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Intrinsic Values

The changing face of public lands in America.

By Chance Gowan

America's publicly owned lands are undoubtedly our most prized and valuable possession. They are a national treasure and critical to our survival. Unlike any other nation in the world, there are hundreds of millions of acres across this great country of ours that are available for all to use and enjoy while at the same time providing the natural resources necessary for our sustenance.

More importantly, the value of our public lands extends far beyond recreation and wildlife habitat. They cleanse our air and sequester water. They provide timber for building and minerals for high-tech and energy to run our factories and light our homes and power our transportation systems, and they provide forage for millions of cattle and sheep. The richness provided by these lands sustains all that we love and all that we need as a country.

Without our public lands and the bounty they provide, America as we know it could not exist. But a change is underfoot and that change, if left unchecked, will have a profound and irreversible impact on our country and those who live in or visit here.

As most of you know, within a few months of Biden's election as president, and in the face of staunch and unyielding opposition from fully one-half of the U.S. Senate, he

appointed Tracy Stone-Manning as the director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

When you talk about public lands in America it's important to recognize that these lands are not all created the same. They are divided up among different agencies and managed according to the mission and principle uses that Congress assigned to each.

Some of these lands were set aside strictly for the preservation of their intrinsic values. Typically, these are places of remarkable beauty and diversity like Yellowstone National Park, Mount Rushmore and the Petrified Forest. These places have unique qualities and few extractive uses are allowed. Park visitors are limited where they may tread and even how they get there. The National Park Service, with a primary mission of preservation and education, manages the 63 national parks in our country and, with limited exceptions, removal of natural resources is not allowed

on these lands.

Next is our system of national wildlife refuges, which have been set aside to ensure protection of lands and habitats that are critical to a variety of amazing species. Many of these lands are wetlands essential to the survival of waterfowl and thousands of other habitat-specific or migratory animals. There's also a National Bison Range and the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge, which was established to conserve Alaska Peninsula brown bears, marine mammals, and to comply with treaty obligations. There are nearly 600 national wildlife refuges distributed across America where some extractive uses are allowed, but they are tightly regulated and closely monitored.

Next in this hierarchy in the management of our public lands is the U.S. Forest Service. This agency is responsible for managing our national forests and national grasslands, which encompass about 200 million acres. It has a true multiple-use mandate. Things like backpacking, hunting and fishing are comingled with timber harvesting, livestock grazing and mining.

The Forest Service is the generalist of our public-lands system. It's a difficult balance to maintain and anti-use terroristic groups often target the agency because they believe that usage of our natural resources cannot possibly coexist with healthy forests and clean water. It does not fit their paradigm and they want to hide the Forest Service's success in

balancing protection with recreation and commodities production. This is exactly why terroristic groups like Earth-First! chose to spike trees and sabotage equipment that's used during closely monitored commodity extraction.

Last in the grouping and hierarchy of federal land-management agencies is the

Bureau of Land Management. This agency manages about 250 million acres under a "multiple-use and sustained-yield" mission. Of all the public-lands agencies, the BLM is the one Congress designated as being the most heavily weighted toward the utilization of these lands for the needs of our country while providing open use to our populace. Energy extraction, mining, and grazing are



top priorities. Recreational activities are only loosely regulated and things like off-road vehicle use (which is largely prohibited by the other agencies) is typically accommodated.

Protectionism is not a central component of the BLM's congressionally mandated mission and its lands are absolutely critical to the health and independence of America. They contain our most important commodities and natural resources. Sadly, Stone-Manning intends to change all of this. Her first major step toward this goal was the creation of "The Conservation and Landscape Health Rule," which is a thinly veiled attempt to eliminate commodity production and forage utilization while handing over management of our nation's most important public lands to environmental extremists. (Read "Bait and Switch" by Cat Urbigkit in *RANGE*, Summer 2024, via rangemagazine.com.)

For reasons that are hard to imagine, President Biden chose to turn over the management of these lands to a known far-left, anti-use environmental extremist, Tracy Stone-Manning. She is a founding member of the

terroristic, anti-use group EarthFirst!. Among her many other anti-use activities, she was complicit in "spiking trees"—trees that were part of a timber sale on national forestlands in Idaho. The Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee—the group that would confirm or deny Stone-Manning's appointment as director of the BLM—was made fully aware of her past.

Special Agent Michael Merkley, the lead federal investigator into the tree-spiking crime, testified that Stone-Manning "was an active member of the original group [Earth-First!] that had planned the spiking" and "had discussed whether to use ceramic or metal spikes in the trees." The intent of the discussion being—if the trees were "spiked," would ceramic or metal spikes do more damage to those who encountered them?

Stone-Manning went out of her way in an effort to distance herself from her criminal past and perjured herself in front of the Senate committee. When questioned, she stated that all she ever did was retype a letter that had been previously written by another member of EarthFirst!—and emphasized that

she had no involvement or even knowledge of the group's plans to spike trees or any other of its ecoterroristic activities. She also stated, under sworn testimony, that she was never a target of the investigation into this federal crime.

Except that Special Agent Merkley was emphatic in stating that Stone-Manning "was an active member of the original group that planned the spiking, and that she had been sent a certified letter notifying her that she was, in fact, a target of the investigation." Merkley also stated that John Blount—the ringleader of the spiking operation who was ultimately sentenced to federal prison—stipulated that Stone-Manning "agreed to author the letter informing the Forest Service of their illegal deeds" and possibly deadly intent.



VIA INTERNET

Blount also confirmed, "Stone-Manning was an active member of the original group that had planned the spiking. She knew about it far in advance, a couple of months before we headed out."

Stone-Manning only began cooperating with the investigators once she knew she was in fact a principal target of the investigation. She hired an attorney who negotiated an immunity deal. Special Agent Merkley went on to state that during the investigation, "She was the nastiest of the suspects, and refused to answer any of the questions."

Sen. Barrasso added: "This new information confirms that Tracy Stone-Manning lied to the committee and the nominee has no business leading the Bureau of Land Management. President Biden must withdraw her nomination." Utah Sen. Mike Lee, in an interview with Fox News said: "Her actions counted as supporting ecoterrorism and that she conspired with criminals to make vile threats.... She lied to the Senate about her involvement.... She's not fit to run the Bureau of Land Management."

Despite all of the evidence against con-

firmed Stone-Manning as the head of our nation's largest land-management agency, she was confirmed along strict party lines. And the only reason she was confirmed was that five Republicans chose to "sit out" this critical vote. Strangely, all five—Blackburn (TN), Cornyn (TX), Moran (KS), Paul (KY) and Tuberville (AL)—were "too busy to vote" on this crucial appointment and all hailed from states without any BLM lands. Their failure to vote ensured that Stone-Manning would be confirmed as the new director of the BLM. One has to wonder what deals may have been cut in order to precipitate their complacency?

The future of our country literally hangs in the balance. We have an opportunity to right this wrong and remove a known anti-use ecoterrorist from the management of our

A smirking Tracy Stone-Manning talks to reporters about her group's efforts to stop timber harvesting. The inoculated sign explains why EarthFirst! endeavored to maim and kill American citizens.

nation's largest and most important commodity-producing agency. In a very short time we will have the opportunity to vote for our next president. Do we leave in the man who knowingly nominated and staunchly supported Tracy Stone-Manning, a woman who was once complicit in environmental terroristic activities against our government? A woman who is now hell-bent on completely redirecting the agency that is primarily responsible for providing most of our nation's important natural resources?

This next election may be the most important and pivotal in the history of our nation. Please vote wisely. ■

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