committee. We do oversight over, among others, the Environmental Protection Agency, Fish and Wildlife Service. For us to do our jobs, occasionally we are going to be making inquiries. Sometimes we do it in hearings. Sometimes we do it in phone calls, sometimes we do it in letters. It is important for us to receive timely responses.

I have a letter that I sent to the previous Secretary of the Department of the Interior like a year ago; I never got a response. I think that is just unconscionable. I would never do that if I were in a position like that.

Talk to us, and I am going to ask for the record, ask unanimous consent, Mr. Chairman, to submit for the record the letter I sent to you 2 weeks ago, and what I deem to be an incomplete response. We had talked about this yesterday.

Would you just say a few words, and then we will move on to the next question?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes, Senator, thank you very much for your time yesterday. I appreciate the candid conversation that we had.

I did provide a response in light of that conversation, and look forward to providing that remainder.

Senator CARPER. I don't mean to be rude, but can you just commit to me today that I will have a full and complete response within a week from today? Is that reasonable?

Ms. SKIPWITH. I will have to work with the Department of the Interior to do a deeper dive.

Senator CARPER. On what I am looking for, can you commit to respond within a week? You have had 2 weeks already.

Ms. SKIPWITH. So I did respond to those, to the questions.

Senator CARPER. I think those who are going to look at the record are going to say that was not a complete response.

Ms. SKIPWITH. And I will, I am working with the Department to provide the remainder, knowing that how much time that letter was, it will take a deeper dive to work with the Department to provide an appropriate response.

Senator CARPER. Let me just impart, if I could, a sense of urgency. I don't ask of people, I don't send an inquiry and ask for a response in 2 or 3 days. I don't do that. I will give you a couple of weeks, and I will ask you to do your best to, within a week from today, to give me a complete response.

Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Without objection, your letter will be made part of the record.

[The referenced information follows:]

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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6175

August 29, 2019

Ms. Aurelia Skipwith
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Skipwith:

The role of Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service caries the important responsibility of leading federal activity in the management and protection of wildlife and natural habitats within our country. As the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works considers your nomination to serve in this position, I request that you provide me and the Committee with written answers, and where applicable, documentation in response to the following questions. We will use this information to better assess your nomination.

1. AVC Global is a company of which you reported yourself a founder and general counsel between May 2016 and March 2017, immediately before your current appointment began at the Department of the Interior. As a founder and former officer of the company, you presumably have a deep understanding of AVC Global's business and relationships. Please provide a detailed explanation of AVC Global's business, what products and/or services it provides, along with a list and description of the company's current or former customers or clients that have interests before the U.S. government.

2. On May 5, 2017, shortly after you joined the Interior Department, you filed a Public Report Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e), in which you disclosed that your assets included AVC Global stock valued between $50,001 and $100,000. However, in subsequent OGE Form 278e filings, including reports filed on June 4, 2018; Nov. 14, 2018; May 14, 2019; and June 12, 2019; you do not report any ownership of AVC Global stock. Since joining the Department of Interior in April 2017, you have filed four different Periodic Transaction Reports (OGE Form 278-T) as required by federal regulation, in which you disclosed the purchase, sale or exchange of stocks or other securities exceeding $1000 in value. These reports were certified by the Department of Interior, Departmental Ethics Office on September 18, 2018; October 22, 2018; November 1, 2018; and November 8, 2018. None of these filings reported the sale of AVC Global stock. Do you currently have an ownership stake in AVC Global? If so, what is the current value of that stock (or other form of financial interest), and why did you not report this asset in your financial disclosure reports after May 2017? If you no longer own AVC Global stock or have a financial interest in the company, how and when did you divest yourself of this asset and why did you not disclose the transfer of this asset as you were required to do?

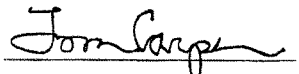
3. In April 2017, you signed an ethics pledge as directed by the President in Executive Order 13770 (commonly referred to as the Trump Ethics Pledge). Section 1, Paragraph 6 of that pledge prohibits you from participating in particular matters involving specific parties that directly and substantially relate to your former employer or former clients. As a former Senior Counsel and Senior Advisor at Gage International, a registered lobbying firm, what steps have you taken to identify former clients who may have interests before the U.S. government? Have you provided to the Departmental Ethics Office a list of those former clients or any related parties with interests before the government, along with a specific commitment to recuse yourself from any matters involving those parties that may arise? If you made such a list, or developed or received a written process to avoid violating the Trump Ethics Pledge, please provide a copy of all relevant documentation. If you have not, please explain why you chose not to do so, and additionally explain what steps you have taken to avoid any such violations.

4. As Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, you have been overseeing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since April 2017. So that we can understand how you performed these duties in a manner consistent with ethical requirements, please provide copies of all your calendar entries since you joined the Department in April 2017 that included meeting, communicating, or coordinating with non-governmental parties. In responding to this request, please explain the topic of each appointment, a list of all participants involved (and affiliations thereof), along with an explanation of any agreements or action items that came out of the appointments.

Please provide your responses to this letter by no later than Monday, September 9, 2019. Thank you for your diligence on these items. I look forward to further discussing these and other matters in the weeks to come. If you have any questions. If you have any questions, please contact my staff Elizabeth Mabry, Brian Eiler, or Michal Freedhoff at Elizabeth_Mabry@epw.senate.gov, Brian_Eiler@epw.senate.gov, or Michal_Freedhoff@epw.senate.gov or at 202-224-8832.

With best personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and
Public Works Committee
United States Senate

September 10, 2019

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Carper:

This responds to your August 29, 2019, letter seeking information related to my nomination to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

First, you asked for information related to AVC Global, which I cofounded and where I served as General Counsel. AVC Global is a start-up company that is developing a high technology agriculture supply chain platform using a cloud-based system and distributed ledger. The platform is intended to streamline the supply chain, by-passing layers of middlemen by validating smart contracts using digital finance and asset-backed programmatic security tokens. I have not been employed by the company since joining the Trump Administration in April 2017. At the time of my departure this was a relatively young start-up company without customers or revenue.

Regarding AVC Global stock, I was never issued any stock or stock options. From the outset in 2016, I understood that I would potentially receive stock options for my advisory role at the company, representing 1 percent equity in the company. In an abundance of caution, I opted to over-report and listed the value of that 1 percent assumed ownership at between $50,000 - $100,000 on my financial disclosure form based on the company representation that the average series A round for similar companies would value company shares at $1 per share. In March 2017, I stepped away from my role and relinquished any rights to stock or stock options in the company. It was my understanding that relinquishing these rights did not meet the definition of a reportable transaction for my financial disclosure reporting obligations, so I did not list this event as a transaction on my public financial disclosure reports.

Finally, my role at Gage International was as an unpaid advisor. I did not engage in lobbying for Gage International. I did not provide lobbying or any other personal services for any Gage International clients at any time. I signed the Trump Ethics Pledge in April 2017, which required recusal from participating in "any particular latter involving specific parties that is directly and substantially related to my former employer or former clients, including regulations or contracts" for 2 years from the date of my appointment. During the 2-year period after my appointment as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Gage International did not have matters before the Department that required my recusal.

From the beginning of my service in this Administration, I have consulted with and followed the advice of the Department of the Interior's career ethics officials and I am in full compliance with all ethics laws, regulations, and the ethics pledge. I take compliance with the ethics requirements of the federal government seriously and will continue to seek and follow ethics guidance.

Sincerely,

Aurelia Skipwith

Senator CARPER. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Lemos, President Trump has repeatedly tried to eliminate the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. Can you commit to supporting and defending both the board's mission and at the least, its current budget?

Ms. LEMOS. Thank you, Senator. Yes.

Senator CARPER. I was going to ask some questions about the Migratory Bird Act, but I think one of our colleagues from Maryland is going to do that.

Ms. Skipwith, if I could, the Department of Interior does not always give the Fish and Wildlife Service a seat at the table in discussions about how the Department should manage Federal lands, even when those management decisions impact habitat for imperiled species. For example, Politico ran a story, I think it was in July, 2 months ago, it was entitled "How Science Got Trampled in the Rush to Drill in the Arctic." The article describes in detail how fish and wildlife experts have recently been excluded from decisionmaking with respect to oil and gas leasing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

I would ask unanimous consent, if I could, Mr. Chairman, that that article be submitted for the record.

Senator BARRASSO. Without objection.

[The referenced information was not received at time of print.]

Senator CARPER. Thank you.

Ms. Skipwith, you were working at the Department when this occurred. I would just ask, why didn't you ensure that the Fish and Wildlife Service experts were part of the process? I would just ask that you commit to us today to ensuring that in the future, the Service is included in important Department of Interior conversations about leasing and energy development in ecologically sensitive areas that are home to imperiled species.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I am a biologist, and I am a scientist. I believe in following the law. And that requires that the best available science, along with the law, is used in making decisions. So I will work with you and your office on ensuring that the professionals are used in decisionmaking processes.

Senator CARPER. Good. Thank you.

Let me ask you a question. Well, I am about out of time. Real quickly.

No, I am not going to ask the next question. I want to make sure I have time for my colleagues to ask their questions. So I will stop right there. We will have some more questions for the record.

Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank both of our nominees for their willingness to serve, and we thank their families, because this is a family effort. So we thank you for your willingness.

Ms. Skipwith, I want to start with you. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife is critically important to the State of Maryland and our region, Delaware, the Chesapeake Bay. Sixty percent of the members of the panel right now are in the Chesapeake Bay region. The Chesapeake Bay office in Annapolis, for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife is a

critical part of the compact reached between six States and the District of Columbia.

Are you familiar with the Chesapeake Bay program?

Ms. SKIPWITH. A little bit, Senator.

Senator CARDIN. I would just urge you to understand the important role that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife plays there.

You already mentioned the issues in regard to the Endangered Species Act on science as it relates to the gray wolf and the grizzly. The Chairman asked you questions about the court decisions, which at times I have disagreed with. The court is trying to interpret the laws that Congress has passed. And sometimes we don't do what we should be doing here in Congress, leaving ambiguity to our courts.

You said that science dictated your views on that, and I appreciate that. That is what I am looking for.

At times, we have to make tough decisions. We don't always base all of our decisions on science, but we must have from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife the science information in order to make those judgments. At times, there will be political considerations.

Are you prepared to shield yourself from the politics so that we get from U.S. Fish and Wildlife the best information based solely on the science?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, when it comes to making listing determinations and looking, it is based on what is the best available science, and it is also operating within the law. So if confirmed, I will continue that path of using the best available science and operating within the law.

Senator CARDIN. And will you commit to us that you will always be judged in providing information to this Committee and to the Members of Congress on science based upon what the science indicates and not based upon political considerations?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, thank you very much for that question. And it is about looking at the science and still making sure that it is within the realm and the responsibilities of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Senator CARDIN. If you are, through the political structure, coming from either the White House or above, there is a direction that they want to go, but science indicates a contrary position, are you prepared to say that you will at least advise us as to what science tells is the right decision in that regard?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, one of the things, and if confirmed, would be my responsibility, is to look at the science to make my decisions and to make my recommendations based on that.

Senator CARDIN. I am not sure that completely responds to my question. I will ask that again for the record, and it would be helpful to know that you are prepared to speak out on behalf of science, which you have indicated is your passion, recognizing that we will make the political decisions and there will be political considerations. But we expect U.S. Fish and Wildlife to call it the way science indicates. I am not——

Ms. SKIPWITH. I can commit to that, Senator, yes.

Senator CARDIN. I appreciate that.

Ms. Lemos, I want to tell you, the work that you do is critically important. We had an episode in Baltimore in September of 2017

with a chemical release that required people to shelter in place for several hours. My question is basically, you don't have any ability to enforce your recommendations. You make recommendations, but you can't enforce your recommendations. So you can't issue penalties; you can't issue regulations.

How do you go about making sure that your recommendations are carried out?

Ms. LEMOS. Thank you, Senator. I agree, the role of the accident investigation board, whether it be in transportation or chemicals, is to make sure that you are writing recommendations that are relevant, you gain stakeholders' buy in, you work with all the different parties. But when it comes to ensuring—if you are speaking about regulations, or recommendations in general, that is a process you work with Congress. The agencies are held accountable, or any of the folks that we write recommendations to. We have a system of following up on those recommendations, how many are closed, how many closed or open are acceptable. So that is the method by which we can account for that.

But when it comes to having an authoritative arm, no, we are not the authority. We are not writing the regulations, or we are not actually enacting the changes by which people have to adhere to.

Senator CARDIN. I want to ask you one more question, if I might. In response to Senator Carper, you indicated you believe that climate change is real, but you qualified that not human behavior is a major factor toward climate change. Do you want to explain that? You don't have to say yes or no, but explain to me why you believe the emissions of carbon that we have done is not accelerating the climate problems.

Ms. LEMOS. Thank you, Senator, for giving me the opportunity to explain. I am fully aware that as humans, we contribute to the climate change in many ways. The degree to which climate science, or climate is changing—I am not a climate scientist. I am a social scientist, and I am a strong supporter of science. I read more and more every day on this topic.

But in terms of making a conclusive statement about the degree to which the human contribution is influencing it, I will leave that to the people who are the climate scientists. That is my perspective.

Senator CARDIN. I would just point out then, when you look at the climate scientists—I will leave it at that. I am a little bit confused by that answer, but I respect the fact that neither you nor I are climate scientists.

Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Just to point out, Wyoming Stock Growers Association has written regarding Ms. Skipwith that, "It is important that the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service not only possess strong leadership skills, but also the education and experience required to enact policies based on scientific principles, free from political and bureaucratic interference, and Ms. Skipwith meets and surpasses these qualifications."

Without objection, that will be submitted for the record.

[The referenced information follows:]

WYOMING STOCK GROWERS ASSOCIATION
Guardian of Wyoming's Cow Country since 1872

President- Dennis Sun, *Casper*
First Vice President- Scott Sims, *McFadden*
Region I Vice President- JD Hill, *Ranchester*
Region II Vice President- Steve Paisley, *Wheatland*
Region III Vice President- Mantha Philips, *Casper*
Region IV Vice President- Brad Mead, *Jackson*
Region V Vice President- Reg Philips, *Dubois*
Executive Vice President- Jim Magagna, *Cheyenne*
Young Producers Assembly- Will Hudson, *Sinclair*

February 5, 2019

Senator John Barrasso
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Barrasso:

I write to express our endorsement of the re-nomination of Aurelia Skipwith, of Indiana, to serve as the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. On November 13, 2018, Ms. Skipwith was nominated by President Trump for this position. Over the past two years, I have had the opportunity to work with Ms. Skipwith as she currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. She is committed to the current Administration and its policies. I am impressed with her priority of getting into the field and engaging stakeholders to understand their perspective on key natural resource issues. Her acknowledgement of the unique challenges facing livestock producers in the West has been a welcome change from the previous administration.

Ms. Skipwith has established an impressive track record in both the public and private sectors. Her diverse background and education provide her with the unique skill set required to deal with subject matters of the Service, including endangered species, depredation by migratory birds and wildlife migration corridors. She thinks critically on the complex issues faced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and formulates solutions that are free from political and bureaucratic interference. She offers common sense solutions based on sound science and rule of law.

After receiving her Master's degree in Molecular Biology from Purdue University, she worked for a leading agriculture biotechnology company and later received her law degree from University of Kentucky's College of Law. With that science and legal combination, she was an attorney at Kentucky's leading agriculture company working to ensure the health and safety of the environment and animals by using all-natural products. Ms. Skipwith's career mirrors the foundation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is the sustainability of plants and wildlife and working lands for all.

I believe it is important that the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service not only possess strong leadership skills, but also the education and experience required to enact policies based on scientific principles free from political and bureaucratic interference. Ms. Skipwith meets and surpasses these qualifications. WSGA requests that you urge President Trump to quickly re-nominate her. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Jim Magagna

Jim Magagna
Executive Vice President

"Shaping and Living The Code of The West"
P.O. BOX 206, CHEYENNE, WY 82003• PH: 307.638.3942 • FX: 307.634.1210
EMAIL: INFO@WYSGA.ORG •WEBSITE: WWW.WYSGA.ORG • BLOG: WWW.REALRANCHERS.COM

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Whitehouse.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Chairman.

Ms. Skipwith, you are not a prolific campaign donor, political campaign donor.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, no, I am not.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. You were appointed for this position on July 17th of this year.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes, Senator, that is correct.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Two days later, on July 19th, you reported a $5,600 campaign contribution to Donald Trump for President. You had to report all your donations in a 10 year period. That is the only one. It occurred 2 days after your appointment.

Can you explain the circumstances of that, and specifically any and all contacts or conversations you had with anybody from the Trump administration or the Trump campaign related to that contribution?

Senator BARRASSO. Could I point out to the Senator, she was nominated actually in the previous Senate as well, prior to this?

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I'm sure the record will make that very clear. But this statement says her nomination date was July 17th, and it was.

Ms. SKIPWITH. That is correct, Senator. I made a contribution to the Administration and support what this Administration is doing.

However, as stated, I was nominated in the prior Congress, and I was nominated before that contribution.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And to the part of my question that asked about any contacts between you and the Administration or the Trump campaign regarding contributions.

Ms. SKIPWITH. There is no contact except for——

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Nobody asked, nobody suggested? Nobody pointed out that you had not contributed? You just spontaneously made that contribution on July 19th?

Ms. SKIPWITH. I did.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Fair enough.

Do you understand that the rot runs pretty deep in the Trump administration when it comes to environmental and public health protections and regulatory agencies, that they are quite often handed over to the industries that they ought to be regulating? And mind you, EPA has become effectively a captured tool of the fossil fuel industry and is no longer doing its job to protect the public.

You have worked many years for Monsanto. Can you give us assurances here that as Director, you will be the Director for the people of the United States and all of their interests, and not the Director for Monsanto or for other polluting or extracting interests?

Ms. SKIPWITH. So, Senator, I have been at the Department for over 2 and a half years. When I first came on board, I worked very closely with our ethics office, and to this day, I still work closely with the ethics office to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest. And in my role today, I am working for the American people. And if confirmed as Director, I will continue to work for the American people.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. In that case, I wish you well.

Senator BARRASSO. Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ms. Skipwith, thank you, and our other nominee, for your desire to serve your country. It is not always easy. I appreciate your willingness to do that, and appreciate your families' willingness and support to be here. These are always—these are positions that sometimes can be challenging, and we need good people.

So I want to thank both of you, because it is not easy. Even going through this Senate confirmation, my good friend, Senator Whitehouse, as always, has probing questions. I appreciate—I think we all appreciate—your direct answers. I was going to try to counter some of those, but I don't think there is a need.

So I am going to start with something that actually he and I are working on quite a lot, you and I talked about it together yesterday in a meeting in my office, this issue of oceans and cleaning up our oceans. Senator Whitehouse and I have legislation that passed last year, the President was very supportive, called the Save Our Seas Act. That is all about ocean debris. And now we have legislation called the Save Our Seas Act 2.0 that the Trump administration has been supportive of.

So to the extent you can, I would like to get your commitment, again, you're not fully having jurisdiction over the oceans, but you do have some. And to the extent you can, can you commit to work with this Committee, with me, with the Chairman, with Senator Whitehouse, on this important issue of not just our legislation, Save Our Seas 2.0, but working to clean up and maintain healthy oceans for America and the world?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, it was a pleasure to meet with you yesterday and to discuss this very important topic. I commend you and Senator Whitehouse for introducing that, and look forward to working with the both of you and the rest of this Committee to move it forward.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. I believe we are going to have a markup on that legislation here, Mr. Chairman, in a couple of weeks. We look forward to moving it forward to get it in front of the Trump administration.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I hope we have a date.

Senator SULLIVAN. I think we have a date from the Ranking and Chairman, so thank you, gentlemen.

Good. We look forward to working with you on that.

I want to talk a little bit about my State, which unfortunately some of my colleagues like to talk about my State as well. I always encourage them to stay focused on their States. They have a lot to do with their own States. My State is the great State of Alaska, which always seems to get a lot of attention in this Committee.

And it should, because it is a great State. But we are a unique State. The U.S. Supreme Court just came out with a very big opinion about 4 or 5 months ago called Sturgeon v. Frost. It was an interpretation of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, what we refer to in Alaska as ANILCA, a 9 to 0 opinion written by Justice Kagan. Huge for my State, that essentially says—not essentially, it did say—Alaska is unique, Alaska is different, and the Congress has stated that many times in ANILCA, and in other Federal statutes.

This is important, because we have a different striking of the balance between conservation and environmental issues and the need to actually develop our economy, which unfortunately, a lot of people in this building don't remember, that is something that is important in Alaska.

Can you commit to me and working with me and this Committee to looking at ways in which, given the Sturgeon v. Frost, a 9 to 0 Justice Kagan opinion looking at new regulations to reset the way in which Federal agencies like the Fish and Wildlife Service look at Alaska lands under ANILCA, with a new regulatory package or another way in which to implement that very, very important Supreme Court case, which essentially said Federal agencies, Democrat and Republican Federal agencies, have been treating Alaska wrongly under the law, and Alaska is unique under ANILCA, and there needs to be a reset.

This is Justice Kagan saying this. Can you commit to work with me on this issue, Ms. Skipwith?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I am familiar with that case, and I commit to working with you and your office to figure out a path forward and looking at what regulations to align with what the court cases says.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you very much.

Let me ask one final question. It is again a bit of a unique Alaska issue, particularly in southeast Alaska. We have a growing problem with the sea otter population, which has essentially exploded. And in many ways, harms the interests of the communities in southeast Alaska, particularly our fishermen. This is a problem that has been in the works for years.

We need to coordinate Federal agencies, State agencies, key stakeholders in Alaska, on a way in which to address this growing problem. Can I get your commitment to work with me and the Federal agencies to get to Alaska soon, but also to work with us on convening other Federal agencies to help us with this growing problem that is negatively impacting many, many different stakeholder groups in Alaska?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I commit to that. I have heard from you as well as from others about the impacts of the overpopulation of the sea otters, and I look forward to working with you on that, if confirmed.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

I again want to thank both of you. I look forward to strongly supporting both of your nominations in this Committee and on the floor of the Senate.

Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much, Senator Sullivan.

Before turning to Senator Van Hollen, we are in the middle of a vote, and Senator Carper has gone. I have gone; Senator Cramer will be acting in the Chair capacity until we return.

Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank both of you for your testimony.

Ms. Lemos, I hadn't planned to ask you about this, but I think your answers require it. Neither you nor I are medical doctors, right?

Ms. LEMOS. Correct.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. But we would both agree that it has been established that smoking cigarettes increases the chance of lung cancer, right?

Ms. LEMOS. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And your testimony is that you would support the views of the scientific community with respect to conclusions on climate change, right?

Ms. LEMOS. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. And isn't it the case that the overwhelming majority of scientists believe that human activity is the primary cause of climate change?

Ms. LEMOS. The majority of that which I have read, yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK. And I hope you will clarify this for the record, because there is a great concern right now that individuals like you, whose primary job is going to be to get to the bottom of facts and apply the science, are going to fear the politics when we want people focused on the science. So I hope you will clarify all of that in your written responses.

So, Ms. Skipwith, thank you for your interest in serving. As Senator Cardin mentioned, we have a great interest in Maryland and in the other Bay States in protecting the Chesapeake Bay. The Fish and Wildlife Service is a big part of that.

We have two wildlife refuges in Maryland, Blackwater and Elk Neck. We are going to be looking forward to working with you. We have a bipartisan legislative proposal with Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Senator Cardin, and myself, to authorize more Fish and Wildlife grants to help protect the Bay. And I just look for your commitment, if you get through the nomination process, to work with us on that.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes, you have my commitment.

I also want to say, thank you very much. Last year, there was the National Urban Wildlife Refuge Day. You sent over a citation with Katherine Provost.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes.

Ms. SKIPWITH. It was absolutely wonderful to get that recognition. That is something that we are doing across the country, is really recognizing that engaging with those audiences that are those nontraditional audiences, that is the way to ensure that that conservation stewardship lasts beyond just this generation.

So your support really means a lot. We look forward to doing that again this year.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. I was pleased, I got good feedback after that meeting.

So let me ask you about the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Because as you indicated in your testimony, one of your missions is to protect the flyways and migratory birds. You agree that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is an important part of that strategy, right?

Ms. SKIPWITH. I do believe, yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK. So when we had the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the damages under that Act required BP and others

to pay $100 million in damages because of the mass killing of migratory birds that was caused by that oil spill.

But the Department of Interior has since changed their legal interpretation of the damages provisions. When I asked Secretary Zinke about this, when he was still the Secretary, he denied that the Department of Interior's reinterpretation of the damage provisions of the MBTA meant that oil companies would no longer be liable for damages for mass killings of birds from oil spills.

That is not correct, is it? In other words, the reinterpretation does mean that oil companies will no longer be liable for the mass killing of migratory birds through oil spills. Isn't that a fact?

Ms. SKIPWITH. So, Senator, with the Solicitor's opinion that came out for the MBTA, it deals with the incidental take of migratory birds. So there are other laws.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. No, I'm asking you, we just want to get the facts. I am talking about this treaty, right? Under this treaty, isn't it a fact that the Department of Interior's reinterpretation means that we will no longer be able to collect damages against oil companies for the mass killing of migratory birds caused by oil spills? Yes or no.

Ms. SKIPWITH. It is about the intentional versus incidental take of migratory birds.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So, intentional, right? So what you are saying is that unless BP intentionally created an oil spill with the purpose of killing migratory birds, then we wouldn't be able to collect damages? Right?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Then there would be, there would be recourse.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So the question is, why. Do you support this reinterpretation, or do you want to work with us to modify it? Because it seems a ridiculous result, that you have got an important damage provision of that Act, you, meaning the Department of Interior.

Ms. SKIPWITH. So, Senator, when looking at that characterization that you just gave, the Department went back, looked at what is the intent of the law, what is the history of the law, and then looking at what are the different case laws that came out of it. And there is a lot of ambiguity in that.

So when looking at what is the opinion that was written for the Department to follow, if confirmed, it would be following that Solicitor's opinion, in which we know that there are other laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, there is also the Bald and Golden Protection Act for others ways for——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Right, but you might have a mass killing of birds that are not necessarily an endangered species, then you're not going to be able to collect damages under the Endangered Species Act, right? So that is why this was an important tool.

Anyway, I will follow up. At least you answered the question in a straightforward manner, which is that what the Department of Interior did has made it impossible to collect damages in the kind of scenario we saw under the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. I think that that is a huge mistake.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CRAMER [presiding]. Senator Gillibrand, you are welcome to 5 minutes.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Ms. Skipwith, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is one of the National Resource Trustees for the Hudson River. As you may be aware, the EPA recently finalized the certificate of completion for General Electric's dredging of PCBs from the Hudson River.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has been on record raising concerns about the continued ecological threat posed by PCBs remaining in the river, and has called for additional remediation to remove more of the remaining PCBs from the Hudson. This is a view shared by the State of New York, and there are real, legitimate concerns that GE's dredging thus far has failed to accomplish the goal of protecting public health and the environment.

Do you support the EPA's decision to issue a certificate of completion for the Hudson River dredging?

Ms. SKIPWITH. So, Senator, thank you very much for that question. That was a decision that was made by EPA. The Fish and Wildlife Service does serve as an advisor on that committee. So knowing that their role as a trustee would then be to work on the remediation to figure out, to return the vegetation, returning the natural, to much of the natural state as possible. And so we would look forward to continuing to work with EPA and also with the citizens and organizations within New York.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Were you consulted by the EPA before they made the decision?

Ms. SKIPWITH. So, I was in meetings involving EPA on this matter.

Senator GILLIBRAND. And do you think, as the new Director, you will have the capacity to influence further decisionmaking?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I believe that if Director, I would look at the science, and I would provide my recommendation as an advisor to EPA.

Senator GILLIBRAND. And do you have, at this moment, any ideas about what recommendations or what you could do to actually focus on the ongoing ecological impacts of PCBs that are remaining in the river?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I would have to get briefed on the status of where things are at in order to appropriately address that question.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Once you get your sea legs and you have had the opportunity to review the issues, will you write a letter to my office about ways that you intend to pursue making sure that there's ecological stability in the Hudson River?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I commit to doing that.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Lyme disease, as the Department of Health and Human Services Tick-Borne Disease Working Group reported last year, tick-borne diseases are a serious public health threat. Lyme disease infects nearly half a million Americans each year, and the range of the ticks that carry the bacteria that cause Lyme has been expanding.

Humans and pets can acquire Lyme anywhere they come into contact with deer ticks, working, enjoying the yard, camping, hiking, hunting, or otherwise being outdoors. Nationally, the cases involving Lyme disease and tick-borne illnesses have led to an estimated $1.3 billion in direct medical costs each year.

If confirmed, will you prioritize any effort that the Fish and Wildlife Services can take to coordinate with local communities and other agencies to address Lyme disease in deer and other wildlife populations?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I am not very familiar with this topic, so would look forward, if confirmed, to get up to speed. And then working with other Federal agencies and other State agencies to work on this issue.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Last—well, not last, next. Pesticides. The preponderance of scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that neonic pesticides have negative impacts on non-target species, including bees and birds. I was therefore disappointed by the Fish and Wildlife Service's decision in August 2018, to reverse an Obama era ban on the use of neonics and genetically modified organisms in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Our refuges are established for the primary purpose of protecting wildlife. So this decision appears to benefit agro-chemical companies over the species that you have a responsibility to protect. Given your decade of prior work experience at Monsanto, I am concerned about reports that you were actively involved in making this decision.

Will you please explain what role you played in this reversal and why you did not recuse yourself to prevent a conflict of interest as required by ethical guidelines you signed regarding conflicts of interest with former employers?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I was not involved in the decisionmaking for this process. And also, I have worked closely with our ethics department to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest in any matters that I am involved in.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Will you commit to working with Congress to make sure that we can work on getting neonic pesticides out of the refuges that you are asked to protect?

Ms. SKIPWITH. So, Senator, pesticides is one and so are GMOs, are a way for the Service, in order to meet its wildlife forged goals. So it actually provides an advantage for our wildlife. And knowing that that is just one of the tools in the tool box in order for the Fish and Wildlife Service to meet its goals would have that as a recommendation for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and right now, as it stands, it is a case by case basis for a refuge manager to decide if it is compatible to use GMOs or pesticides in that refuge.

Senator GILLIBRAND. OK.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

I guess I will recognize myself now for 5 minutes.

First of all, thank you both for your willingness to serve and for being here. Thank you for your willingness to sit through this.

We are, as Chairman Barrasso said, in the middle of a vote series, so people will come and go. And I'm going to do my best to fill the time in the meantime.

Ms. Skipwith, first of all, thank you for coming by my office yesterday. When Secretary Bernhardt was going through this process, and of course Deputy Secretary Wallace as well, or Assistant Secretary Wallace as well, they came by. I think in the case of Sec-

retary Bernhardt, he had to come by twice, as a matter of fact, to talk about North Dakota specific issues.

I just want to home in on one in particular that we covered, which is, of course, Fish and Wildlife Service waterfall production areas, which in the State of North Dakota—North Dakota is in that flyway. We are a prairie pothole region. As I often like to say, South Dakota is a sod buster State; we are a swamp buster State. We have a lot of water, a lot of wetlands that have been stewarded very well by the landowners long before there were laws and incentives attached to it.

The waterfall production areas created a concern at home, a very serious concern. Not the WPAs themselves, but rather, the enforcement of them in recent years, and maybe even the last couple of decades, because it has become what was once a cooperative, collaborative, community conservation program, it has become a contentious one, mostly over what I call pretty heavy handed enforcement, a sense of government superiority over the private landowner. And I have heard it not from a few, not from several, not even from dozens, but hundreds of landowners that have expressed concerns about the enforcement of that important program. The status quo is just not acceptable.

When Secretary Bernhardt and I met, we covered basically three issues, three action items. I want to restate them for you. One would be a request to review and update the guidance, specifically guidance to provide greater clarity and consistency in the enforcement of these rules. I think the lack of consistency is one of the problems. I think the aggressiveness of it is probably another one, but at least provide some consistency.

Then to establish an effective appeals process for landowners if they disagree with the determinations by the Service. One of the things we have seen many times is that if a landowner disagrees with a determination, and their only appeal process is right back to the same people that disappointed them the first time, the second time, the third time until they are out of money, and we really feel like we need to establish a more effective appeals process.

Then third, to finish updated modern easement maps. I don't know if you have ever looked at them, but some of the maps I have looked at to first determine the easements are a circle in the middle of a section of land, and today the section of land is a wetland. And there is no real evidence, historical evidence, to support oftentimes the Service's position.

So, now, I noticed—by the way, you missed an opportunity to answer the easiest question I have heard since I have been here when Senator Sullivan asked if you would commit to coming to Alaska. Now, I would have said yes, right away, I will be right there, can we go this weekend? But anyway, I would love to have your commitment that you would come to North Dakota, meet with my farmers, my landowners, as well as the other conservation community, and work on this stuff and iron it out to greater satisfaction than so far.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator——

Senator CARPER. Could I just make a quick point?

[Laughter.]

Senator CARPER. There is a tradition, and sort of a protocol that folks are visiting when confirmed, they come by the order in which the State entered the Union and when they ratified the Constitution. I wanted to mention that.

[Laughter.]

Senator CRAMER. Senator Sullivan prefers alphabetically.

[Laughter.]

Senator CRAMER. But as for me, we are in the middle. We appreciate that. And your commitment to work really hard on these issues, because it really is contentious, and I want cooperation, because I think conservation works better when everybody is working together. Is that fair?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes, that is very fair. And thank you very much for your time and very candid conversation. I know the Fish and Wildlife Service is working very hard on the maps, and looking into an appropriate appeals process to make sure that there is due process.

I commit to coming out to North Dakota to look at this.

Senator CRAMER. And on to Alaska.

[Laughter.]

Ms. SKIPWITH. And Alaska. Because one of the things I have learned, too, as being in my current role, and which something that is a priority for me, if confirmed, is understanding what is going on in the field and on the ground. It makes a difference when talking to a lot of the stakeholders.

And one of the things is that 60 percent of the land here in the U.S. is privately owned. In order for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to meet its mission, it is about collaboration with private landowners, with States, with State agencies, and other Federal agencies as well. So that is a huge priority for me.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you.

Thank you both, and I have adequately fulfilled my time, and the leadership has returned. So I will go and vote second.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO [presiding]. Thanks, Senator Cramer. We appreciate your role in chairing the Committee in our absence.

Senator Carper has returned.

I know you had a couple of additional questions that you would like to ask before we adjourn to go back for the second vote.

Senator CARPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would ask if I could, Mr. Chairman, for unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter from wildlife protection organizations who are not supporting Ms. Skipwith's nomination, as well as a letter from former Department of Interior career staff.

Senator BARRASSO. Without objection.

[The referenced information follows:]

September 10, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Opposition to the Nomination of Aurelia Skipwith as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dear Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper,

On behalf of our organizations and millions of members, we urge you to reject the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to be the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In her role as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Ms. Skipwith has undermined scientific integrity and the work of career scientists at the Service and circumvented the Endangered Species Act at the behest of the coal industry, putting numerous species at risk of extinction. In addition, while Ms. Skipwith has worked for two years within the Department, her prior experience does not meet the statutory requirements — that an individual have scientific training and experience in wildlife and fisheries management — that are required by law to be the Director of Fish and Wildlife Service.

As detailed in an exposé by the Washington Post, and in records obtained via the Freedom of Information Act, Ms. Skipwith was instrumental in an effort to undermine safeguards for endangered wildlife in Appalachia — including the Guyandotte River and Big Sandy crayfish — to green-light mountaintop coal mines owned by political benefactors of the Trump administration.[1] Ms. Skipwith pushed to overrule the career scientists at the Service that were attempting to develop conservation measures to protect these crayfish from water pollution from these mines. At Ms. Skipwith's insistence, an industry-written plan was deemed acceptable, even when the career scientists had warned it would ravage the crayfishes' habitat. Scientific integrity is the hallmark of what makes the Endangered Species Act the most effective conservation law in the world. Her actions blindsided Service scientists who were following the law's clear mandate to use the best available science in developing a conservation plan for these species.

In her two years as a political appointee within the Department of Interior, Ms. Skipwith has been involved in efforts to weaken the Endangered Species Act's implementing regulations and strip protections from our nation's most vulnerable species, including the grizzly bear, American burying beetle, Mexican wolf, and dunes sagebrush lizard. Her official calendars show she was also involved in efforts to weaken the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, weaken protections for the

[1] *See* Juliet Eilperin, How the West Virginia coal industry changed federal endangered species policy, The Washington Post (May 10, 2019) *available at*: https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/how-the-west-virginia-coal-industry-changed-federal-endangered-species-policy/2019/05/10/56d28de0-4bf0-11e9-b79a-961983b7e0cd_story.html?utm_term=.8b9d794bac05

wildlife refuge network from dangerous pesticides, and weaken protections for National Monuments. Ms. Skipwith is clearly ideologically opposed to the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and would not be able to separate her personal biases from the science-based decisions required of the Director.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is a unique federal agency that regularly deals with complex scientific issues relating to the conservation of the natural world at the local, national and global scale. Recognizing this, Congress took the unusual step of requiring that the President only appoint a Director who is "by reason of scientific education and experience, knowledgeable in the principles of fisheries and wildlife management."[2] Ms. Skipwith's academic and professional career demonstrate that, while accomplished, she lacks the necessary scientific education and experience to be the Director.

As recently as 2013, Ms. Skipwith was a summer legal intern with the U.S. Department of Agriculture where she worked in the Office of Technology Transfer and the Foreign Agriculture Service. She was general counsel at AVC Global, a company she co-founded, and she worked at Monsanto prior to law school. Ms. Skipwith has certainly had a successful career, but none of her experiences or education remotely qualifies her to run the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Every one of the 12 prior directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service since 1964 has had, at a minimum, a degree in fisheries or wildlife management or a closely related field. One prior Director has had a Ph.D., eight had master's degrees, and three had bachelor's degrees in a wildlife field. More importantly, nearly all prior directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service spent significant time either working within the Fish and Wildlife Service or at a state fish and game agency. The average amount of time served by prior directors before being nominated was approximately 16.5 years of relevant experience. Ms. Skipwith, unfortunately, has no relevant work experience related to conservation or wildlife management.

PAST DIRECTORS OF THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Name	Presidential Administration	Period Served	Confirmed?	Experience/Education in Wildlife Management
Dan Ashe	Obama	2011-2017	YES	M.S. in Marine Affairs; 15 years at FWS
Sam Hamilton (died in office)	Obama	2009-2011	YES	B.S. in Biology; 30 years at FWS
H. Dale Hall	G.W. Bush	2005-2009	YES	M.S. in Fisheries Management; 27 years at FWS
Steven A. Williams	G.W. Bush	2002-2005	YES	Ph.D in Forestry; 7 years at Massachusetts Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife
Jamie Rappaport Clark	Clinton	1997-2001	YES	M.S. in wildlife ecology; 13 years at FWS
Mollie Hanna Beattie	Clinton	1993-1996	YES	M.S. in Forestry; 5 years at VT Dept. of Forests & Nat. Resources

[2] 16 U.S.C. §742(b).

John F. Turner	G.H.W. Bush	1989–1993	YES	M.S. in Wildlife Management; WY State Senator for 20 years
Frank Harper Dunkle	Reagan	1986-1989	YES	M.S. in Wildlife Management; 17 years Montana Fish and Game; 3 years at FWS
Robert A. Jantzen	Reagan	1981–1985	YES	B.S. in Wildlife Management: 30 years at AZ Game and Fish Depart
Lynn Adams Greenwalt	Nixon/Carter	1974–1981	YES	M.S. in Wildlife Management; 21 years at FWS
Spencer H. Smith	Nixon	1970–1973	YES	B.S. in Wildlife Management; 17 years at FWS
John S. Gottschalk	Nixon	1964–1970	YES	M.S. in Fisheries Management; 19 years at FWS

Ms. Skipwith's overall lack of experience and background in wildlife management, together with her ideological opposition to the protection of our nation's wildlife, disqualifies her for such a critical position. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to oppose Ms. Skipwith's nomination as Director of FWS.

Sincerely,

Atlanta Audubon Society
Coal River Mountain Watch
Coastal Plains Institute
Center for Biological Diversity
Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Protection Information Center
Howling for Wolves
Klamath Forest Alliance
MASS Audubon
Northern Jaguar Project
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Rocky Mountain Wild
Save the Manatee Club
Trap Free Montana
Trap Free Montana Public Lands
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western Watersheds Project
WildEarth Guardians
Wild Zone Conservation League

September 8, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Subject: Opposition to the Confirmation of Aurelia Skipwith as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

We are writing to oppose the confirmation by the U.S. Senate of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Ms. Skipwith lacks the training and experience necessary for this position. Her background consists largely of serving as a consultant or attorney dealing with non-wildlife and non-conservation issues. Ms. Skipwith's job history includes potential conflicts of interest which raise serious questions about her ability to act in the public interest for the welfare of public lands, migratory birds, fish, wildlife, and threatened and endangered species.

We write this letter as concerned Federal retirees with a combined 665.5 years of working for the Federal government (627.5 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and 38 years with the National Park Service). Our jobs included Field Supervisor, Assistant Field Supervisor, Supervisory Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Supervisory Ecologist, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Special Agent, Project Leader. Environmental Contaminants Specialist, Public Affairs Specialist, Freedom of Information Act Office, and Park Superintendent.

The practice by President Trump of placing unqualified people into positions of power undermines the morale of the Federal employees, weakens the public trust, and causes irreversible losses to precious natural resources.

Aurelia Skipwith Lacks the Training and Experience to be Director of the Service

Federal law 16 USC § 742(b) clearly states "...No individual may be appointed as the Director unless he is, by reason of scientific education and experience, knowledgeable in the principles of fisheries and wildlife management." While Ms. Skipwith holds a bachelor's degree in general biology, a master's degree in molecular genetics, and a law degree, she does not have the necessary education, experience,

or training in the principles of fish and wildlife management or conservation. Her career has been spent entirely in unrelated positions - crop science, patent and business law, and corporate affairs.

The Director of the Service must possess a high level of appropriate knowledge, experience, and competence because the approximately 9000-person agency is a science-heavy and complex organization to effectively manage and run. The agency's responsibilities encompass all aspects of the protection, conservation, and management of fish, wildlife, migratory birds, and threatened and endangered species at national and international levels. This requires its Director to have a comprehensive understanding of fisheries, land management, wildlife law enforcement, ecology, and conservation biology.

The Service has a long history of distinguished Directors who possessed advanced training and extensive experience in wildlife management, ecology, or biological conservation prior to their appointments as leaders of the agency. Former Wyoming State Senator John Turner (R-WY) possessed a master's degree in wildlife ecology, was an expert on the Bald Eagle and had extensive experience with wetlands. The late Mollie Beattie, the first woman to head the agency, had a master's degree in forestry, had served as Commissioner of the Vermont Commission of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and had served as the Deputy Secretary of the Vermont Agency for Natural Resources. The last confirmed Director, Dan Ashe, was trained in marine affairs and wetlands, had served as Chief of the Service's National Wildlife Refuge Systems, and had served as the Science Advisor to the Director of the Service.

The current Administration also attempted to appoint another unqualified person to the position of Acting Director of the Service, but this candidate was prevented by his lack of educational qualifications. Greg Sheehan served as Deputy Director of the Service for 14 months from June 2017 to August 2018. According to a story by the Associated Press on October 23, 2018, former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke tried to appoint Acting Deputy Director Sheehan to the position of Acting Director of the Service, but Sheehan was barred from that position because he does not have a required science degree for the federal post.

Although Ms. Skipwith has a degree in molecular genetics, she lacks the necessary background, training, and experience in ecology, natural resources management, or biological conservation. Without this fundamental understanding of fish and wildlife resources, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for her to effectively guide and manage the complex and controversial issues surrounding the Nation's precious wildlife, fisheries, and imperiled species as is required of the Director of the Service. Simply stated, she does not meet the statutory qualifications as described in 16 USC § 742(b) for confirmation for the position.

Aurelia Skipwith has Demonstrated that She is Unsuitable to be Director of the Service

After completing her academic training, Ms. Skipwith spent nine years in a variety of positions, none of which were related to fisheries or wildlife, and all of which were apparently related to pest-control issues. This included an internship in 2013 at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and almost seven years at the Monsanto Company (2006-2012) bringing new agricultural products to the commercial market, managing operations and communications, and dealing with issues regarding conventional and GMO agricultural crops. Ms. Skipwith was General Counsel for AVC Global, a company she co-founded, from May 2016 to April 2017. She started her current position as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks at the Department of Interior in April 2017.

During Ms. Skipwith's short tenure in her current position at the Department of Interior, the agency has made unprecedented and biologically unsupportable changes that resulted in devastating consequences and irreparable harm to natural resources, public lands, wildlife, and the American public. Some of these include: scaling back protections to listed plants and animals, thereby weakening the Endangered Species Act; catering to the interests of the pesticide and fossil fuel companies, which harms wildlife and natural resources; and, severely altering the boundaries of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments in Utah to benefit private interests.

On August 12, 2019, with Ms. Skipwith serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the Department of Interior made significant changes to the regulations implementing the Endangered Species Act. These new regulations not only provide absolutely zero benefit to endangered plants and animals, but they have far reaching negative impacts to the recovery and very survival of both currently listed species and those that are imperiled and currently without protection. The revisions fundamentally weaken section 4, the conditions under which species and critical habitat are listed or designated; allow the consideration of economic costs of protecting a species rather than solely biological issues during the listing process; and turn the process for protecting threatened species into a bureaucratic Gordian knot.

Further, the revisions tear out the essence of the protections and conservation for listed and proposed species carried out by Federal agencies under section 7. Since the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, section 7 has helped many listed species to persist, become more secure, and reduced the likelihood of their extinction. Studies have clearly demonstrated that the presence of endangered and threatened plants and animals have not prevented implementation of the vast majority of projects; most projects have proceeded with minimal delay and cost and minor modifications, while minimizing or avoiding adverse effects to the listed species.

During Ms. Skipwith's tenure at the Department of Interior, the Service repeatedly has put the interests of the pesticide industry ahead of imperiled wildlife. On August 8, 2018, Reuters reported the agency had reversed a 2014 decision prohibiting bee-killing neonicotinoid pesticides and genetically modified, pesticide-resistant crops on National Wildlife Refuges. Ms. Skipwith's tenure at Monsanto does not give us confidence that she would put natural resource concerns ahead of corporate concerns of pesticide companies.

On July 21, 2017, the Washington Post reported Ms. Skipwith ordered a review of Federal rules that prevented hunters from killing bears and wolves in National Parks and the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in the State of Alaska using techniques that include killing of bear cubs and wolf pups with their mothers during the season when they are denning, baiting bears with greasy doughnuts in Denali National Park, and killing large predators for the sole purpose of increasing the number of game animals for hunting rather than maintaining natural ecosystems. Ms. Skipwith sent memos to the National Park Service and the Service in July 2017 requesting that they reassess rules on "...various prohibitions that directly contradict State of Alaska authorizations and wildlife management decisions."

Ms. Skipwith also played a key role in a decision that sets a precedent for coal mining companies to evade essential and necessary measures for the protection of endangered species, as reported by the Washington Post on May 10, 2019. From documents obtained through Freedom of Information Act, Ms. Skipwith worked closely with Landon Tucker Davis, a former coal lobbyist, who was Trump's campaign director in West Virginia and Virginia. After the November 2016, election, Davis was appointed to a political position at the Office of Surface Mining. There he was documented in emails obtained through

the Freedom of Information Act to have contacted Ms. Skipwith to expedite the approval of permits for mountaintop coal removal which the Service was reviewing as required by law, since they would affect federally endangered and threatened species. This political influence on Ms. Skipwith appears to have been successful.

In a July 7, 2017, email to Acting Director Sheehan, Ms. Skipwith stated she was concerned the Fish and Wildlife Service career biologists were "...overstepping their bounds..." and that the agency was "...stonewalling their ability to move forward claiming the (endangered) Guyandotte River and Big Sandy River crayfishes." This demonstrates her apparent lack of understanding of the Endangered Species Act and ties to industry and lobbyists. In a July 17, 2017, email, Vincent Devito, the Counselor for Energy Policy, a newly created appointed position at the Department of Interior, approved the projects without any federally required biological or legal review, restrictions, or approvals by the Service. This is a clear departure of the norm that appears to be in violation of fish and wildlife responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act.

The above examples show Ms. Skipwith's questionable leadership, lack of understanding of fish and wildlife resources, apparent conflicts of interest, and willingness to put corporate interests ahead of Service responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act.

Aurelia Skipwith should not be confirmed as Director of the Service

The Service is charged with protecting our public lands, fish, wildlife, migratory birds, and threatened and endangered species for all Americans, as well as future generations. Aurelia Skipwith's woeful lack of appropriate and necessary training and experience, potential conflicts of interest, industry ties, and questionable judgment make her ill-suited to lead the Agency and her confirmation would place our most cherished natural resources at great risk.

In the decades we spent working at the Service and the National Park Service, we saw firsthand the threats to our public lands, fish, wildlife, migratory birds, and listed and imperiled species. The position of Director is not one for which on-the-job training is appropriate. We believe that Aurelia Skipwith will fundamentally damage, significantly alter for the worse, and irretrievably undermine the protection of our Nation's heritage and the morale of the agency. Therefore, we strongly urge the U.S. Senate not to confirm her as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact Chris Nagano, Paula Halupa, or Steve Schwarzbach at foxbatnagano@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Christopher D. Nagano
Former Deputy Assistant Field Supervisor
Sacramento Field Office
27 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Paula J. Halupa
Former Fish and Wildlife Biologist (Listing and Recovery)
South Florida Ecological Services Office
25 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Steve Schwarzbach, PhD
Former Chief, Environmental Contaminants Division
Sacramento Field Office
12 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Felix Smith
Former Field Supervisor
Sacramento Field Office
34 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Michael Hoover
Former Assistant Field Supervisor
Bay-Delta Fish and Wildlife Office
25 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Cay Collette Goude
Former Assistant Field Supervisor (Endangered Species)
Sacramento Field Office
31 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Joy Winckel
Former Senior Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
26 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office

Elizabeth Warne
Former Senior Biologist, Endangered Species Division
Sacramento Field Office
22 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Robert Frakes, PhD
Former Supervisory Ecologist
South Florida Ecological Services Office
21 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Susan K. Moore
Former Field Supervisor
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
14 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Robert D. Williams
Former Nevada State Supervisor
Nevada Fish and Wildlife Service Office
32 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Denise Klimas
Former Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Cary NC/Remote for R4
11 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Loyal A. Mehrhoff, PhD
Former Field Supervisor
Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office
12 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Liberta Scotto
Former Fish and Wildlife Biologist
South Florida Ecological Services Office
11 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Thomas H. Richardson
Former Branch Chief, Energy and Power Division
Ecological Services Office, Sacramento, California
24 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

John G. Mendoza
Former Criminal Investigator
Chico, California
36 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Christy Smith
Former Project Leader
Desert National Wildlife Complex
25 ½ years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Pete Sorensen
Former Division Chief
Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Office
37 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Patricia Carroll
Former Freedom of Information Act Officer
Regional Office, Portland, Oregon
23 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Brian Czech
Former Conservation Biologist
Headquarters (Arlington, Virginia)
18 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Robert Fike
Former Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Vero Beach Fish and Wildlife Office
16 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Patrick A. Pitts
Former Fish and Wildlife Biologist
South Florida Field Office
16 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Philip Carroll
Former Public Affairs Specialist
Oregon State Office, Pacific Regional Office
18 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Gail Kobetich
Former Field Supervisor
Carlsbad Field Office
42 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dale A. Pierce
Former Deputy Field Supervisor
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
27 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Don Fruge
Former Regional Program Supervisor
Multiple stations and regions
39 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dr Mary Ellen Mueller
Former Fisheries Manager
California Nevada Operations
23 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Russell Galipeau
Former Park Superintendent
Channel Islands National Park
38 years with the National Park Service

Senator CARPER. How does your faith guide you as you would approach serving in this capacity?

Ms. SKIPWITH. My faith? My faith has guided me from an early age, and that was instilled in me from——

Senator CARPER. With respect to this job.

Ms. SKIPWITH. With this job?

Senator CARPER. Fish and Wildlife Service. How would it guide you?

Ms. SKIPWITH. My conscience?

Senator CARPER. Your faith.

Ms. SKIPWITH. My faith. It is about knowing that the decisions that I make, that's how I base them on including my background and education and science and on law. So I ask every day for God's guidance, because it is a huge role. There is a lot that goes into it. And it is working with the great people of the Service to ensure that that mission is complete, and that includes having faith to get that done.

Senator CARPER. Sometimes we talk on our Committee about this amazing planet that God has given us, and that we have a moral responsibility to protect the people and the plants and the animals that are here. Few agencies in the Federal Government really have touched that responsibility and hold that responsibility more than the Fish and Wildlife Service.

I would just say to you as a person of faith talking to a person of faith that you will be guided by that as well.

Ms. SKIPWITH. Yes, sir.

Senator CARPER. Our country—again, for you, Ms. Skipwith, if I could—our country's modern conservation movement stands on the shoulders of many influential scientists who have over the past, I guess, 150 years, shaped America's most important conservation laws, agencies, and principles. Would you take a second and tell us which conservation focused scientist has been most influential in your career, and how has their work influenced your approach to fisheries and wildlife management?

Ms. SKIPWITH. So, thank you very much for that.

Senator CARPER. You are welcome.

[Laughter.]

Ms. SKIPWITH. I will say, one of the things is, looking at President Teddy Roosevelt, and it really goes to the essence of——

Senator CARPER. I served with him.

[Laughter.]

Senator BARRASSO. I thought it was Franklin Delano Roosevelt that you served with.

[Laughter.]

Senator CARPER. I get confused.

Ms. SKIPWITH. And knowing that that is really the basis and the essence of the generation, the mission for the Fish and Wildlife Service. And it goes back to a lot of what other leaders within the conservation community look back to in order to guide their steps. So that is what I would say is one of the leading people that I would look to.

Senator CARPER. I was asking, my question was scientists. I asked you to share with us what conservation focused scientist has been most influential in your career, and how has the work of that

scientist influenced your approach to fisheries and wildlife, fisheries management.

Ms. SKIPWITH. So I would say offhand, looking at, I would say Rob Frazier, he was a leading scientist, in order to change technology that dealt with how do you ensure that there is a balance in the environment as well as making sure that there is productivity for the people that are on the ground generating crops as well. A lot of that, what I have learned in my time in the science realm, is the theories can be applied to many different industries as well.

Senator CARPER. Thank you.

Dr. Lemos, after the unprecedented historic flooding during Hurricane Harvey, which caused chemical explosions, as you will recall, in Texas, at the Arkema facility, the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board issued a report calling the industry to better understand and prepare for the safety hazards caused by more frequent and severe weather events. Do you agree that industry must do more to prepare chemical facilities for the risks posed by climate change?

Ms. LEMOS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CARPER. You are welcome.

Ms. LEMOS. I believe I am familiar with these recommendations and the report. I understand the significant risk that is posed by changing sea levels, rising sea levels, and it has certainly impacted, and I believe it is important, and I support that recommendation for all relevant plants to do the same, and facilities.

Senator CARPER. Thank you.

One last quick question. Ms. Skipwith, if confirmed as Director of Fish and Wildlife Service, would you commit to protecting career staff at Fish and Wildlife Service and bolster their expertise instead of suppressing them?

Ms. SKIPWITH. Senator, I commit to working—I commit to that, yes.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. That is a good answer.

Thank you.

Senator BARRASSO. Well, thank you, Senator Carper.

Thank you to both of you.

Before closing, I want to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record several letters of support for the nomination of Katherine Lemos to be Member and Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

Senator CARPER. I object. Not really.

[Laughter.]

[The referenced information follows:]

UNITED

August 5, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

As an airline pilot with over 20 years of experience as a manager and labor volunteer, I write to you in support of Dr. Katherine Lemos' nomination to the U.S. Chemical Safety Board. I've had the distinct pleasure of collaborating with Dr. Lemos since 2005 in the course of my work for United Airlines and while chairing several aviation safety committees and sub-committees for the Air Line Pilots Association based in Herndon, Virginia. In that time, I've come to know Dr. Lemos as a supremely competent business leader and scientist who possesses unique strengths in building consensus across a diverse range of stakeholders.

During her tenure at the National Transportation Safety Board and at the Federal Aviation Administration, Dr. Lemos and I worked to improve the quantity and quality of aviation-related safety information through data-sharing programs connecting labor, industry, and regulatory agencies. Through her work on initiatives like the Aviation Safety Analysis and Sharing (ASIAS) team, Dr. Lemos brought discipline to the information sharing process and bridged gaps between sometimes skeptical participants. She routinely achieved these results using superior communication skills combined with her reputation for impartiality and objectivity.

While Dr. Lemos is unquestionably viewed as an expert in the field of human factors and safety management, she has also developed a reputation as a talented organizational leader and skilled change agent through her work at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and at Northrop Grumman Corporation. As a program manager in research and development at the FAA, Dr. Lemos implemented business-like efficiencies and processes to an entrenched $125 million organization while minimizing disruption to work flow and to her staff of fifteen managers and researchers. At Northrop Grumman,

her successively challenging leadership roles continue to build her portfolio as a leader and consensus builder in a highly complex and dynamic environment.

In spite of her remarkable skills and qualifications, Dr. Lemos remains a humble and approachable leader. Her reputation among aviation labor and industry safety experts is second to none and I can think of no better person to help build and maintain important relationships while promoting safety through the work of the U.S. Chemical Safety Board.

Sincerely,

Captain Marc Champion
Boeing 787 Fleet

August 19, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senators Barrasso and Carper,

We, as the current Deputy Executive Director of the Accident Investigation and Prevention Office (AVP) in the Aviation Safety Line of Business for the Federal Aviation Administration, and the previous Executive Director of AVP, offer our strong support and endorsement of Katherine Lemos for the role of Board Member and Chair of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB).

With her extensive technical background and experience in front-end technology development both in academia and at NASA, with her demonstrated ability within the FAA's Office of Aircraft Certification to work with stakeholders to pull these technology advancements forward in the adoption and implementation phases, and with robust accident investigation and leadership experience at the NTSB, she quickly became an invaluable asset to AVP and integral to the success of our office.

Because of Katherine's leadership abilities and unique people skills, we routinely applied her strengths to multiple projects. Her ability to work across organizational stovepipes in achieving consensus is profound, especially in situations requiring immediate intervention. In one circumstance, she was asked to step in to lead the Safety Working Group for the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO) to bring a group of federal stakeholders to agreement on the minimum requirements for operational implementation and evaluation of Safety Management Systems (SMS). The committee, comprised of representatives from DOT, NOAA, DHS, DoD, FAA, NASA, and the White House Office of Science and Technology, had been working diligently to come to agreement for several years without closure. She achieved this goal and our commitment to Congress within six months.

In another circumstance, our office needed strong leadership and technical skills to achieve consensus among industry and government stakeholders in the U.S. Commercial Aviation Safety Team (CAST). Specifically, Dr. Lemos worked with aircraft manufacturers, commercial airlines, union representatives, as well as FAA certification engineers to identify a set of safety mitigation strategies to address aircraft loss of control. She used her consensus building and safety advocacy skills as well as her analytical expertise to bring the diverse group of stakeholders to a unanimous decision. As a result, her team delivered an approved set of safety mitigation strategies to CAST leadership ahead of schedule. The mitigation strategies, including new flight

training scenarios and recommended upgrades to future flight deck design, have been voluntarily adopted and are in use today.

Katherine demonstrated her leadership successfully across a range of other assignments within the purview of AVP, and was requested on detail by other offices within the FAA to assist with unique and significant challenges. Several other notable assignments had direct bearing on the FAA's standing with Congress. For example, in coordination with NASA, she spearheaded a cross-agency plan to identify and prioritize near-and long-term safety research topics and investments. She also led a cross-division Safety Management System (SMS) research team within the FAA, successfully achieving key aviation safety goals.

As a consummate safety professional with the ability to adapt and apply her knowledge across domains, her tenacity, and her leadership skills in engaging and drawing every resource, Katherine is the ideal candidate for this role. She is passionate about safety and has a balanced approach to risk mitigation that neither ignores the operator or the owner. We believe she will serve the CSB with an objective and non-partisan approach, and her usual 110% level of energy. We both look forward to engaging her in this new capacity on events that require or benefit from collaboration across party lines as relevant to the CSB's mission and scope.

Sincerely,

Warren Randolph
FAA AVP Deputy Executive Director

Tony Fazio
Former FAA AVP Executive Director

Senator BARRASSO. And over 80 stakeholders who have signed letters of support for Ms. Skipwith's nomination to serve as Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I ask unanimous consent to enter these endorsements into the record. And if there is an objection, I will read each of the names individually, personally, and the letters.

Senator CARPER. In that case, I do not object.

[The referenced information follows:]

Aurelia Skipwith is the Right Choice

Thursday, October 25, 2018

The Boone and Crockett Club today endorsed the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith as the new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director. Skipwith, an attorney and scientist, currently serves as deputy assistant secretary for fish, wildlife, and parks at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

"This is a critical appointment because our fish and wildlife are critical natural resources to our nation," said Paul Phillips, co-chairman of the Club's Conservation Policy Committee. "This might be stating the obvious, but the challenges facing our fish and wildlife require a deeper dive than what just lies on the surface. Skipwith has proven she has the knowledge, experience, and energy to not just maintain, but enhance these resources for all Americans."

"The Boone and Crockett Club has had a close relationship with the Fish and Wildlife Service dating back to 1905 when it was named the Bureau of Biological Survey," explained James L. Cummins, also a co-chairman of the Boone and Crockett Club's Conservation Policy Committee. "This was part of our founder, Theodore Roosevelt's strategy for wildlife conservation, the establishment of expert agencies."

The Bureau of Biological Survey was one of the nation's first conservation and management agencies. In addition to studying birds and mammals, the Survey's responsibilities included managing the nation's first wildlife refuges, controlling predators, enforcing wildlife laws, and conserving dwindling populations of migratory birds. The Bureaus of Fisheries and Biological Survey were transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1939. In 1940, they were combined and named the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

"I have had the privilege of working with Ms. Skipwith in her current capacity at the Department of the Interior," Cummins added. "The nation is fortunate to be the beneficiary of her service."

Jim Matheson
Chief Executive Officer

November 8, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) supports the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to be the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

NRECA is a national service organization for more than 900 not-for-profit rural electric cooperatives providing affordable, reliable electricity to approximately 42 million people in 47 states across our nation. Rural electric cooperatives are small businesses, most of which serve member-consumers, especially those in rural areas, facing significant economic challenges. NRECA believes in responsible stewardship of America's bountiful wildlife.

Ms. Skipwith's background makes her an excellent choice to lead the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She brings to the role unique and beneficial experience in both science and law. In the past two years, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of Interior, she has earned a reputation as a sound and reliable public servant. She will bring this education and institutional knowledge to this prestigious leadership position.

NRECA looks forward to the Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works advancing her nomination to the full Senate for confirmation.

Sincerely,

Jim Matheson
CEO, NRECA

4301 Wilson Blvd. • Arlington, VA 22203-1860 • tel: 703.907.5500 • www.nreca.coop

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

November 13, 2018

Senator John Barrasso
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Barrasso,

I write to proudly endorse the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Ms. Skipwith is a distinguished alumna of Howard University having earned her bachelor of science degree in biology before going on to achieve a master's degree in molecular genetics from Purdue University, and a law degree from the University of Kentucky. Her strong academic credentials are matched by a distinguished professional career. Ms. Skipwith has parlayed her significant experience in both the public and private sector to serve admirably as the current Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of Interior.

It is no surprise that a range of stakeholders and organizations have applauded her nomination. Trade groups, state attorneys general, and foundations have noted Ms. Skipwith's professional demeanor, pragmatism, open-mindedness, and thoughtful approach to the consequential and complex challenges faced by the USFWS.

I also note that Ms. Skipwith's nomination bears historical significance. If confirmed, she would be the first African American to hold this prestigious post. Please call on me if I can add additional reasons for my wholehearted support for Ms. Skipwith's prompt confirmation by the United States Senate.

Excellence in Truth and Service,

Wayne A. I. Frederick, M.D., MBA
President

2400 Sixth Street, NW • Suite 1402
Washington, DC 20059

(202) 806-2500
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www.howard.edu

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

November 13, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

The Public Lands Council (PLC), National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), and American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) wish to express our support of Aurelia Skipwith to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). PLC is the only national organization dedicated solely to representing the roughly 22,000 ranchers who hold federal grazing permits and operate on federal lands. NCBA is the beef industry's largest and oldest national marketing and trade association, representing American cattlemen and women who provide much of the nation's supply of food and own or manage a large portion of America's private property. ASI has been the national trade organization representing the interests of nearly 90,000 sheep ranchers located throughout the country who produce America's lamb and wool since 1865. ASI is a federation of forty-five state sheep associations representing a diverse industry

In her current role as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Ms. Skipwith has been a valued partner and honest broker in her dealings with the livestock industry. A holder of a Juris Doctor from the University of Kentucky and a Master of Science degree in molecular genetics from Purdue University, she has an educational background that exceeds the minimum qualifications for this role. Additionally, her private sector experience in the legal and agricultural professions have prepared her to address the diverse set of issues that will be under her purview if confirmed.

As part of their business operations, livestock producers do vital work that benefits fish and wildlife, as well as the places they call home. They do this by improving water sources, revitalizing habitats, and maintaining the open spaces that Americans enjoy. Having leaders at the Department of Interior who understand the agriculture industry, and role it plays in the stewardship of America's lands and species, is vital to ensure the continuity of our national heritage.

PLC, NCBA, and ASI appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on behalf of our members – the nation's food and fiber producers. We strongly urge the swift confirmation of Aurelia Skipwith.

Sincerely,

Kevin D. Kester
President
National Cattlemen's Beef Assn.

Bob Skinner
President
Public Lands Council

Mike Corn
President
American Sheep Industry Assn.

November 14, 2018

The Honorable Senator John Barrasso M.D.
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Senator Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

I write this letter to strongly support the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to serve as the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I worked closely with Ms. Skipwith during her time as a student at the University of Kentucky College of Law. I know that she possesses both the skillset and traits that make her prepared to serve as the next Director.

Ms. Skipwith was president of the International Law Society student organization while in law school. She took great effort to engage the organization in programming and activities that enhanced the academic experience of her fellow law students. Furthermore, Ms. Skipwith was one of four law students who participated in a new tradition for the graduating class to give back to the school through a class "Legacy Gift." The first gift from this endeavor was a piece of artwork by a local artist that is prominently displayed at the College of Law. Dean David Brennen also engaged Ms. Skipwith for student input into a major marketing research and re-branding initiative for UK College of Law. After her graduation, I continued to follow Ms. Skipwith's career, especially during the time she worked in Lexington, KY for Alltech.

Ms. Skipwith's career experience and academic background provide enough proof that she has the skillset to grasp and resolve complex issues. Further, Ms. Skipwith was one of the most organized and detail-oriented students with whom I had the pleasure of working. When managing programming or needing assistance, she came to me in a timely manner to understand the logistics, asked the right questions and was open to any guidance I may have provided regarding her efforts. She was always, and continues to be, professional, courteous, mature and a great representative for any agency where she may work. I have said before, and will say again, that I am confident Ms. Skipwith will continue to have a bright future ahead. She will be a great asset to our country in this Director position. I urge you to approve her nomination.

Very truly yours,

Daniel P. Murphy, Jr.
Assistant Dean of Community Engagement & Diversity

seeblue.

620 South Limestone | Lexington, KY 40506-0048 | P: 859-257-1161 | F: 859-253-1061 | law.uky.edu

Wm. LACY CLAY
1st District, Missouri

COMMITTEES:

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit
Member,
Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
Member,
Subcommittee on Government Operations

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Member,
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515 -2501

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St. Louis City Office:
6830 Gravois
St. Louis, MO 63116
Phone: (314) 669-9393
Fax: (314) 669-9398

November 14, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

I am writing to extend my highest recommendation on behalf of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith as she seeks confirmation to serve our nation as the new Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Ms. Skipwith began her professional career as my constituent in St. Louis, Missouri. Since that time, the trajectory of her career has continued to rise and expand. She is a knowledgeable professional with a keen insight into policy and passion for science and its use to improve lives.

Aurelia Skipwith is an ardent conservationist and will bring her skill set and enthusiasm to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ms. Skipwith has helped lead many of the top Interior Department priorities for the past year and a half including promoting the enjoyment of our country's public lands, expanding access for hunting and fishing, and leading the historic effort to designate sites on the African American Civil Rights Network, a personal priority of mine.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to know Ms. Skipwith, both as an extremely talented individual and dedicated public servant. I find her to be knowledgeable, fair minded and highly motivated, with a genuine dedication and commitment to her federal agency and its mission. I state, without hesitation, she has the initiative and drive and most importantly, the experience required to succeed as the new appointee to the position of Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

I strongly urge and recommend that Aurelia Skipwith be confirmed as the next appointee to lead the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Please give her your utmost consideration. Thank you for your time and attention, please feel free to contact me for more information.

Sincerely,

Wm. Lacy Clay

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION

November 14, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman
Senate Environment & Public Works Comm.
410 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Environment & Public Works Comm.
410 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) is pleased to endorse the nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The USFWS is one of the most important federal agencies to RMEF and many other sportsmen organizations. RMEF has a vested interest in many issues and decisions that come before the agency, including implementation of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, predator and threatened and endangered species management, ecological services and administration of hunting access on certain federal lands.

Ms. Skipwith is well-suited to serve as USFWS Director. RMEF has enjoyed the opportunity to work with Ms. Skipwith during her tenure as USFWS Deputy Assistant Secretary the past couple of years. Ms. Skipwith has a diverse background with scientific and legal expertise. She is a biologist and attorney with federal agency, private industry and nonprofit experience. This profile indicates she will have the ability to balance the interests of wildlife (including game and nongame species) with land and recreation management.

From RMEF's perspective, the primary issue facing USFWS is removal of recovered species from the threatened and endangered species list, such as grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystems and gray wolves in the Great Lakes states. We are confident Ms. Skipwith will help guide the agency to work with Congress and state wildlife agencies to ensure state management of these predators.

Thank you for the opportunity to endorse Ms. Skipwith's nomination. I encourage you and members of the Committee to contact me or my staff should you require additional information.

Sincerely,

R. Kyle Weaver
President & CEO

5705 Grant Creek Rd. | Missoula, MT 59808-8249 | (800) CALL ELK | WWW.RMEF.ORG

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NEIL L. BRADLEY
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT &
CHIEF POLICY OFFICER

1615 H STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20062
(202) 463-5310

November 15, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

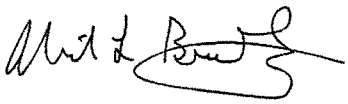
The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to be Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) at the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). Ms. Skipwith is highly qualified to serve in this role and we look forward to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee advancing her nomination to the full Senate for confirmation.

Ms. Skipwith has a distinguished career as a public servant and is an expert on fish, wildlife, and natural habitat policy and regulation. Ms. Skipwith currently serves as DOI's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and has worked closely with stakeholders to provide appropriate guidance for implementing sound federal policy regarding the management and conservation of public lands and wildlife. She has also worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Agency for International Development.

In addition, Ms. Skipwith's experience in the private and non-profit sectors has provided her with the knowledge and expertise to implement federal policy objectives. For example, prior to her time at DOI, she founded an agricultural value chain platform that united small farmers and multinational buyers with the tools needed to meet the growing demand for food.

Ms. Skipwith's confirmation would provide FWS with the key leadership and experience needed at DOI to manage important federal policies. As such, we urge you to swiftly act on Ms. Skipwith's nomination.

Sincerely,



Neil L. Bradley

cc: Members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

November 20, 2018

The Honorable Senator John Barrasso M.D.
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Senator Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators:
I am Harry E. Johnson, Sr. President/CEO of The Memorial Foundation, formally The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial. At the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, I was responsible for raising over $127 million to build the Memorial.

I have known Ms. Skipwith for the past 2 years in her role as Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. When I first heard of her appointment to the Department of the Interior, I was proud of the fact that she would be first person of color and a woman to hold such a distinguished position. In her role, I came to know her as an advocate for me and The Memorial Foundation. She has supported each program held at the MLK Memorial and has shared ideas on how to continue to make the MLK Memorial much more relevant to the broader community. Ms. Skipwith has always been willing to meet with National and Community Leaders not just to hear their concerns, but to also be an advocate for them as well.....her appointment is well deserved and earned.

Now that she has been nominated to become the Director of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I am excited to write this letter on her behalf. Why am I excited? I am excited because she will be the first Black Director and I know that she will bring with her the zeal and ability for helping others at the Fish and Wildlife Service as well as help the environment.

I am sure with Ms. Skipwith's diverse career background as a biologist and lawyer, and with her very positive attitude she will be able to make a difference in the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, just as she has done all across the Interior Department. In my humble opinion, Ms. Skipwith's educational background and her ability to lead people in a variety of settings and disciplines make her more than qualified to serve in this capacity. She will serve our President and the citizens of the United States with honor and distinction. I do hope that the committee advances her appointment.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Harry E. Johnson, Sr.
President/CEO

WWW.THEMEMORIALFOUNDATION.ORG
633 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20004 Phone: (202) 737-5420

Wayne Hubbard & Candice Price
2725 Garfield Avenue, Kansas City, MO 64109
913-334-5177 www.uaotv.com

November 26, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and Committee Members:

On behalf of Urban American Outdoors (UAO) - a nongovernmental organization that inspires conservation stewardship among families in urban areas through national outreach and community initiatives, including a nationally syndicated TV show which has reached millions - I write to fervently express support for Deputy Assistant Secretary Aurelia Skipwith's nomination as the next Director of the U.S. Fish and wildlife Service.

In her current position, Deputy Assistant Secretary Skipwith has championed our nation's heritage of conservation stewardship. For example, at UAO's 2018 Urban Kids Fishing Derby on the National Mall in Washington, DC, she addressed more than 300 family members expressing her support for results-driven conservation stewardship events like our fishing derbies which are held in communities across the country.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Skipwith, with her strong skills set and experience in the public and private sectors, is well suited to lead the agency for which she has been nominated. Thus, I urge you to approve her nomination as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

If any of you have any questions or need additional information, please have a member of your staff contact me at uaotv@aol.com or (913) 334-5177. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Candice Price
Executive Director

THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES
OF THE FLATHEAD NATION
P.O. BOX 278
Pablo, Montana 59855
(406) 275-2700
FAX (406) 275-2806
www.cskt.org

A Confederation of the Salish,
Pend d' Oreille
and Kootenai Tribes

A People of Vision

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Charmel R. Gillin
Myrna L. DuMontier

November 27, 2018

Honorable John A. Barrasso, Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

On behalf of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Tribes) I am writing to you in support of the nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith to be the Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service). I understand that Tribal staff have had constructive discussions with her and believe that she would be an effective leader for the Service. It is also my understanding that Ms. Skipwith shares the Secretary's views of Indian Self-Determination and Tribal Self-Governance as being effective methods of local control governance.

The Tribes have a large and active Natural Resources Department which has a long history of cooperative work with the Service. I am confident that, under Ms. Skipwith's leadership, the Service's role as a productive Tribal partner would only grow.

I urge your Committee to recommend confirmation of Ms. Skipwith to be the next Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Thank you,

Ronald Trahan, Chairman

cc: Senator Jon Tester
Senator Steve Daines

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DeMaurice Smith
Executive Director
NFLPA

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General President
OPCMIA

Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President
IBEW

December 3, 2018

The Honorable Senator John Barrasso M.D.
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate

The Honorable Senator Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

We write to express our strong support of the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to serve as the next Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Ms. Skipwith has established a tremendously impressive track record working with both the public and private sectors. Her diverse education and background provides her with the unique skill set required to address the many complex issues faced by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with Ms. Skipwith in her position as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. Her ability to think critically and derive common sense solutions that are based on sound science has been clearly demonstrated in her actions. We have partnered with Ms. Skipwith on numerous projects to restore our refuge system infrastructure, provide access and change lives by creating a deep respect, love and admiration for the outdoors.

We believe it is vitally important that the next Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service not only possess strong leadership skills and the ability to form public and private partnerships, but also the education and critical decision making skills required to enact policies based on scientific principles free from political and bureaucratic interference. Ms. Skipwith meets and surpasses these qualifications and we urge you to approve her nomination.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Scott Vance
CEO and Executive Director
Union Sportsmen's Alliance

UNION SKILLS. OUTDOOR PASSION. COMMON PURPOSE.

4800 Northfield Lane • Spring Hill, TN 37174 • 877 872 2211 • www.UnionSportsmen.org

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General President
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Kenneth E. Rigmaiden
General President
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Joseph Sellers, Jr.
General President
SMART

DeMaurice Smith
Executive Director
NFLPA

Daniel E. Stepano
General President
OPCMIA

Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President
IBEW

Dennis Williams
President
UAW

July 18, 2019

The Honorable Senator John Barrasso M.D.
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Senator Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

We write to express our strong support of the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to serve as the next Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Ms. Skipwith has established a tremendously impressive track record working with both the public and private sectors. Her diverse education and background provides her with the unique skill set required to address the many complex issues faced by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with Ms. Skipwith in her position as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. Her ability to think critically and derive common sense solutions that are based on sound science has been clearly demonstrated in her actions. We have partnered with Ms. Skipwith on numerous projects to restore our refuge system infrastructure, provide access and change lives by creating a deep respect, love and admiration for the outdoors.

We believe it is vitally important that the next Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service not only possess strong leadership skills and the ability to form public and private partnerships, but also the education and critical decision making skills required to enact policies based on scientific principles free from political and bureaucratic interference. Ms. Skipwith meets and surpasses these qualifications and we urge you to approve her nomination.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Scott Vance
CEO and Executive Director
Union Sportsmen's Alliance

UNION SKILLS. OUTDOOR PASSION. COMMON PURPOSE.

235 Noah Dr., Suite 200 • Franklin, TN 37064 • 877-872-2211 • www.UnionSportsmen.org

In Your Area

NWTF applauds Skipwith nomination

7/19/2019

EDGEFIELD, S.C. — The National Wild Turkey Federation applauds President Trump's recent re-nomination of Aurelia Skipwith for director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and looks forward to her confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

Trump had previously nominated Skipwith, the current Department of the Interior's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, to be the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in November of 2018.

"The NWTF and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service share a strong interest for the conservation of our nation's wildlife and public lands," NWTF CEO Becky Humphries said. "We look forward to working with Ms. Skipwith in her new role, as she has been a great partner in her current role as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Her background in both biology and law make her well suited to this key leadership position and in line with our efforts to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt."

In her current role as Deputy Assistant Secretary for FWP, Skipwith and her team protect lands and waters within the national park and wildlife refuge systems. Skipwith earned her B.S. in biology from Howard University, M.S. in molecular biology from Purdue University, and J.D. from the University of Kentucky College of Law.

As a research biologist and a lawyer, Skipwith trails an extensive professional background in both public stewardship and corporate enterprise.

Read the full release from the Department of the Interior here.
https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-bernhardt-applauds-nomination-aurelia-skipwith-be-director-us-fish-and

About the National Wild Turkey Federation
When the National Wild Turkey Federation was founded in 1973, there were about 1.3 million wild turkeys in North America. After decades of work, that number hit a historic high of almost 7 million turkeys. To succeed, the NWTF stood behind science-based conservation and hunters' rights. Today, the NWTF is focused on the future of hunting and conservation through its Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative – a charge that mobilizes science, fundraising and devoted volunteers to conserve or enhance more than 4 million acres of essential wildlife habitat, recruit at least 1.5 million hunters and open access to 500,000 acres for hunting. For more information, visit **NWTF.org**.

For more information, contact Pete Muller (803) 637-7698

NATIONAL ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT
REFORM COALITION
1050 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20007
tel. 202.333.7461 fax 202.338.2416
www.nesarc.org

July 19, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

On behalf of the National Endangered Species Act Reform Coalition (NESARC), I am writing to express our support of Aurelia Skipwith for the position of Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). With great respect for Ms. Skipwith's exceptional qualifications, we are pleased to see her nomination to this federal leadership role.

NESARC is the country's oldest broad-based, national coalition dedicated solely to achieving improvements to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and its implementation. Our members are committed to promoting effective and balanced legislative and administrative improvements to the ESA that support the protection of fish, wildlife, and plant populations as well as responsible land, water, and resource management.

Ms. Skipwith's substantial understanding of the public and private sectors make her an excellent choice for leadership at FWS. Her experience serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior, combined with her background as a scientist and conservationist, position her well to lead the agency to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats.

NESARC urges the committee to advance this nomination as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact me at ryanv@fb.org, or NESARC's Executive Director, Jordan Smith at jas@vnf.com, with questions or if we may be of additional assistance.

Sincerely,

Ryan R. Yates
Chairman

TREASURE STATE
RESOURCES ASSOCIATION
OF MONTANA

P.O. Box 1700
Helena, MT 59624
(406) 443-5541
treasurestateresources.org
Email: info@treasurestateresources.org

July 22, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
The Honorable Thomas Carper
United States Senate
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

Dear Senator Barrasso and Senator Carper:

On behalf of the Treasure State Resources Association of Montana, I'd like to express our support for the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith of Indiana, to serve as the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Over the past two years, our association members have had the opportunity to work with Ms. Skipwith in her current role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks. We appreciate that she makes it a priority to get into the field and engage stakeholders to understand their perspective on pressing issues.

The Treasure State Resources Association of Montana brings together diverse industry, organized labor, agriculture and recreation groups to work together on issues that affect land use and resource development in Montana.

The organization was formed in 1976 when representatives of organized labor, agriculture and industry recognized they had a common interest in seeing good jobs created by growing Montana's economic opportunities. Later, motorized recreation interests joined the mix as they saw the need to protect their access to public lands.

Ms. Skipwith has truly been a pleasure to work with on our issues. She has established an impressive track record in both the public and private sectors. Her diverse background and education provide her with the unique skill set required to deal with the key issues that would come under the purview of the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She thinks critically on complex challenges and formulates common sense solutions that are free from political and bureaucratic interference. Her decisions are based on sound science and the rule of law.

We believe it is important that the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service not only possess strong leadership skills, but also the education and experience required to enact policies based on scientific principles. Ms. Skipwith meets and surpasses these qualifications and we urge you to support her nomination.

Thank you both for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Mark Baker
President
Treasure State Resources Association of Montana

Cc: The Honorable Jon Tester, United States Senate
The Honorable Steve Daines, United States Senate

July 23, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

The Public Lands Council (PLC), National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), and American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) support the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). PLC is the only national organization dedicated solely to representing the roughly 22,000 ranchers who hold federal grazing permits and operate on federal lands. NCBA is the beef industry's largest and oldest national marketing and trade association, representing American cattlemen and women who provide much of the nation's supply of food and own or manage a large portion of America's private property. ASI is a federation of forty-five state sheep associations representing a diverse industry since 1865 and has been the national trade organization representing the interests of nearly 90,000 sheep ranchers located throughout the country who produce America's lamb and wool.

We were pleased last year when the President nominated Ms. Skipwith to serve as Director of the USFWS and continue to support her re-nomination during the 116th Congress. In her current role as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks at the Department of the Interior, she has been a valued partner and honest broker in her dealings with the livestock industry. She holds both a Juris Doctor from the University of Kentucky and a Master of Science in molecular genetics from Purdue University, giving her an educational background that exceeds the minimum qualifications for this role. Additionally, her private sector experience in the legal and agricultural professions have prepared her to address the diverse set of issues that will be under her purview.

As part of their business operations, livestock producers do vital work that benefits fish and wildlife, as well as the places they call home. They do this by improving water sources, revitalizing habitats, and maintaining the open spaces that all Americans enjoy. Having leaders at the USFWS who understand the agriculture industry, and the role it plays in the stewardship of America's lands and species, is vital to ensure the continuity of our national heritage.

PLC, NCBA, and ASI appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on behalf of our members – the nation's food and fiber producers. We respectfully request that Aurelia Skipwith be re-nominated to serve as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sincerely,

Jennifer B Houston
Jennifer Houston
President
National Cattlemen's Beef Assn.

Bob Skinner
Bob Skinner
President
Public Lands Council

Benny Cox
Benny Cox
President
American Sheep Industry Assn.

Wayne Hubbard & Candice Price
2725 Garfield Avenue, Kansas City, MO 64109
913-334-5177 www.uaotv.com

August 6, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and Committee Members:

On behalf of Urban American Outdoors *(UAO)*—a nongovernmental organization that inspires conservation stewardship among families living in metropolitan areas through national outreach and community initiatives including a national syndicated TV show which reaches millions —I write to register UAO's fervent support of Deputy Assistant Secretary Aurelia Skipwith's nomination as the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

While serving in her current position Deputy Assistant Secretary Skipwith championed conservation stewardship and reintroducing American families in metropolitan areas to outdoors activities rooted in our national heritage. At Urban American Outdoors' 2018 Urban Kids Fishing Derby on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Deputy Assistant Secretary Skipwith addressed the over 300 families and spoke of her support for results-driven conservation stewardship events like, UAO's fishing derby, that interest families living in local areas. In 2019 Deputy Assistant Secretary Skipwith attended the event and once again spoke and participated directly with families on the National Mall.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Skipwith brings the right skillset and experiences from the public, private, international sectors, and is well suited to lead the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service forward. We urge you to approve Aurelia Skipwith's nomination as the Director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective, and please have a member of your staff contact Executive Director Candice Price for further information or questions by email address, which is uaotv@aol.com, and or by phone number (913) 334-5177.

Sincerely,

Candice Price
Executive Director

American Woodcock Society * Archery Trade Association * Boone and Crockett Club Camp Fire Club of America * Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation * Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports * Delta Waterfowl Foundation * Ducks Unlimited * Houston Safari Club * Mule Deer Foundation * National Rifle Association National Shooting Sports Foundation * National Wild Turkey Federation * North American Falconers Association * North American Grouse Partnership * Pheasants Forever * Pope and Young Club * Professional Guides and Outfitters of America * Quail Forever * Quality Deer Management Association * Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Ruffed Grouse Society * Safari Club International * Sportsmen's Alliance * Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership * Wild Sheep Foundation Wildlife Forever * Wildlife Mississippi

August 7th, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Senate Environment & Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Environment & Public Works Committee
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

On behalf of the millions of hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and other outdoor enthusiasts that our organizations represent, we are writing to express our strong support for the confirmation of Aurelia Skipwith to serve as the next Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Throughout her public service in the Department of the Interior, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Ms. Skipwith has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Her accomplishments include expanding access for hunting and fishing, recognizing Urban National Wildlife Refuges, and designating sites on the African American Civil Rights Network.

If confirmed, Ms. Skipwith would be the first African American to serve as Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service marking a historic moment, not only for wildlife conservation, but for the nation as well. Additionally, her experience in the private sector has given her a keen understanding for the use of public-private partnerships to achieve favorable wildlife conservation outcomes. Ms. Skipwith will work diligently to enforce the nation's wildlife laws while improving relations with local governments and sportsmen.

We urge you to approve the confirmation of Aurelia Skipwith, so that the Senate may act to quickly confirm her as the next Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society
Archery Trade Association
Boone and Crockett Club
Camp Fire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
Houston Safari Club
Mule Deer Foundation
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Falconers Association
North American Grouse Partnership
Pheasants Forever
Pope and Young Club
Professional Guides and Outfitters of America
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Mississippi

August 10, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman
Senate Environment & Public Works Comm.
410 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Environment & Public Works Comm.
410 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

As a board member of the Texas Public Policy Foundation, I am pleased to endorse the nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The Foundation's mission is to promote and defend liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise by using academically sound research and outreach. No place in the federal government should follow the cannon of sound research more than the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The USFWS is one of the most diverse federal agencies in our federal system and one where science is the key to its success.

Ms. Skipwith is well-suited to serve as USFWS director. She has experience in the private sector, working in the corporate world as a scientist and as a lawyer. Just as important is her free enterprise spirit, which has shown brightly as she has grown her own real estate business.

As a biologist and attorney with a federal agency and private industry and with her nonprofit experience, she has the diverse background, to not only use sound science to make decisions, but the background to use common sense in making decisions to balance the interests of fish and wildlife with the use of land in conservation, recreation management, and economic development. Please confirm her as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Doug Deason
President
The Deason Foundation
Deason Capital Services
Board Member of the Texas Public Policy Foundation

Deason Capital Services • 5956 Sherry Lane, Suite 800 • Dallas, TX 75225 • Office: 214.378.3600 • Fax: 214.378.3780

MONTANA
FARM BUREAU
FEDERATION
502 S. 19th Ave. Ste 104
Bozeman, MT 59718

August 12, 2019

The Honorable John A. Barrasso III
Chairman
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

Chairman and Senator Carper,
It is my great pleasure to recommend and express my support for the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to serve as the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. On behalf of the farmers and ranchers across the state of Montana, Montana Farm Bureau Federation supports effective leadership at the Department that has a strong understanding of, and support for the agricultural industry. As a tireless advocate for Montana agriculture, we promote, protect and represent the interests of Montana's farmers and ranchers. Ms. Skipwith has shown her commitment to actively engage in key issues and is well suited to address the challenges our Montana members face.

We believe that President Trump has made an excellent choice for his nomination of Ms. Skipwith to be the next Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Given her experience as an attorney we are convinced that she will lead the agency in a professional and honorable manner and work to enforce the laws of the United States.

Once again, the Montana Farm Bureau Federation on behalf of it's over 20,000 Farmer and Rancher members are proud to support the nomination of Ms. Skipwith.

Sincerely,

John Youngberg
Executive Vice President

Connecting Central Oregon's Water, Land & Environment

August 12, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

I am writing on behalf of the eight irrigation districts in Central Oregon's Deschutes Basin in support of Aurelia Skipwith to be confirmed by your committee and the Senate as the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For over a decade, the irrigation districts, organized under the collective Deschutes Basin Board of Control, have been actively engaged with the Department of the Interior (Interior), especially the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in our collaborative development of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). We plan to complete the HCP next year, which we believe will benefit Central Oregon's economy and environment, and enhance habitat conditions for fish and wildlife such as the Oregon spotted frog, bull trout, steelhead and other species.

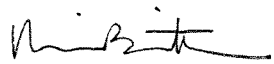
During this time, we have had the pleasure of working with several Interior and Service officials, including Ms. Skipwith. She has always been well briefed for our discussions, responsive, and has represented Interior and the Service in the most professional manner imaginable. More importantly, we have been continuously impressed by her commitment to the Service, where she has not only supported our work, but challenged us, to achieve the most responsible solutions for our communities and the environment. She has our complete support for this position.

PO Box 919 - Madras, OR 97741

Deschutes Basin Board of Control Member Districts
Arnold Irrigation District • Central Oregon Irrigation District • Lone Pine Irrigation District • North Unit Irrigation District
Ochoco Irrigation District • Swalley Irrigation District • Three Sisters Irrigation District • Tumalo Irrigation District
DBBC President - Mike Britton, 541-475-3625; mbritton@northunitid.com

I respectfully request your support for the confirmation of Ms. Skipwith to become the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely



Mike Britton
President

cc: Senator Jeff Merkley

PO Box 919 - Madras, OR 97741

Deschutes Basin Board of Control Member Districts

Arnold Irrigation District • Central Oregon Irrigation District • Lone Pine Irrigation District • North Unit Irrigation District
Ochoco Irrigation District • Swalley Irrigation District • Three Sisters Irrigation District • Tumalo Irrigation District
DBBC President - Mike Britton, 541-475-3625; mbritton@northunitid.com

National Hydropower Association
601 New Jersey Ave. NW, Suite 660, Washington, DC 20001 • Tel 202.682.1700 • Fax 202.682.9478 • www.hydro.org

August 13, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman
Senate Energy and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

On behalf of the National Hydropower Association, I write to support the confirmation of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith to be the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

NHA members have had several opportunities to work with Ms. Skipwith in her present position as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks in the Department of the Interior. In her current role, her team is responsible for ensuring the protection and stewardship of lands and waters within the national park and wildlife refuge systems.

Our members describe her as a dynamic leader with the scientific and management skills to effectively execute the Department of Interior's mission. As such, we believe that Ms. Skipwith would make an outstanding Director, and we fully support her confirmation.

For your background, the National Hydropower Association is a nonprofit national association dedicated to promoting the growth of clean, renewable hydropower and marine energy, which currently provides electricity to 30 million Americans. NHA represents more than 240 companies, from Fortune 500 corporations to family-owned small businesses. Our diverse membership includes public and investor-owned utilities, independent power producers, developers, equipment manufacturers and other service providers.

Thank you for considering this letter of support. Please feel free to contact Jeffrey Leahey at 202-750-8403 if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

M. Woolf

Malcolm Woolf
President and CEO

THE PEREGRINE FUND

CONSERVING BIRDS OF PREY WORLDWIDE

Headquarters
World Center for Birds of Prey
5668 West Flying Hawk Lane
Boise, ID 83709
United States of America
208.362.3716

Arizona Field Office
P.O. Box 6123
Marble Canyon, AZ
86036

Africa Field Office
P.O. Box 45111
Nairobi, Kenya 00100

Madagascar Field Office
B.P. 4113
Antananarivo (101)
Madagascar

South America Field Office
Casilla 17-17-1044
Quito
Ecuador

14 August 2019

The Honorable Sen. John Barrasso, Chairman
The Honorable Sen. Thomas Carper, Ranking Member
US Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

RE: Nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith as Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

The Peregrine Fund has worked with Ms. Aurelia Skipwith in support of US Fish and Wildlife Service efforts to restore Endangered Species for the past two years. We greatly appreciate her enthusiasm and understanding of the need for private sector partnerships in working together to restore our Endangered wildlife heritage. Aurelia's substantial first-hand experience understanding landowner and local government needs and concerns coupled with her background in biology provides her a comprehensive background for addressing Endangered Species Recovery.

The Peregrine Fund has worked closely since our founding 50 years ago with our most important domestic partner — the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Five decades ago we began an effort together to recover the Peregrine Falcon. In 1999 we celebrated the Recovery and Delisting of the Peregrine Falcon. Today The Peregrine Fund is partnered with the Fish and Wildlife Service in an effort to Recover the California Condor, Aplomado Falcon and Puerto Rican Sharp-shinned Hawk. Ms. Skipwith's experience with and commitment to Recovery of Endangered Species can serve to restore health to at risk species throughout the US and worldwide. If confirmed, we very much look forward to continuing to work with Ms. Skipwith in our partnership to steward our magnificent wildlife heritage.

Sincerely yours,

Richard T. Watson
President & CEO, The Peregrine Fund

AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION
600 Maryland Ave. SW | Suite 1000W | Washington, DC 20024

ph. 202.406.3600
f. 202.406.3602
www.fb.org

August 15, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

The President's nomination of Aurelia Skipwith as Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is great news for American agriculture. She understands the needs of America's farmers and ranchers and the critical balance required to promote effective wildlife conservation and to foster an innovative and productive agricultural economy. The American Farm Bureau Federation supports the swift confirmation of Ms. Skipwith.

Ms. Skipwith's substantial understanding of the public and private sectors make her an excellent choice for leadership at FWS. Her experience serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior, combined with her background as a scientist and conservationist, position her well to lead the agency to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats.

AFBF urges members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee to advance this nomination as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Zippy Duvall
President

NFWF

NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION
1133 15th Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20005
P 202-857-0166 | F 202-857-0162 | nfwf.org

August 19, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
The Honorable Thomas Carper, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

I have been a friend and colleague of Aurelia Skipwith during her tenure at the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI). She has been a very positive influence and has now shown an interest in expanding her role as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Aurelia has proven that she is a strong professional with strict ethical principles. She lives those principles every day at DOI. I have watched her commit herself to more fully learning and appreciating the complex issues of resource management, species recovery and the protection of our Nation's wildlife. In addition, I have seen her work with career professionals to guide and inspire us to all work toward larger goals to make our Nation even better.

Aurelia should be given every consideration as you work to review her nomination. Her willingness to serve our country is both admirable and honest. I have enormous respect for her and her accomplishments. I look forward to continuing to work with her should her confirmation be completed.

Thank you for your consideration and please let me know if I can be of any assistance.

With best wishes,

Jeff Trandahl

ASSOCIATION of FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

The voice of fish and wildlife agencies
1100 First Street, NE, Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: 202-838-3474
Fax: 202-350-9869
Email: info@fishwildlife.org

August 19, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas Carper, Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

I am writing on behalf of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) in support of the nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith to serve as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Association's mission is to support and advocate for the work of state fish and wildlife agencies and to assist those agencies in delivering science-based resource management in collaboration with public and private partners. All 50 states are members.

State fish and wildlife agencies have a long-standing, collaborative relationship with federal partners for managing the fish and wildlife resources and habitats of our great nation. The USFWS, in particular, is an important partner for conservation planning and delivery for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, invasive species, fish and aquatic habitats, and wetlands systems, including those of the National Wildlife Refuge system. At a national scale the Association interacts daily with the senior leadership of the USFWS on such issues from a policy and regulatory perspective. In recent years, state fish and wildlife directors have met with senior leaders of the USFWS to discuss mutual policy interests, to enhance communications, and to advance positive conservation outcomes. In sum, we have considerable interest in this appointment.

We have worked with Ms. Skipwith, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, on a variety of issues. We have found her to be an able, accessible, and effective communicator who is interested in, and responsive to, working with state fish and wildlife agencies. Indeed, Ms. Skipwith, with her science and policy background, her earnest interest in fish and wildlife conservation, and the value she places on partnerships and collaboration, leads the Association to believe she will be an effective national conservation leader. We look forward to working with her and we commend her to you for timely confirmation action.

Thank you in advance for considering this letter of support for Ms. Aurelia Skipwith.

Sincerely,

Ed Carter

Ed Carter
President

Colonel John Domenech, Ph.D (USA-RET)
29332 Forrestal Avenue
Big Pine Key, Florida 33043

August 20, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman
Senate Environment & Public Works Comm.
410 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Environment & Public Works Comm.
410 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

The purpose of this memo is to unequivocally endorse the nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith to be Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

As a resident of the Florida Keys and a Trustee of The College of the Florida Keys, I know the importance of the USFWS as it manages, studies and ensures sustainability of our fragile resources for future generations to enjoy. The USFWS is also vital to the college as a resource due to our renowned educational and workforce training opportunities associated with the marine environment. To enhance those offerings, we recently initiated a Bachelor of Science in Marine Resource Management and Conservation and I have personally spoken to Ms. Skipwith as to how the college relies upon the USFWS for its success and she assures me that such support will unabatedly continue.

Ms. Skipwith is well-suited to serve as USFWS director due to her diverse background in the private sector, biology, law and public service. In addition to working with her on the importance of USFWS impact on the college, we have discussed the endangered species management program as it relates to a number of Florida Keys species on that list--including the tiny Florida Key Deer which roam freely around my home on Big Pine Key. In that regard, I believe Ms. Skipwith is the right choice to guide the agency, in the best interests of US citizens, with balance as it tackles the contentious issue of removal of certain species from the threatened and endangered species list whether that species is a Florida panther in the Everglades, grey wolf in the Great Lakes area, Grizzly bear in around Yellowstone National Park or the Bear-paw poppy in the Mojave Desert.

It is my hope that the United States Senate will approve her nomination. In the meantime, I will continue to work with this fine public servant as she balances competing public demands on issues facing the USFWS. I am confident that she will make the right decisions for this and many generations to follow.

With kind regards,

Colonel John Domenech, Ph.D (USA-Ret)

Pahrump Office
Nye County Government Center
2100 E. Walt Williams Drive
Suite 100
Pahrump, NV 89048
Phone (775) 751-7075
Fax (775) 751-7093

Board of County Commissioners
Nye County, Nevada

Tonopah Office
Nye County Courthouse
William P. Beko Justice Facility
PO Box 153
Tonopah, NV 89049
Phone (775) 482-8191
Fax (775) 482-8198

August 20, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: **Letter of Support for Aurelia Skipwith**

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

As you know, President Trump has nominated Aurelia Skipwith to be the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and your committee will be reviewing her record and qualifications to be confirmed for that position. On behalf of the Nye County, NV Board of Commissioners, I am writing to express our strong support for her confirmation. We believe that Ms. Skipwith has a unique set of skills that would make her an ideal Director of the FWS. We urge you to vote in favor of her nomination and to get her confirmation through the full Senate as soon as possible.

Nye County is 98 percent federal land. As a result, the County and our residents are constantly interacting with the federal land agencies, including the FWS, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service. We understand the need to balance the interests of economic development and environmental protection. We appreciate when our federal partners also understand the need for a balanced approach to land management.

Ms. Skipwith understands this. She has a scientific background, private sector experience and has worked at three federal agencies. This includes the U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture and, most recently, as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. This public-private background is exactly what is needed to balance the needs of economic development and the environment. For too long, development in the West has been chocked off by Washington bureaucrats that do not know how to achieve this balance.

Our support is not just based on her resume. Earlier this year, a delegation of Nye County Commissioners was in DC to talk to federal land managers about some difficult lands issues.

We met with Deputy Assistant Secretary Skipwith. She listened to our concerns and understood our point of view. She did not just give us what we wanted, but instead worked with us to make sure that our interests were heard and balanced with other competing interests. We believe the proposed solution will allow crucial development in Nye County while protecting an endangered species located on the land.

We fully understand that we will not always get what we want. But we do expect that our concerns will be heard and that federal officials will work with us and show the flexibility to entertain innovative solutions to lands issues. Ms. Skipwith demonstrated those skills. For that reason, we strongly support her nomination to be the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sincerely,

Leo Blundo,
Nye County Commissioner, District 4

LB/RS

South Dakota
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

August 20, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

The South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry supports the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to be Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) at the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). Ms. Skipwith is highly qualified to serve in this role and we look forward to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee advancing her nomination to the full Senate for confirmation.

Ms. Skipwith has a distinguished career as a public servant and is an expert on fish, wildlife, and natural habitat policy and regulation. Ms. Skipwith currently serves as DOI's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and has worked closely with stakeholders to provide appropriate guidance for implementing sound federal policy regarding the management and conservation of public lands and wildlife.

Ms. Skipwith visited South Dakota at our invitation to be the keynote speaker for the 2018 Business Day at the Legislature. Her address and insights about the goals of the Trump Administration for the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks impressed business leaders, legislators and members of the Governor's cabinet.

Ms. Skipwith took the time to visit a number of national parks while she was in South Dakota to learn more about how the Department of Interior worked "on the ground". Being in a remote part of the country, her willingness to make those visits was very much appreciated.

Ms. Skipwith's confirmation would provide FWS with the key leadership and experience needed at DOI to manage important federal policies. As such, we urge you to swiftly act on Ms. Skipwith's nomination.

Respectfully,

David Owen
President

CC: Senator John Thune, Senator Mike Rounds

PO Box 190 • 222 E. Capitol, Ste 15
Pierre, South Dakota 57501-0190
PH. 605.224.6161 • 1.800.742.8112
www.sdchamber.biz

The Voice of South Dakota Business

Protect The Harvest

August 26, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

We at Protect The Harvest would like to express our support for the confirmation of Aurelia Skipwith as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. While her background, education, and experience qualify her greatly for the position, her professionalism and dedication to excellence are what truly set her apart.

We know Ms. Skipwith to be astute and insightful regarding the issues we face. With many interests at stake, we trust that her experience in both the public and private sectors, combined with her education in molecular biology and law, will make her a highly valuable asset not only to the Service, but to the people and places she serves.

Ms. Skipwith has done an outstanding job as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and has come to be known for her dedication to balancing environmental and economic considerations in her collaborations with stakeholders. She understands the many complexities and interrelations of the science and laws involved in policy-making, and she possesses the critical thinking skills and common sense to identify potential repercussions, and then to effectively manage them if necessary.

Protect The Harvest respectfully urges you to confirm Ms. Skipwith as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Forrest Lucas

Forrest Lucas

Founder, Executive Director

Protect The Harvest

Protect The Harvest
Forrest Lucas
Founder, Executive Director
www.protecttheharvest.com

September 6, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman, Senate Environment & Public Works Committee
410 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member, Senate Environment & Public Works Committee
410 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

I am writing on behalf of the geothermal industry to express our support for the confirmation of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith to be the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Geothermal Resources Council is a non-profit professional association for the geothermal industry and community in the United States and abroad. We were founded in 1972 and are headquartered in Davis, California. We have over 1,300 members from around the world and are working to advance our industry by supporting the development of geothermal energy resources through communication of robust research, knowledge and guidance.

Those members of the Geothermal Resources Council who have worked with Ms. Skipwith as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks believe her to be a dedicated, diligent, non-ideological and extremely talented public servant. We think her three university degrees in science and law will serve her well as she seeks to balance economic and environmental concerns to forge favorable wildlife conservation outcomes while enforcing the nation's wildlife laws. In short, we believe Ms. Skipwith would make an outstanding Director and we urge you to approve her confirmation.

Thank you for your consideration, ,and please feel free to contact me at wpettitt@mygeoenergy.org with any questions.

Respectfully,

Will Pettitt, PhD
GRC Executive Director

P.O. Box 1350, Davis, California 95617-1350 • 630 Peña Drive, Suite 400, Davis, California 95618
Phone (530) 758-2360 • Fax (530) 758-2839 • grc@geothermal.org

PURDUE Office of the President

September 9, 2019

Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

On behalf of Purdue University, I am pleased to support the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith for Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in the Department of Interior. I am confident, if approved, Ms. Skipwith will make outstanding contributions to the mission and objectives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Along with the Master of Science in molecular genetics she earned from Purdue University, she holds a Juris Doctor from the University of Kentucky. The combination of science, civics, and law provide the necessary educational foundation and perspective to serve the USFWS responsibly as Director. She has built a robust career in environmental science, agriculture, and conservation in both the private and public sectors. This broad experience with many diverse conservation stakeholders has provided her ample context from which to move the mission of USFWS forward.

Ms. Skipwith is the current Deputy Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks at the Department of the Interior. Among her many accomplishments while at the Department of Interior, Ms. Skipwith expanded access for hunting and fishing, recognized Urban National Wildlife Refuges, and designated sites on the African American Civil Rights Network. I am confident she will serve the Department of the Interior well as Director of USFWS.

On behalf of Purdue University, I appreciate the opportunity to promote Ms. Skipwith as an outstanding Boilermaker and civil servant. I encourage you to consider Ms. Skipwith's nomination favorably and confirm her as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sincerely,

Mitch Daniels

Mitchell E. Daniels Jr.
President

Hovde Hall, Room 200 | 610 Purdue Mall | West Lafayette, IN 47907-2040
(765) 494-9708 | Fax: (765) 494-7875

150 YEARS OF GIANT LEAPS
PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Protecting Water for Western Irrigated Agriculture

P.O. Box 216 Klamath Falls, OR 97601
(541)-892-6244 www.familyfarmalliance.org

September 10, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Ranking Member
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

I am writing on behalf of the Family Farm Alliance in support of the nomination of Ms. Aurelia Skipwith to be the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

The Alliance is a grassroots organization of family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts and allied industries in 16 Western states. The Alliance is focused on one mission: To ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers. We are also committed to the fundamental proposition that Western irrigated agriculture must be preserved and protected for a host of economic, sociological, environmental and national security reasons – many of which are often overlooked in the context of other national policy decisions.

Over the past several years, we have had the pleasure of working with Ms. Skipwith on our issues at the Department of the Interior. The Alliance believes Ms. Skipwith will bring a level of practical experience and intelligence, an understanding of the issues affecting Western farmers and ranchers, and a long-term vision for the future of the West to this important position in the Trump Administration. She has our complete support for this position.

I respectfully request your support for the Senate confirmation of Ms. Skipwith to become the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We know she will serve our Nation well in this important position.

Sincerely,

Dan Keppen
Executive Director

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NEIL L. BRADLEY
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT &
CHIEF POLICY OFFICER

1615 H STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20062
(202) 463-5310

September 11, 2019

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

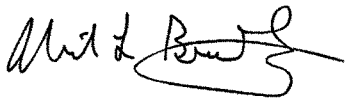
The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to be Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) at the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). Ms. Skipwith is highly qualified to serve in this role and we look forward to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee advancing her nomination to the full Senate for confirmation.

Ms. Skipwith has a distinguished career as a public servant and is an expert on fish, wildlife, and natural habitat policy and regulation. Ms. Skipwith currently serves as DOI's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and has worked closely with stakeholders to provide appropriate guidance for implementing sound federal policy regarding the management and conservation of public lands and wildlife. She has also worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Agency for International Development.

In addition, Ms. Skipwith's experience in the private and non-profit sectors has provided her with the knowledge and expertise to implement federal policy objectives. For example, prior to her time at DOI, she founded an agricultural value chain platform that united small farmers and multinational buyers with the tools needed to meet the growing demand for food.

Ms. Skipwith's confirmation would provide FWS with the key leadership and experience needed at DOI to manage important federal policies. As such, we urge you to swiftly act on Ms. Skipwith's nomination.

Sincerely,



Neil L. Bradley

cc: Members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

Senator BARRASSO. If there are no more questions for today, members may submit, as we have talked about before, follow up questions for the record. They will do that by 4 p.m. on Friday, September 13th, so 2 days from now.

And we should ask that you both respond to the questions by 4 p.m. on Thursday, September the 19th.

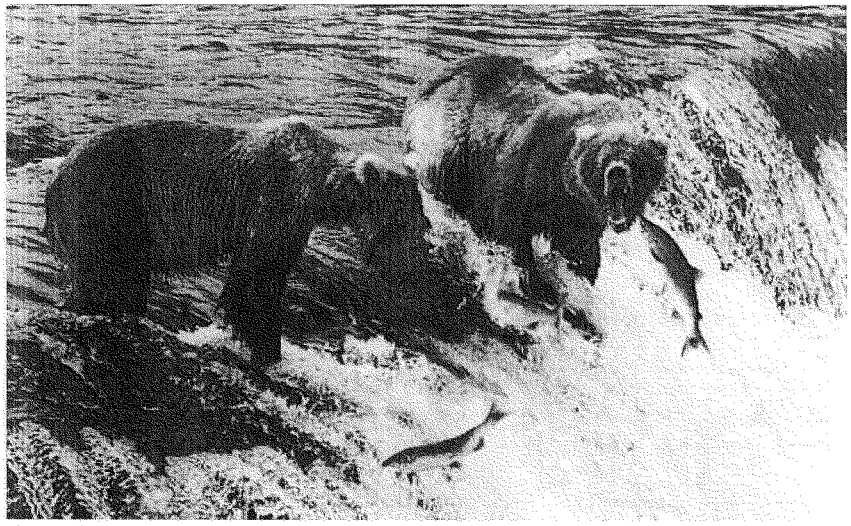
I want to thank and congratulate both of the nominees. Thank you for your testimony today.

With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:38 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[Additional material submitted for the record follows:]

The Guardian



This article is more than **7 months old**

Trump conservation pick triggers question of 'favoritism or connections'

Aurelia Skipwith, who lacks predecessor's experience, faces potential conflicts of interest over links to corporations

Emily Holden *in Washington*

Thu 20 Dec 2018 11.13 EST

The White House's nominee to head a top US conservation agency lacks her predecessors' experience while her political connections raise potential conflicts of interest, a Guardian analysis has found.

Aurelia Skipwith, who started her career at the agrochemical giant Monsanto, has been nominated to lead the interior department's Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees endangered species and wildlife refuges.

Most former directors spent many years working at the agency or in similar state agencies before ascending to the top post. But Skipwith's record shows no background in conservation before she

joined the Trump administration less than two years ago as deputy assistant secretary of fish, wildlife and parks.

Skipwith holds degrees in biology, molecular genetics and law and has worked in crop science and corporate affairs. In law school, she worked with two consulting firms which were founded or co-founded by her fiance, a politically well-connected Montanan who runs in the same circles as the outgoing interior secretary, Ryan Zinke.

Brett Hartl, government affairs director for the Center for Biological Diversity, said: "She's clearly smart. That's not the question."

But he said Congress sets a high bar for the position, requiring certain qualifications because "it's such a science-heavy, complicated agency to run". US law says a director must be, "by reason of scientific education and experience, knowledgeable in the principles of fisheries and wildlife management".

The nomination is the latest example of how Zinke installed people with industry or political ties throughout the agency, ushering in an expansion of resource extraction at the expense of conservation, according to documents obtained by the Guardian. Hires have come from the Koch-funded Americans for Prosperity and the Texas Public Policy Foundation. The deputy secretary, David Bernhardt, who will run the agency at least until a replacement is confirmed, is a former fossil fuel lobbyist.

Skipwith joined Monsanto, which has come under criticism for its cancer-causing weedkiller, in 2006 after earning her master's, according to her résumé. She was a lab technician and then molecular analyst.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has already made one decision favorable to Monsanto. The service rescinded a ban on farms within national wildlife refuges using bee-killing pesticides and the genetically modified crops that can withstand them.

Amit Narang, a regulatory policy advocate for Public Citizen, said senators should question Skipwith about her background and her interactions with lobbyists and corporations.

"She has a potentially fundamental conflict of interest. It's hard to imagine exactly why she's getting this job except because of favoritism or connections," Narang said.

Aurelia Skipwith was a lab technician and a molecular analyst at Monsanto. Photograph: Rogelio V Solis/AP

An interior department spokesperson said that Skipwith "is a scientist and legal professional with a diverse portfolio of experience in conservation, agriculture and international development".

Most previous directors have been educated in wildlife management or wildlife ecology. Some specialized in forestry or fisheries management.

John Turner of Wyoming, nominated by George HW Bush, had been a river guide, rancher and wildlife biologist before taking the position. Barack Obama's director from 2011 to 2017, Dan Ashe, had been the deputy director of policy and science adviser at the service for nine years before his nomination. For five years before that he was chief of the national wildlife refuge system.

Ashe, now CEO of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, praised Skipwith's nomination. "In a field where diversity is sorely needed, it is encouraging to see a woman and person of color nominated to this important and prominent leadership position," he said.

"I offer Ms Skipwith my congratulations on this great honor, and the very best as her education, experience and knowledge are considered by the US Senate," he said.

While Skipwith doesn't have the typical experience of a director, she does have ties to Montana, the home of interior secretary Ryan Zinke, who is resigning amid investigations into whether he used his office for personal gain.

Outside of her six years at Monsanto, Skipwith lists experience at two firms where she worked with her fiance, Leo Giacometto. He is a former US marshal who was in the Montana legislature, was state agriculture director and was chief of staff to the US senator Conrad Burns.

Giacometto, a longtime lobbyist, is known to some Montana sources as a political power broker, someone who could elevate or sink a campaign for public office.

Other than her work at Monsanto and with lobbyists, Skipwith claimed only brief government experience while in law school. She was a consultant at the US Agency for International Development for five months and a summer intern at the agriculture department.

The department declined to respond specifically to a list of more than two dozen questions about Skipwith's resume, including discrepancies about when she worked for some employers.

Skipworth and Giacometto did not respond to requests for clarifications or comment.

Another employer while she was in law school, the agriculture business Alltech, said she worked for the company during the time she was a consultant at USAid, although that is not how she described her work history on her résumé. She said she started at Alltech later.

Because Skipwith has not yet been confirmed by the US Senate, the White House would need to renominate her next year when new lawmakers arrive in Washington in order for her to take the job. The White House did not respond to questions about whether she would be renominated.

Jimmy Tobias and Kathleen McLaughlin contributed reporting

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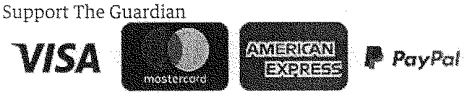

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