

# Shades of Green

*It's not just about diversity and saving nature. There's always the money.*

*By Dave Skinner*

**O**n the first anniversary of President Joe Biden's inauguration, it was announced Interior Secretary Deb Haaland had appointed the first four (of nine total) board members to the Foundation for America's Public Lands, "a new nonprofit foundation created [by Congress in 2017] to help leverage public and private funds to conserve, protect and restore land managed by the Bureau of Land Management."

As is expected from a "progressive" point of view, the appointments are nearly a perfect identity-politics "balance": Two shiny white guys in suits, both westerners, teamed with two women of color, one from the Beltway and the other from Oklahoma. Diversity box? Check! But there's much more to see after first glance.

## **BLM's New Partners**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has long been treated as a stepchild compared to other federal land-management entities. The Forest Service has the three-decade-old National Forest Foundation to draw on; the Park Service has the National Parks Foundation; and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, chartered in 1984.

Each of these exist to raise "private" money (which becomes a nifty tax deduction), in addition to congressional appropriations. As an article teaser in *Mother Jones* put it, "Donors will help fill in the gaps that Congress won't."

As an example of funding, the Fish & Wildlife Foundation has mated \$1.5 billion with another \$5.3 billion from mainly corporate and foundational donors. The total "impact" of \$6.8 billion averages about \$183 million a year, going (according to Wikipedia) in grants, "to some of the nation's largest conservation organizations, as well as some of its smallest." The National Forest Foundation is much smaller, with annual throughput around \$21 million.

While Congress authorized BLM's "non-profit partner" in 2017, Congress didn't fund

it until 2021 ("finally," according to quite a few potential beneficiaries) with \$3 million as administrative seed money to get started.

Prior to Secretary Haaland's announcement, BLM posted a GS-14 vacancy, seeking a liaison staffer tasked with ensuring that the foundations "activities are coordinated with and support the BLM's mission and priorities." Candidates were expected to bring a "nonprofit background" to the job.

Is this new foundation and its board a big deal for western producers or environmental

grant decisions get made.

The other three are, or should be, familiar to westerners, especially loyal *RANGE* students.

## **The Governor**

Topping the news was Secretary Haaland's choice of former Montana governor and failed 2020 presidential/U.S. Senate candidate Steve Bullock (D), former boss of both BLM's current director, Earth First!-alum Tracy Stone Manning, and Martha Williams, just



groups? Time, and money, will tell. But Secretary Haaland's picks are newsworthy now, Exhibit A in how the Beltway patronage games (and American taxpayers) get well and truly played.

## **The Professor**

Of the four appointees, we'll begin with Secretary Haaland's selection of Arkansas Law School Dean Emeritus Stacy Leeds, now a professor of law and leadership at Arizona State University. By all accounts, Leeds has enjoyed a stellar, precedent-setting career focused on Indian legal affairs (she is Cherokee, the first Indian woman to run a law school, at the University of Arkansas), with multiple judgeships and academic positions, first rate. Her appointment signals that tribes and tribal interests will not be ignored when

named U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service director.

Don't worry, Bullock wasn't on the streets. In March of last year, two months out of office, he was appointed as "independent monitor" of OxyContin overseller Perdue Pharma when previous monitor Tom Vilsack (another governor and presidential aspirant) became Secretary of Agriculture a second time for Joe Biden's administration after serving through President Obama's entire presidency.

Bullock has had enough spare time to pen a December 2021 opinion article for the *New York Times*, warning that his Democratic allies "need to get out of the city more." But Bullock is young, undergoing a transition from moderate to progressive, and gave Tracy Stone-Manning her first public-sector "big break." So, mentee mentoring the mentor?

## The Operative

Another pick is Nevada's Neil Kornze. His qualifications include a stint as BLM director from 2014 until the end of the Obama administration. Prior to that, in 2003 Kornze joined the staff of the late U.S. Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nevada), working primarily on public lands policy, moving to senior BLM executive appointments in 2011, then to directorship. Kornze is regarded as instrumental in helping pass the 2009 public lands "Omnibus" that cemented Bill Clinton's national monuments as part of a formalized National Landscape Conservation System first envisioned by Clinton-era Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. Kornze later played a large role in facilitating Gold Butte National Monument in Nevada.

But two other qualifications were likely

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one with suitcases full of cash to spend on their pet cause, Kornze is positioned to be helpful regarding BLM's fundraising.

## The Soccer Mom

Haaland's fourth pick was nonprofit executive Maite Arce, who founded and runs the Hispanic Access Foundation and has previously graced the pages of *RANGE* (Spring 2015). Why her? Ever since its beginnings, American environmentalism as a movement has been guided, funded, and its agenda set mainly by upper-class, economically secure, educated "got mine" whites.

Noted early conservationists like Teddy Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, and Bob Marshall were all silver spoons. For example, when Bob Marshall died in 1939 at age 38 after an ill-



PHOTOS VIA INTERNET

helpful. First, when Tracy Stone-Manning was under heavy Senate confirmation fire, Kornze joined another former BLM director in penning a widely published newspaper op-ed endorsing Ms. Stone-Manning. The other writer? Jim Baca, the guy who had environmentalists believing "Cattle Free by '93," and lasted less than a year.

Kornze's second, likely most-helpful plus? In early 2019, he became chief executive officer of both the Seattle-based Champion Foundation and, probably more importantly, the Champion Advocacy Fund. These are "non-profit" twins, both supported by profits from the Zumiez action sportswear line, "particularly skateboarding, snowboarding, and [get this] motocross." Zumiez founder Tom Champion took the company public in 2005, and his diversified investments have since done very well.

The Champion 501(c)(3) private foundation (\$26 million in assets) aims to "end

homelessness, protect public lands and climate, and strengthen nonprofits." Champion made most of its \$3.6 million in 2019 grants to groups opposing opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration and development, especially as a prime funder of the Alaska Wilderness League. Kornze volunteers 10 hours a week at the foundation.

The 501(c)(4) Champion Fund actually goes through more money and pays Kornze. Its mission is to "accelerate the protection of wilderness and the end of homelessness through direct advocacy." With 2014 gross receipts of \$6,274, Champion Advocacy Fund's gross receipts (all anonymous) hugely spiked in 2016 (\$25.5 million) and 2018 (\$38.6 million), while 2017 and 2015 combined for a relatively paltry \$5 million. What about 2019, Kornze's first year? Try as we might, *RANGE* couldn't find a filed 990 from any public host.

Regardless, with an inside hook to some-

*AT TOP: Neil Kornze, ex-BLM director hand-picked by Sen. Harry Reid. ABOVE LEFT: Maite Arce, founder of the Hispanic Access Foundation and a favorite of Michael Scott of the Hewlett Foundation. CENTER: Stacy Leeds, a Cherokee professor of law and leadership at Arizona State University. ABOVE: Tracy Stone-Manning, ex-Earth!Firster, testifying before the Senate in 2021, before being blessed as the new BLM director by a vote of 50-45. OPPOSITE: Former Montana Gov. Steve Bullock with Tracy Stone-Manning, his chief of staff from 2014-2017.*

trious but short career as a federal employee, he left an estate of \$1.5 million (\$28 million today), much of which went to endow what is today's Wilderness Society.

Today's modern, professional environmentalist movement had its roots in the college protest culture of the 1960s and 1970s, not the slums or suburbs. Even today, across the socioeconomic ladder, from Patagonia and L.L. Bean-clad five-star ecotourists to Greta Thunberg and all the way down underneath the grunge of the scruffiest

EarthFirst!er, almost every member of America's environmental movement is white. More importantly, the funders who set the real priorities for the environmental agenda by writing huge checks are almost all members of America's economic elite, and far whiter as a whole than any other political demographic.

The global Green movement understands its "white elite" credibility problem. To address that, along came Environment 2.0, an initiative to put a "diverse," multicultural face on environmentalism, ideally with people of color in nonprofit leadership positions.

As reported previously in *RANGE*, Ms. Arce and her nonprofit, the Hispanic Access Foundation, were "discovered" by Michael Scott, of the Hewlett Foundation, in 2013. Mr.

Scott claimed he'd seen a YouTube video of an Hispanic family national-parks vacation "while casting a wider net for new grantees" that would, yep, diversify environmentalism's

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image. But the video was no home movie. Rather, it was produced, very professionally and quickly, on behalf of the Hispanic Access Foundation. Founded in 2010, HAF initially focused on providing bilingual help to Hispanics with taxes, cancer awareness and Oba-

macare sign-up. It aimed at "raising awareness among Latinos about national parks and threats posed upon them from oil and gas development." Did it raise awareness? Not much. Eight years after release, the first video of four in the series has racked up a whopping 362 views. But it was released July 17 of that year, while the family (and production team) had only begun the trip on July 13.

Somehow, Hewlett's Michael Scott is one of those lucky viewers, and the Hewlett Foundation was happy to later brag it "took all of 30 seconds to make a believer" out of Mr. Scott. While *RANGE* couldn't find any prior Hewlett donations, the foundation was good for \$80,000 in late 2013, another \$100,000 in 2014, and the checks are still coming.

No, *RANGE* can't learn who fronted the \$104,000 HAF spent on its 2015 campaign to "harness the Hispanic community's passion for public lands." But HAF is doing great, having applied for and won nonprofit watchdog Guidestar's Silver Seal for transparency, with election year 2018 HAF's best year ever: \$4.2 million, more than twice 2017's \$1.7 million, and still twice 2019's \$2.02 million. So, how much came from how many?

Well, here's where it got fun. The sidebar is a result of someone's mistake, as "charitable" donor identities and the amounts they give are usually the most closely guarded secrets in politics, the darkest of "dark money." But... Guidestar posted multiple versions of HAF's 2018 and 2019 Form 990 IRS report. Those show donors/amounts simply as "Restricted." Lucky for you (but not the employee who messed up), the 2018 "Public Disclosure" copy (which *RANGE* immediately downloaded, copied and locked) has numbers for just seven checks that comprise fully sourcing almost all of HAF's funding, but no names. Darn! Then *RANGE* got luckier: HAF's 2019 copy reveals not just numbers, but also names. Wow. Here we have an environmental group that routinely gets fat checks not just from America's biggest green grant makers, but that also pulled down even more from taxpayers, through the Department of Interior during the Trump administration.

Kind of puts a different light on the foundation and its charter appointees—a light showing the true colors of green. ■

*Dave Skinner is increasingly splitting his time between his northwest Montana research bunker and doctors' offices.*

**Hispanic Access, Your Money?**

Hispanic Access Foundation's 2018 return showed \$4.8 million in revenues: \$998,415; \$373,369; \$266,360; \$432,460; \$100,000; \$1,297,706; and \$1,021,622. That's seven anonymous contributions in excess of its 2018 donor reporting threshold (to the IRS only) of \$247,615. Including the \$100,000 that wasn't required to be listed, these seven checks totaled about \$4.487 million—fully 93 percent of its revenue.

In 2019, HAF was required to report to the IRS "[t]otal contributions of the greater of [\$5,000 or 2 percent of the year's total grants]," which ended up being \$40,538.

**GOVERNMENT**

U.S. Department of Interior (NPS)	\$451,890
U.S. Department of Interior (FWS)	\$238,745
USDA (U.S. Forest Service)	\$310,783
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	\$153,740
DOI's Bureau of Land Management	\$ 98,673
<b>Taxpayer subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,253,831</b>

**GREENS**

Western Conservation Foundation	\$ 90,000
Hewlett Foundation	\$ 80,000
Resources Legacy Fund	\$ 56,000
American Rivers	\$ 60,000
The Partnership Project	\$ 45,000
Packard Foundation	\$113,000
Wildspaces LLC	\$120,000
<b>Charity subtotal</b>	<b>\$564,000</b>

**GRAND TOTAL OF MAJOR DONATIONS \$1,817,831**

Only 12 checks, 61 percent from government (interestingly, much from Donald Trump's "racist" Interior Department), and another 28 percent from giant environmental groups, combined for fully 88 percent of HAF's revenue.

In case you're wondering about HAF's biggest 2019 nongovernment donor, Wildspaces LLC is a "California Foreign Limited Liability Company" created in 1999 and based in Pescadero, with Norbert Riedy listed in campaign finance databases (Democratic) as executive director. The Wilderness Society once employed a Norbert Riedy.