



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**77th HONOR AWARDS
CONVOCATION**

TUESDAY · MAY 7, 2024

Sidney R. Yates Auditorium



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR 77TH Honor Awards Convocation

STEWART LEE UDALL DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUILDING

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY



As we celebrate our countless achievements at the Department of the Interior, we acknowledge the contributions of the public servants who make our mission possible. Alongside Acting Deputy Secretary Laura Daniel-Davis, I am honored to recognize this group of remarkable team members who went above the call of service.

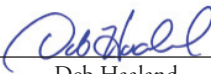
Like many at the Department, I learned what it means to be a public servant from my parents. Growing up, I watched my dad lead a 30-year career in the Marines, while my mom served first in the Navy and later as a 25-year Bureau of Indian Affairs employee.

Throughout it all, they ensured that my siblings and I understood what their service meant and what our enduring responsibilities were to our family, to our community, and to our country.

Every day, I see this same commitment in the people who show up to accomplish our essential mission. Whether it is advancing crucial measures to tackle the climate crisis like building out our clean energy future, restoring the precious ecosystems we each depend on, or strengthening our government-to-government relationship with sovereign Tribal Nations, our colleagues across the country exhibit an admirable dedication to the American people.

The passion that our team brings to the job inspires me to do the best I can as Secretary, and the leaders we recognize today remind me of just how lucky I am to be a part of this outstanding community of public servants. These members of our team do not do this important work for recognition or credit—they do it because they believe in a better future for all.

As we celebrate today's convocation ceremony, I encourage everyone to reflect on the impact that public servants everywhere have on our lives today and the futures we strive to have tomorrow. I hope their leadership continues to inspire each of you, just as it inspires me.



Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior

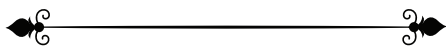


PROGRAM

EVENT HOST	<i>George McDonald</i> <i>Office of Assistant Secretary</i> <i>Policy, Management, & Budget</i>
HONOR GUARD	<i>U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service</i> <i>Honor Guard</i>
NATIONAL ANTHEM	<i>Althea Raymond</i> <i>Office of the Solicitor</i>
MOMENT OF SILENCE	<i>In memory of Department</i> <i>employees who have passed away</i>
INTRODUCTION	<i>Laura Daniel-Davis</i> <i>Acting Deputy Secretary of the Interior</i>
CONGRATULATORY REMARKS	<i>Deb Haaland</i> <i>Secretary of the Interior</i>
PRESENTATION OF AWARDS	<i>Safety and Health Award</i> <i>of Excellence</i> <i>Department Award for Outstanding</i> <i>Contributions to Aviation Safety</i> <i>Environmental Achievement Awards</i> <i>Secretary's Diversity Awards</i> <i>Distinguished Service Awards</i> <i>Outstanding Service Award</i> <i>for Political Appointee</i> <i>Citizen's Award for Bravery</i> <i>Valor Awards</i>
CLOSING REMARKS	<i>George McDonald</i> <i>Office of Assistant Secretary</i> <i>Policy, Management, & Budget</i>



SAFETY AWARDS



The Department of the Interior presents the prestigious Safety and Health Award of Excellence and the Department Award for Outstanding Contributions to Aviation Safety. These awards are the highest-level safety and health and aviation awards granted by the Department and are presented by the Secretary of the Interior.

These awards recognize individuals or groups that have performed an outstanding service for or made a contribution of unusual value to the occupational safety and health of employees, visitors, and volunteers, and aircraft accident prevention.

Recipients of the Safety and Health Award of Excellence receive a plaque while recipients of the Aviation Safety Award are presented a certificate and award citation signed by the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget.

Safety and Health Award of Excellence *Group Category*

U.S. Geological Survey

Regional Aviation Managers

From July 2022 through June 2023, during the absence of a permanent Bureau Aviation Manager (BAM), U.S. Geological went above and beyond in their duties and provided safety training advice and oversight; disseminated pertinent aviation safety bulletins and current event information; maintained life support equipment and personal protective equipment for aviation users; coordinated flight-following efforts; and served as aviation subject matter experts for the planning of all scientific aviation activities for seven USGS regions.

The group approved hundreds of safety plans for center aviation management, aviation mishap response, and project aviation; conducted countless risk assessment analyses; prevented aircrew from exposure to aviation hazards; and mitigated risks to acceptable levels for various scientific missions. The special use aircraft activities that this group oversaw were varied and included drilling operations with helicopter sling loads on the North Slope of Alaska, fixed wing aircraft landings on lakes to band birds, flights along coastal areas for walrus research or otter studies, the aerial capture and tagging of polar and grizzly bears, and the aerial research, data collection, and scientific observations involved in supporting volcanic eruption emergency response and evacuation.

The team's dedication, oversight, and sound advice for each aircraft activity mitigated USGS aviation hazards and ultimately prevented accidents. Due to the vacant BAM position, and in addition to their regular duties, they exercised extraordinary initiative



and creativity while addressing the critical needs of the aviation program. The group's selfless efforts allowed the USGS to execute over 700 mishap-free flight hours with aircraft operations from all seven USGS regions, representing more than 40 individual units. Their sustained efforts allowed the USGS to maintain its five years and over 7,500 hours of incident-free and accident-free flying.

Because of this group, scientists in charge, managers, supervisors, field scientists, technicians, and administrative staff members have higher safety awareness, are more knowledgeable about aviation safety practices, and are fully prepared to execute aviation activities. The group's successes in proactive risk management, effective safety oversight, engaged leadership, and steadfast commitment to improving the aviation safety program have preserved assets, prevented accidents, saved lives, and ultimately contributed towards a safer and more healthful environment within the Department of the Interior and the USGS.

USGS Regional Aviation Managers Team Members:

Todd Burton

Lisa Faust

Daniel Morgan

Timothy Saucier



Departmental Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aviation Safety

U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Region

The Alaska Region is comprised of two central units, the Alaska Science Center (ASC) and the Volcano Science Center (VSC) who are responsible for effectively enforcing aviation policy and ensuring the safe and compliant execution of their flight operations. The Alaska Science Center (ASC) excels in diverse aviation missions, overseeing achievements that include helicopter sling loads for North Slope drilling support, fixed-wing aircraft landings for bird banding, and wildlife studies such as the aerial capture and tagging of polar bears, grizzly bears, and caribou research. This comprehensive approach extends to the Volcano Science Center (VSC), where aviation activities are centered on volcanic research, data collection, and monitoring, collaborating with partners to oversee more than 130 volcanoes in the region.

Under the guidance of the USGS Alaska Regional Aviation Manager (RAM), collaboration and excellence have been the focal points. The RAM's leadership has enhanced science and safety by sharing best practices within the aviation safety community. Noteworthy accomplishments include providing safety training advice, overseeing records, disseminating aviation safety information, and serving as an aviation subject matter expert, fostering employee engagement in safety and science. These accomplishments of the organization were necessary in bettering the aviation posture of the Bureau. Their implementation and success demonstrate a significant contribution to aviation safety and aircraft accident prevention efforts. It took the combined efforts of the two units (ASC and VSC) and their respective leadership assigned to the U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Region to work together to ensure safe and efficient aviation operations in an inherently hazardous flight environment and for this, the U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Region is granted the Departmental Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aviation Safety.

USGS Alaska Region Leadership:

Aimee Devaris

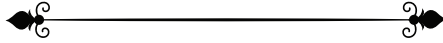
Daniel Morgan

Durell Smith

Christian Zimmerman

(all accepting on behalf of USGS Alaska Region)

ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



The Department's Environmental Achievement Awards recognize employees and partners who have made exceptional contributions through projects in categories aimed at fostering the protection and preservation of cultural and environmental resources.

Cultural Resources Protection Category

Eldon Brown

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service

Bureau of Land Management

Historic Mining Structures in the South Pass
& Lewiston Mining Districts Restoration Team

Climate Champion Category

National Park Service

Natural Resource Stewardship & Science
Climate Friendly Parks Project

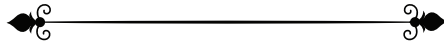
Environmental Justice Category

*Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service,
& U.S. Geological Survey*
Tribal Monitoring Program Partnership

Greening the Fleet

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
Office of Administration Support Services Team

SECRETARY'S DIVERSITY AWARD



The Secretary's Diversity Awards recognize and honor employees or groups of employees of the Department who have provided exemplary service and/or have made significant contributions to the Department in its efforts to increase diversity at all levels. Recipients receive a special certificate and citation signed by the Secretary.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Chaene Gusman Jones

Ms. Chaene Gusman Jones provides critical expertise to hiring officials and leadership teams at all levels of the Department and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). She provides innovative resources to better position BLM to attract diverse candidates for job openings in California and across the United States. As BLM California's advisor on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, Ms. Gusman Jones ensures that leadership is provided with quality information about diversity-promoting initiatives, including annual State of the Agency briefings about the newly completed annual roadmap for creating effective equal employment opportunity programs, MD- 715. She leads exceptional special emphasis program events on a quarterly basis and gives annual presentations regarding outreach, recruitment, and retention initiatives to leadership in Interior Regions 8 and 10. Ms. Gusman Jones also routinely volunteers for BLM-wide and State-level projects and programs to implement diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives and Executive orders. She is a champion of BLM California's employee advocacy programs, serving as a critical link between employees and senior management by celebrating and increasing the visibility of diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences. Her oversight of special emphasis programs and participation in a Diversity Change Agent team have significantly advanced efforts to further diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility throughout BLM. For this reason, BLM national and regional leadership had identified her diversity-promoting outreach efforts as a foundation for best practices in hiring, including at the field committee and executive leadership team levels. Diversity and inclusion resources shaped by Ms. Gusman Jones are the model for the Office of Civil Rights to use across BLM.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Calvert Norton

Mr. Calvert Norton, a land surveyor, has dedicated 10 years to inspiring a diverse next generation of conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts. In 2013, he cofounded the Earth Connections Camp in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Utah Youth Program Coordinator, State of Utah partners, and a public advocacy organization. The camp engages Native American youth in hands-on learning experiences in conservation, stewardship, and cultural heritage, fostering



a deeper appreciation for the Nation's public lands. Since its inception, over 600 primarily Native American youth have attended the camp. Lauded by Indian education specialists in Utah, the camp supports school curriculum and helps students understand the connection between their cultural heritage and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields and provides urban Native American youth with an unparalleled opportunity to learn about themselves and how they fit into the world. The camp is staffed by Native American professionals who serve as role models by showcasing their achievements, imparting knowledge, and inspiring a sense of connection and empowerment, particularly in STEM fields. Mr. Norton has served as one of these role models and participated in planning, coordinating, and implementing camp activities. He has also volunteered to serve as BLM's Utah Native American Special Emphasis Program Manager. In this capacity, he shares his insights into Native American culture with his BLM colleagues and supports outreach efforts by relaying information to Native American groups about employment opportunities.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Samantha Bartling

Ms. Samantha Bartling is a leader in environmental education within the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Wildlife Refuge System, providing innovative and collaborative leadership to connect local communities with the FWS mission in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Her pioneering efforts connect people with nature and establish FWS as a community asset. In 2015, Ms. Bartling created a Latino Engagement Program for the Willamette Valley where all materials and events are presented in at least two languages—English and Spanish. While bilingual herself, Ms. Bartling hires native-speaking bilingual interns to expand the Latino Engagement Program, ensuring inclusion across a broader public and fostering new relationships with the Spanish-speaking communities. By partnering with a local nonprofit environmental organization, she realized a vision—the creation of the Ankeny Hill Nature Center—a gathering place where children and adults can discover the importance of the environment to our future. This facility, which opened to the public in 2022, provides indoor and outdoor classrooms, native oak prairie habitats, a pollinator garden, and an accessible trail. It all offers a diversity of educational opportunities and serves as an anchor for the community and FWS environmental education programs for the Willamette Valley. Ms. Bartling excels in connecting with the local communities and environmental educators to spread her enthusiasm for the refuge, its wildlife, and the wetland and oak savanna habitats in the Willamette Valley. For one event, her efforts involved 30 partners and provided programming to 1,200 individuals across 3 refuges and 4 counties in 7 languages during an entire month.



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Infrastructure Team

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Infrastructure Team developed the first-ever Maintenance and Infrastructure Fellows Program (MIFP), the primary goal of which is training and mentoring an enthusiastic and diverse workforce to accomplish deferred maintenance and climate adaptation and resilience work. The team expertly implemented the leadership and overarching goal of MIFP and developed the program with a cross-programmatic and nationwide focus. Through tenacity, creativity, and relationship-building, the team achieved enormous success and exceeded expectations for FWS. The team secured funding through multiple sources, built coalitions within FWS leadership to gain support for the program, and provided the overall vision and goal for the program. In addition, the team led employees and provided critical support to them along the way to develop the MIFP nationally. In total, the first class of the MIFP brought in 40 fellows from across the Nation with a focus on local hiring and underrepresented communities. The class is one of the most diverse fellowship classes at FWS, with 60 percent of the fellows identifying as racial or ethnic minorities, 30 percent identifying as LGBTQ+, and 27 percent identifying as female—all impressive statistics for internships in the fields of maintenance and engineering. As a result of the team's work, the fellows are receiving meaningful FWS experience through training and mentorship and will receive Public Lands Corps Act noncompetitive hiring eligibility upon completion of their fellowships.

Team Members:

Naomi Fireman

Robert L. Miller

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Joint Administrative Operations Hiring Team

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Joint Administrative Operations (JAO) Hiring Team took on the challenge of thoughtfully evaluating its workforce and putting forth a succession strategy that focused on diversifying and on hiring veterans into its programs. Over the past 3 years, the team has achieved excellent veteran representation in its workforce, with 37 percent of the organization being veterans. The team prioritized hiring people with disabilities through the Schedule A Hiring Authority and Veterans Hiring Authorities (VRA, 30% Disabled Veteran). In fiscal year (FY) 2023, the team utilized special hiring authorities and strategic recruitment options for 24 percent of its vacancies. The team focused on career development programs such as cross-functional detail opportunities to engage its workforce. This dedication to employee development has increased retention and internal promotion opportunities. In addition to its internal review of organizational diversity and veterans hiring, the team supports FWS initiatives dedicated to expanding diverse hiring opportunities. The team engaged FWS-wide programs, regional offices, and subject-matter experts to identify challenges, assess best practices,



and evaluate proposed employee engagement efforts. The team helped coordinate national hiring projects using special hiring authorities and strategic recruitment options to reach a broader and more diverse applicant pool. As a result of this proactive coordination, in FY 2023 FWS achieved greater diversity overall and saw a 22 percent increase in hires using the Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act, a 33 percent increase in hires using the Public Land Corps Act, and a 20 percent increase in hires using the STEM direct hire authority.

Team Members:

Sarah Carney

Monica Cordova

Jackie Hall

Erin Pilitowski

Pam Sirotzky



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Ally Engagement & Enrichment Week Change Agents

During 2023, team members, known as ‘Diversity Change Agents’ with multiple bureaus and offices, played a vital role in planning and executing the Department of the Interior’s Ally Engagement and Enrichment Week, held August 7–11, 2023. The event—in support of the Department of the Interior’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Goal Priorities for safe workplaces, professional development, and DEIA training and learning—was a Departmentwide team effort. Diversity Change Agents from the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Interior Business Center, National Park Service, Office of Diversity Inclusion and Civil Rights, Office of Natural Resources Revenue, Office of the Secretary, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and U.S. Geological Survey partnered with Department employee resource groups and Equal Employment Opportunity practitioners to host the week’s 10 dynamic sessions. The sessions were focused on the theme of “Widening Our Lens” and involved 10 presenters, 17 Department-level executives/panelists, and 45 volunteers. In total, the week’s events hosted 2,546 total attendees, averaging 254 per session. Attendees were employees from a multitude of the Department’s Bureaus and Offices as well as other Federal agencies, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Homeland Security, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Government Accountability Office.

Team Members:

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT:

Hillary Conner

Arthur Ferraro

Kamberly Gnad

Kimberly Leitzinger

Kim Mincer

BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Lisa Gentry

Rick Knowles

Gail Morrison

Vilma Perez De Pottella

Renee Richards

Alexandra Ritchie

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION:

Sarah Whitney

BUREAU OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT



Catherine Anadu
Patricia Jones
Janine Marie Tobias

Brittany Hodul
Karla Marshall
Jackie Tschida

INTERIOR BUSINESS CENTER

Jeanette Alexander
Chiharu Bullock
Tonya Lovelace
Myranda Whitesides

Andrea Antunes
Nichole King-Campbell
Eleni Sarris

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Daniel Calloway

Nichole McHenry

OFFICE OF DIVERSITY INCLUSION AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Howard Caro-Lopez
Nora 'Zoey' Woolridge

Acquanetta Newson

OFFICE OF NATURAL RESOURCES REVENUE

Cassady Blakesley

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Ross Allen

OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING AND RECLAMATION

Larisha Warner

Lori Windle

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

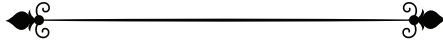
Erin Cole

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Eric Best
Ernestine Coleman
Patricia Garcia
Elda Varela Minder

Dawn Childs
Janet Cushing
Roxanne Lamb
Kimberly Scott

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS



The Distinguished Service Award is the highest honorary recognition an employee can receive within the Department of the Interior. It is granted for an outstanding contribution to science, outstanding skill or ability in the performance of duty, outstanding contribution made during an eminent career in the Department, or any other exceptional contribution to public service. Recipients receive a special certificate and citation signed by the Secretary along with an engraved gold Distinguished Service Medal and a gold lapel pin.





DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

Award Recipients

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Sharlene Round Face

BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Michael A. Celata

Michelle V. Morin

William W. Shedd

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Stephanie A. Connolly

Scott Hopkins

Kurt D. Huhta

Deborah J. Sullivan

Jennifer Walker

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Shawn T. Bengé ()*

Gary A. Bremen

Jennifer Flynn

Raymond I. Murray, Jr.

Cindy Orlando

Michael T. Reynolds ()*

Douglas W. Smith

Raymond K. Todd

Christine J. Williamson

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Gregory Scott Austin

Debra T. Bills

Kenneth S. Clough

Tammy J. Fairbanks

Gregory W. Gerlich

Rebekah T. Giddings

Rosemarie S. Gnam

Edward Joseph Grace

Jacquelyn B. Hall

Jason D. Holm

Richard A. Johnston

Scott D. Knight



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

(Continued)

Kevin J. Kritz

Cindy Loban

Damien Miller

Edwin E. Muniz

David L. Wedan

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Carter Atkinson

Nicholas M. Beeler

Michael J. Focazio

Ruth A. Harris

Stephen H. Hickman()*

Randall J. Hunt

Jane E. Meyer

Carolyn Ruppel

Gregory Steyer

Curt D. Storlazzi

Michael A. Tischler

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Vicki A. Brown ()*

Mariane Gately ()*

Jonathan J. Mack ()*

Robert Duncan MacLean

Donna M. Riley ()*

Jeffery R. Rupert

Jodi B. Vargas

Lori Y. Vassar

*Compact of Free Association
Negotiations Team*

*(*Award Previously Presented at Bureau Ceremony)*



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

Award Recipients

Sharlene Round Face

Ms. Sharlene Round Face brought stability, accountability, and consistency to the Real Estate Services program within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) during a time of unprecedented change amid the recognition of the importance of the program to BIA's overall mission. During her tenure as the Chief of the Division of Real Estate Services at the headquarters level, the program emerged as the focus of BIA's systems-modernization efforts and served as the cornerstone of BIA's efforts to carry out its trust obligations, while at the same time empowering Tribes to achieve true self-determination. Ms. Round Face began her 40-year career on her home reservation in Montana and later served in two Oklahoma field offices, learning all aspects of the program in the process. She then expanded on that wealth of knowledge by serving as the initial director of BIA's national probate program—a key component of the multifaceted trust reform initiative arising out of the landmark Cobell settlement—before becoming Division Chief in 2013. During her career, Ms. Round Face was instrumental in developing and implementing ground-breaking and sweeping legislation, including the Indian Mineral Development Act, the HEARTH Act, and the American Indian Probate Reform Act. She was also instrumental in developing and implementing new policies and associated regulations applicable to virtually all types of land transactions. Under leadership with vastly different perspectives and priorities, Ms. Round Face provided seamless oversight to several management initiatives and systems modifications in order to support more efficient allocations of resources and a revitalization of the workforce. She was a true champion for the Real Estate Services program. She also brought people together and drew on her life's work on behalf of Indian Tribes and individual Indian landowners.

Michael A. Celata

Mr. Michael A. Celata's 34-year career with the Federal Government has been distinguished by his exceptional performance and contributions. His visionary leadership revolutionized the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) ability to provide a fair return for oil and gas leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM), which provides 97 percent of U.S. offshore oil and gas production and billions of dollars in annual revenues to the Treasury. Mr. Celata implemented key technologies, including geological interpretive tools for subsurface interpretations and analyses, which serve as the foundation for fair market value determinations and geologic assessments. He played a critical role in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response and established the Worst-Case Discharge Program to ensure adequate future oil spill response planning and execution. Mr. Celata conducted 12 GOM oil and gas



lease sales as Regional Director, resulting in nearly \$1.6 billion in winning bids. He oversaw three of BOEM's largest coastal resiliency initiatives, which provided nearly 45 million cubic yards of sand to reduce risk to Gulf coastal communities and infrastructure. Mr. Celata's forward-looking leadership laid the groundwork for the first GOM offshore wind auction, initiated a carbon sequestration program, and drove development of an innovative ocean planning process to support the GOM's transition to an integrated, clean-energy basin. He also developed BOEM's risk management operations to ensure taxpayers are not responsible for paying billions of dollars to decommission offshore facilities. Mr. Celata created a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace culture, exemplifying and advancing inclusive guiding principles; developing targeted anti-harassment training and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility training; and encouraging and using employee feedback to make BOEM one of the best places to work in the Federal Government. He established the Gulf Leadership Development and Mentorship Programs that served as models for other programs. Mr. Celata also served as Field Special Assistant to the Secretary for Unified Region 6 and played a significant role in the Department's reorganization.

Michelle V. Morin

For almost 30 years, Ms. Michelle V. Morin helped shape and implement the environmental review functions for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program and the OCS Renewable Energy Program. Her long and impressive career of public service began in DOI as a student volunteer in 1993 with the Environmental Studies Program in the Gulf of Mexico Regional Office. During her time in the regional office, Ms. Morin gained valuable environmental expertise that would serve her well as she moved to BOEM headquarters in 2008. She played a key role in the aftermath of the Macondo spill in 2010 clarifying the environmental processes and analyses leading up to the tragedy. In October 2010, she joined the ranks of management as the Chief of the new Environmental Branch for Renewable Energy in the Office of Renewable Energy Programs. In 2015, a White House-sanctioned Offshore Wind Permitting Subgroup was established, bringing together Federal officials from many agencies to help streamline the permitting process through improved coordination and communication. She led the subgroup for several years and developed powerful working relationships with key personnel throughout the Federal Government, States, Tribes, and in the private sector. Ms. Morin again provided exemplary leadership overseeing BOEM's efforts to prepare the initial environmental assessments for multiple offshore wind projects. She was a strong proponent of the use of a "design envelope," enabling much more effective and streamlined environmental reviews than would otherwise be possible using conventional approaches. These efforts provided a template for success that will continue to be utilized in future project reviews. Ms. Morin was a member of the team that received the 2021 Department of the Interior Environmental Achievement Award in the Climate Champion category for the Supplemental Environmental



Impact Statement for the Vineyard Wind 1 project. Throughout the growth and development of the environmental review team for offshore renewable energy, Ms. Morin has made fundamental and long-lasting contributions and her legacy will continue to influence the evolution of the Renewable Energy Program.

William W. Shedd

During his more than 40 years of work within the Department of the Interior, industry, and the research community, Mr. William W. Shedd has been recognized for his scientific expertise and his contributions to the geologic knowledge of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf. His contributions increased the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) ability to assess gas hydrate resources, appraise shallow geologic hazards, and provide a detailed description of the seafloor. Mr. Shedd began mapping the seafloor of the Gulf of Mexico more than 20 years ago, eventually co-publishing a 1.4-billion-pixel map of the Gulf of Mexico's deepwater area. His seafloor description received international acclaim and resulted in thousands of downloads from the BOEM website. His work was also used as the standard for Gulf of Mexico bathymetry in both industry and academia, and it led to the identification and protection of chemosynthetic communities. Mr. Shedd's expertise in hydrocarbon migration and seepage allowed him to participate as an expert advisor for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the Taylor MC20 platform remediation. His seafloor mapping and anomalies knowledge led to collaboration with various Federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Coast Guard, and Department of Energy, where he worked on site selections related to seeps, hydrates, and coral communities. Mr. Shedd completed extensive mapping and assessment of gas hydrates in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean. He also frequently served on panels at the prestigious International Gordon Research Conference on Gas Hydrates as an expert in his field and contributed to multiple publications, posters, and lectures. During his career, Mr. Shedd has mentored many geologists and published multiple manuscripts in industry and academic journals, which will ensure that his legacy and research will serve generations to come.



Stephanie A. Connolly

Throughout her 30-year career in Federal land management, including more than 20 years with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Ms. Stephanie A. Connolly has worked tirelessly to ensure the achievement of BLM priorities by focusing on a range of key issues, including Tribal and intergovernmental relations, public land restoration, line officer training, and resource advisory councils. She has demonstrated unsurpassed leadership in high-profile temporary assignments, including Acting Wyoming Associate State Director, Acting Colorado Associate State Director, Acting Deputy Assistant Director, Senior Advisor to the Director, and Acting Colorado State Director. Especially important was Ms. Connolly's service as Acting Deputy Assistant Director for Resources and Planning, during which she contributed to BLM's manual and handbook on Tribal consultation. Her accomplishments include initiating and staffing the Powder River Basin Restoration project, which facilitated more efficient and effective sage brush restoration, and establishing BLM's first working agreement with the State of Wyoming to assist with plugging abandoned and orphaned wells. Ms. Connolly has fostered beneficial long-lasting partnerships between the agency and other organizations. For example, she navigated a very complex political landscape with wild horse gathers in Colorado, building relationships that are necessary to ensure the success of future gathers. Demonstrating extraordinary leadership and commitment, she has used her problem-solving skills both to achieve general mission-related goals and to further site-specific projects, all the while fostering a spirit of collaboration. Ms. Connolly is dedicated to supporting and mentoring employees, recognizing their outstanding accomplishments, and ensuring that BLM's workforce reflects the diversity, experiences, and cultures of local communities.



Scott Hopkins

Mr. Scott Hopkins is the driving force behind the Valley of the Giants Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Based on his efforts, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) expanded the original area of 400- to 500-year-old Douglas fir and western hemlock from 51 acres to more than 1,600 acres to create one of the largest intact old-growth stands in Oregon's Coast Range. Mr. Hopkins extensively surveyed the site for northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, red tree voles, and other special status species. These surveys became a benchmark used to compare population trends across the field office, ensuring that BLM understood the impacts of active management in other locations by comparing those surveys to this legacy site. While working at a local lumber mill, Mr. Hopkins began his career in the Department of the Interior as a part-time wildlife biologist specializing in raptors. After the northern spotted owl was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990, Mr. Hopkins joined BLM full-time. He began a career-long path of conserving habitat for the owl while



collaborating with foresters and other resource professionals to produce a sustainable yield of forest products to benefit communities across western Oregon. During the development of the groundbreaking 1993 Northwest Forest Plan and the subsequent 2016 Western Oregon Resource Management Plans, Mr. Hopkins acquired a sophisticated understanding of every known northern spotted owl in three heavily forested Oregon counties. Based on that knowledge, he tailored plan objectives and management direction to protect and conserve sensitive species and their habitat. For his commitment, dedication, and public service, Mr. Scott Hopkins is granted the highest honor of the Department of the Interior, the Distinguished Service Award.



Kurt D. Huhta

When the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Alaska Cadastral Survey program suffered a severe reduction-in-force of more than 100 employees, Mr. Kurt D. Huhta used his expertise and extensive experience surveying in the Alaska wilderness to revolutionize the program's field procedures. By blending the Global Position System (GPS) with traditional survey processes, he was able to work with a 50-percent-smaller crew that was in the field for less time per parcel—doubling their survey productivity. Mr. Huhta reduced the amount of line-cutting required to set corners by frequently updating technology, prioritizing training, and reducing the need for high-risk activities, such as tree and branch clearing. He broke new ground for surveying meandering rivers and lakes, becoming the first in BLM to use structures-from-motion, a lost method of low-level photogrammetry. Mr. Huhta custom built aircraft camera mounts, linked cameras to GPS units in fixed wing aircraft, and used data collectors to provide highly accurate renders. This work allows a historical record of surveyor accomplishments, showing the travel of rivers over time by comparing them to photography from Alaska's statehood. As a result of his leadership and innovation, he led surveys of more than 25 million acres in 10 years. Along the way Mr. Huhta built a strong culture of safety, receiving the Department of the Interior's (Department) Meritorious Service Award in part due to his excellent safety record, in which he accrued more than 10,000 injury-free flight hours in 10 consecutive seasons and a 3-year period without any injuries. A strong proponent of building young talent, he routinely employs up to a dozen student trainees each year, many of whom have gone on to careers throughout the Department.



Deborah J. Sullivan

After serving 3 years with the Peace Corps in Ecuador, Ms. Deborah J. Sullivan started her Federal law enforcement career in 2003, serving as a park ranger at several national parks. She was one of the only female officers on the distinguished Midwest Region Special Event and Tactical Team. Hired by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as a resident ranger in Mesquite,



Nevada, Ms. Sullivan effectively represented BLM to a diverse and often contentious group of public land users. She led several national law enforcement details, and for 10 years she served as a shift leader for Burning Man, BLM's most widely attended permitted event with the highest number of law enforcement incidents. Ms. Sullivan then became the supervisory law enforcement ranger for the Southern Nevada district. By bridging the gap between BLM law enforcement, other agencies, and stakeholders, she fostered a culture of cooperation and diversity. Ms. Sullivan has served as Wyoming chief ranger for the last 6 years, becoming an indispensable member of the leadership team there. A mainstay of the Wyoming law enforcement community, she is the first BLM employee to be a member of the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police. Ms. Sullivan has served with distinction as a BLM and multiagency team leader on multiple deployments for natural disaster relief throughout the United States and U.S. territories, including during Hurricanes Dorian, Fiona, Ian, Irma, and Maria. One of her enduring legacies is a mental health initiative she helped establish for the Wyoming law enforcement program, which sourced a law-enforcement-specific mental health professional to ensure that officers thrive in their challenging work. Widely used by BLM law enforcement officers, this program has resulted in higher retention and better quality of life.



Jennifer Walker

During her 20-year career, Ms. Jennifer Walker's dedicated leadership has resulted in thousands of acres of land treatments in Montana and Wyoming to reduce and control invasive plant and insect infestations, restore native species and ecological function, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce wildfire risk, particularly in wildland urban interface areas. Ms. Walker started her career with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Montana.

There, she honed her skills at building partnerships to implement forest health projects across State, Federal, and private ownership boundaries by being an avid learner, a listener, and a negotiator. She then moved to Wyoming to continue developing her passion for landscape management, establishing there a multifaceted fuels management program. Ms. Walker started by building internal relationships with BLM staff and leadership. Out of that effort, a well-organized team of BLM specialists formed with the objective of improving the ecological health of the Bighorn Mountains and Northern Great Plains through a broad, landscape-level management approach. Ms. Walker furthered this initiative by fostering support among external partners, including the U.S. Forest Service, Wyoming State Forestry Division, Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and Johnson and Campbell Counties. She also gained the backing of more than 50 private landowners, in part by spending many hours visiting with them over their kitchen tables. By helping create this coalition, Ms. Walker facilitated the implementation of numerous thinning, prescribed fire, and restoration projects in the Bighorn Mountains and other areas that improved ecosystem health, reduced wildfire risk, and increased trust in BLM among partners, private landowners, and members of the public.



Shawn T. Benge (*)

Mr. Shawn T. Benge began his NPS career as a landscape architect at Big Bend National Park. He served in numerous park-level capacities-including superintendent assignments-at Great Smoky Mountains, Everglades, and Dry Tortugas National Parks, in addition to Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. As the deputy regional director/chief of staff for the South-Atlantic Gulf Region, Mr. Benge provided operational leadership to parks and program areas; organized hurricane/storm response and recovery efforts; served as a primary official responsible for managing NPS oil spill response activities associated with Deepwater Horizon; and established regional capabilities around the NPS Urban Agenda and the NPS Centennial initiatives, for which the region was a national leader. He also completed a tour at the Denver Service Center, the NPS central planning and design office. In 2016, Mr. Benge came to Washington, DC, to serve as the Associate Director for the Park Planning, Facilities and Lands Directorate. Mr. Benge has been involved in the development and implementation of some of the most critical infrastructure work products and projects of the last decade, including the initiation of Project RevAmp and the formation of the NPS Visitor Use Management Group. His calm demeanor and ability to convey deferred maintenance issues to internal and external audiences have proven indispensable, as have his contributions to three milestone construction projects-the Grand Canyon Trans-Canyon Waterline, Arlington Memorial Bridge, and City Arch River, the latter of which is the largest public-private partnership project in NPS history. Since 2019, Mr. Benge has served as the Deputy Director of Operations, first in an acting capacity and then on a permanent basis. During this period, he served a yearlong stint exercising the delegated authority of the director. One of his greatest achievements was leading NPS in accomplishing the passage and implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act. He has motivated a new generation of leaders through his lifelong commitment to mentorship.



Gary A. Bremen

Mr. Gary A. Bremen epitomizes a 21st century National Park Service (NPS) ranger. He is recognized throughout NPS and the Department of the Interior for his inspired creativity and transformational work in the field of interpretation. Ranger Bremen is a writer, speaker, and master storyteller, whose work has appeared in national magazines and on television, radio, and podcasts. He founded Biscayne National Park's Family Fun Fest, which is celebrating 22 years of immersive and wildly entertaining park experiences for local families and visitors of all ages. For 25 years, the park's Dante Fascell Visitor Center gallery, established and lovingly curated by Ranger Bremen, has showcased artistic expression exploring the diversity of the park's human and ecological stories. An early advocate for naturalization ceremonies to be held on the shores of Biscayne Bay, Ranger Bremen partnered with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and established formal annual programming. To date, he has honored and introduced 5,000 new citizens to national parks.



Ranger Bremen's award-winning and most intimate storytelling has been his "Songs and Stories of Our National Parks" collaboration with Florida's Historian-in-Song, Grant Livingston. Successful collaborations include a story about American citizenship with more than a million downloads. His ability to weave threads of his personal journey into the broader stories of NPS has given hope, strength, and courage to countless others. Ranger Bremen has become a natural mentor, friend, and coach to young interpreters who are honing their own storytelling skills. His informal leadership of this next generation of interpreters will positively impact national park visitor experiences for years to come. He has been honored with the Freeman Tilden Award in two NPS regions, NPS Crystal Owl Award for Excellence in Training, and U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Education Award.



Jennifer Flynn

Ms. Jennifer Flynn has served the National Park Service (NPS) for more than 32 years, almost entirely in the Visitor and Resource Protection (VRP) directorate and most recently as associate director. She has also been superintendent of Shenandoah National Park. Within VRP, she has served as a Federal law enforcement officer, emergency medical technician, structural firefighter, wildland firefighter, search and rescue technician, jailer, dispatcher, and fee manager. As associate director—whether it be leading the NPS response to the COVID-19 pandemic; responding to the nationwide public unrest in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd; or ensuring Government continuity in the days after the January 6, 2021, attack on the United States Capitol—Ms. Flynn has successfully commanded 30 programs, more than 850 employees, and a budget exceeding \$200 million. During some of the most complex and challenging times in NPS history, she led the Office of Public Health, United States Park Police, and diverse divisions, including law enforcement, security, and emergency services; fire and aviation management; special park uses; and wilderness stewardship. Ms. Flynn directed the development of the NPS body-worn camera program, equipping all officers with body-worn cameras, bringing unprecedented public transparency to NPS law enforcement. She oversaw the creation of the Employee Wellness and Resilience program, ushering in an unprecedented era of recognition and response to employee mental health and welfare. Under Ms. Flynn's watch, NPS fundamentally changed how it recruits, hires, trains, and mentors law enforcement officers, allowing NPS to be best prepared for policing in the 21st century. Her efforts implementing critical components of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law resulted in better pay and increased staffing within the wildland fire community. Additionally, Ms. Flynn reinvigorated the NPS Operational Leadership program, bringing greater awareness to the importance of workplace safety and helping to create a lasting culture of managing risk. She has directly impacted the safety of those who visit, work, and live within our national parks.



Raymond I. Murray, Jr.

Mr. Raymond I. Murray, Jr. is recognized for an illustrious career spanning nearly 60 years with the Federal Government. Throughout his career, he has distinguished himself as a consummate professional and visionary, devoting himself to advancing and actualizing the mission of the National Park Service (NPS) and its predecessors. Mr. Murray's career began in 1965 as an outdoor recreation planner for the Northeast regional office of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (Recreation), where he worked to launch the newly authorized State Land and Water Conservation Fund program for five States. In 1967, Mr. Murray transferred to the Recreation's Pacific Southwest regional office where he led the development of feasibility studies that were instrumental to the establishment of Golden Gate National Recreation Area (NRA) and Santa Monica Mountains NRA, expanding urban recreation opportunities to millions. Additionally, he spearheaded creation of the Park and Recreation Technical Services program, a cutting-edge approach to leveraging limited Federal funding with philanthropic support, volunteerism, expanded concession opportunities, and management efficiencies—a program that became a national model for NPS and partner agencies. In 1981, Mr. Murray officially became an employee of NPS. Over the next 42 years, his leadership in park philanthropy and expanding the reach of NPS to new audiences helped shape its culture and practices. Mr. Murray led the completion of new area studies, facilitating the establishment of the Rosie the Riveter-World War II Home Front National Historical Park, Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (NHT), and Ala Kahakai NHT. He helped grow the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance; Land and Water Conservation Fund; and National Heritage Areas programs nationally. Additionally, he coauthored the first NPS-wide tourism and philanthropic policies.



Cindy Orlando

Ms. Cindy Orlando served as the Field Special Assistant (FSA) for Interior Region 12 and as Deputy Regional Director of Interior Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12 from April 2020 until her retirement in December 2023. During this period, Ms. Orlando also served as the National Park Service Pacific West Acting Regional Director, where she oversaw more than 60 national park sites. These sites hosted more than 65 million visitors a year and contributed \$5 billion to local economies. She was responsible for leading 3,500 employees and managing a budget of more than \$300 million annually. Ms. Orlando was instrumental in the early governance of the new Department of the Interior regions as an FSA to the Secretary. In addition to her regional leadership roles, Ms. Orlando served in multiple park management roles. Among her assignments, she served as superintendent of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in Oregon during the preparations for the nationally significant Lewis and Clark Bicentennial;



Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve in Washington State, one of the first partnership parks in the country; Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, where she assisted with the planning and execution of the First World Conference on Cultural Parks; and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, managing the park for 14 years through the Kilauea Volcano eruption of 2018 that triggered earthquakes over a 4-month period. At the national level, Ms. Orlando worked on national policy development issues for visitor and commercial services and served as chief of concession management. During her tenure, she provided international technical assistance to parks in Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and Japan. At Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, she developed sister park relationships with Jeju Volcanic Park and Lava Tubes in South Korea, Wudalianchi National Park in China, and La Réunion National Park in France. She has also been active in World Heritage issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Michael T. Reynolds (*)

Mr. Michael T. Reynolds began his lifelong love of nature and public lands while growing up in Yosemite National Park. During his 42-year career with the Department of the Interior—almost entirely with the National Park Service (NPS)—Mr. Reynolds has been a key leader known for science-based decisions. He has served in positions at every level in NPS from front-line ranger to acting Director. He dedicated himself to the conservation and protection of the environment while making them accessible and safe for the public and staff. Managing major facilities and navigating politically sensitive environs, Mr. Reynolds has excelled in business, planning, and intricate problem solving in his most recent roles as Deputy Director; Congressional and External Relations Deputy Director; Regional Director of Interior Regions 6, 7, and 8; and Superintendent of Yosemite National Park through employee-focused programs, billion-dollar budget management, and dedication to addressing climate change and cultural resource issues. As Deputy Director, he managed complex programs, controversies, and large grant programs that impacted every State through outdoor recreation. Mr. Reynolds interfaced with and supported every leadership level in NPS on priorities, project needs, negotiations, and other matters dealing with Congress or partners on behalf of the Director. He was a trailblazer in employee engagement, workplace improvement initiatives, and managing safety during large incidents such as fires, floods, and the COVID-19 pandemic. His extraordinary ability to build and deepen relationships resulted in successful resolutions while handling sensitive issues with law enforcement, construction, partnerships, resources, and staffing. A legacy NPS leader, he inspired generations of employees through his mentorship and professionalism. He received numerous internal and external awards, including the Outstanding Alumnus Award from the University of California, Santa Barbara's Environmental Studies Program. He is known for his deft crisis management, warmth, unflappability, humor, and commitment to public service.



Douglas W. Smith

Dr. Douglas W. Smith is recognized for his outstanding contributions to the reintroduction and recovery of gray wolves in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. During his 28-year career at Yellowstone National Park, Dr. Smith devoted himself to restoring the natural behaviors of wolves and predator-prey dynamics in the ecosystem. He began his career with the reintroduction of 41 wolves from Canada and northwestern Montana and became the leader of the Yellowstone Wolf Project for 25 years. Under his stewardship, wolf numbers increased to 174 in as many as 16 packs before stabilizing between 80 and 125 wolves in 7 to 10 packs. The reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone was a transformational event because it completed the restoration of native large carnivores in the ecosystem. During his tenure, Dr. Smith established one of the world's premier scientific monitoring and research programs. He and his staff captured and collared more than 600 wolves, conducted more than 1,500 aerial flights, hiked or skied more than 20,000 miles, located wolf packs more than 52,000 times, recorded more than 35,000 hours of wolf behavior, and examined more than 8,200 carcasses. These extensive efforts were possible because Dr. Smith worked diligently with the park's funding partner, Yellowstone Forever, to raise more than 6 million dollars for the program. This monitoring and research synergized an incredible proliferation of scientific investigations about wildlife, habitats, and ecosystem processes. Due to his expertise and passion, Dr. Smith became the public face of wolf recovery and conservation in North America. He and his staff conducted more than 1,900 interviews, gave 4,300 formal presentations and 14,800 informal presentations to park visitors, published more than 90 scientific publications and 3 books, and wrote 40 popular articles. In addition, Dr. Smith trained more than 300 biologists and volunteers.



Raymond K. Todd

During his 41-year career with the National Park Service (NPS), Mr. Raymond K. Todd has made significant and lasting contributions through excellence in project and program management in Federal planning, design, and construction throughout the National Park System. As director of the Denver Service Center (DSC), the largest NPS project management and contracting office, his leadership, technical expertise, and guidance has been relied upon to effectively manage and deliver some of the most nationally significant and challenging park projects and programs. Mr. Todd's expertise and wide-ranging institutional knowledge is respected and sought after by colleagues within and outside of NPS. Under his management, the DSC executed 95 projects funded through the Great American Outdoors Act Legacy Restoration Fund, totaling nearly \$2.6 billion for fiscal years (FY) 2021-2023. These projects enabled NPS to reduce the maintenance backlog, protect critical resources, expand recreational opportunities, and focus on long-term sustainable operations for the next century. Mr. Todd has directed numerous actions for process improvements to reduce costs, accelerate schedules, and enhance the quality of project delivery. He led the



DSC to improve its acquisition process—increasing management oversight, improving internal controls, and enhancing job aids and training for project teams—resulting in a record-breaking year of obligating \$1.4 billion to private industry for design and construction services in FY 2023. In addition, Mr. Todd is advancing the future of NPS by mentoring the next generation of project managers through the NPS Facility Manager Leaders program, which is designed to lead responsible stewardship and protection of assets within the National Park System. Mr. Todd’s legacy on NPS has wide and lasting impacts.



Christine J. Williamson

Ms. Christine J. Williamson has served the American public for nearly 30 years, all of which has been in the National Park Service’s (NPS) recreation fee program. She has held nearly every position in the program, starting her career as a seasonal fee collector and rising through the ranks from fee supervisor to fee manager and ultimately into the national recreation fee program manager. As the recreation fee program manager, Ms. Williamson has prioritized training and engagement and overseen the modernization of recreation fee management and business practices. In addition, she has continuously chaired the Interagency Pass Work Group and the Interagency Recreation One-Stop program, which manages the Recreation.gov program. In these multiple roles, Ms. Williamson has distinguished herself as a consummate professional and is recognized across the entire Federal land management family for her visionary leadership. Under her direction, the Recreation.gov program has become recognized as a highly credible high-impact service provider with a strong emphasis on customer experience. Ms. Williamson has led NPS in responding to the unprecedented surge in demand for online reservations brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. She has continuously championed the adoption of new technology, including the first NPS-wide point-of-sale system, the incorporation of contactless payments, and the creation of park-specific digital passes. Moreover, Ms. Williamson spearheaded multiple efforts to implement new free or low-cost interagency passes. These passes include Every Kid Outdoors Annual 4th Grade Pass, Annual U.S. Military Pass, Lifetime Pass for U.S. Military Veterans, Gold Star Families Pass, and Annual Senior Pass. Since 2017, these passes have benefited more than 3.3 million 4th-grade families, 3.1 million U.S. military families, and over 1.5 million seniors. Ms. Williamson’s impact on the recreation fee program and its ability to support the NPS mission and the public is immense.



Gregory Scott Austin

Mr. Gregory Scott Austin has served as the project leader for the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex in the Pacific Southwest Region for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 9 years. During his tenure, he has demonstrated outstanding leadership that persisted even in the face of extreme controversy and adversity. Mr. Austin's tireless commitment to conservation has markedly contributed to the success of the strong partnerships between the refuge and others in the Klamath Basin. He is unmatched in ensuring that day-to-day refuge management and administrative needs are addressed. Mr. Austin continues to demonstrate leadership over an unprecedented drought that threatens conservation of species that the refuge is intended to protect in the Klamath Basin. He continues to be an advocate for the refuge system overall and is extremely involved in the struggles to deliver water to the refuge during a years-long historic drought that persists in the area. Mr. Austin navigates the extremely complicated issues affecting the refuge, including water law, ecology, visitor use, and political pressures. His efforts and decisions are consistently guided by achieving maximum benefits for the refuge's resources. Mr. Austin continues to provide outstanding work by developing partnerships and strengthening relationships within the Klamath Basin. He inspires his staff every day to find the positive work within this unprecedented drought that is impacting morale among refuge employees. He supports his staff with restoration projects and working outside the box to keep the conservation work moving forward. Mr. Austin maintains a tireless advocacy for the refuge and his staff in a very difficult area. He is respected by many for his integrity, character, and dedication and for his excellent leadership and critical contributions to the National Wildlife Refuge System in the Pacific Southwest Region.



Debra T. Bills

Ms. Debra T. Bills began her commitment to public service as a Peace Corp volunteer in Senegal, where she supported development of freshwater fishponds in remote communities. In 1995, her passion for conservation and collaboration led her to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as a wildlife biologist focusing on working with Federal, State, and Tribal partners to advance threatened and endangered species conservation.

Ms. Bills continued to pursue more complex conservation challenges as she rose in leadership stature. In her two decades of work leading several Ecological Services offices in the Southwest United States, she tackled a myriad of Endangered Species Act and other legal matters to protect various species, including the black-capped vireo, golden-cheeked warbler, and lesser prairie-chicken. Ms. Bills also leveraged many partners to protect fish and wildlife in Texas when environmental contaminants impacted critical habitat. Her conservation leadership earned her a Supervisor of the Year Award for 2021. Ms. Bills is known as a compassionate leader who is frequently sought across FWS to offer strategic advice on mentoring, leading a diverse high-performing workforce, establishing organizational values, and preventing unconscious



bias in hiring. She sets the example for being an inclusive manager with her focus on diversity and employee development. Ms. Bills maintains an energetic and positive attitude, which makes tackling the challenges of the FWS mission easier.



Kenneth S. Clough

For more than 25 years as a realty specialist, Mr. Kenneth S. Clough has led teams of landowners, local governments, conservation organizations, and many others to acquire more than 84,000 acres across 20 national wildlife refuges, primarily in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee. In acquiring these lands, Mr. Clough has efficiently stewarded more than \$140 million from the Land and Water Conservation

Fund and Migratory Bird Conservation Fund accounts. His efforts include helping establish three new national wildlife refuges—Red River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Louisiana; Theodore Roosevelt NWR, Mississippi; and Green River NWR, Kentucky. Mr. Clough has worked tirelessly, with exceptional character, collaboration, and communication to earn and build trust and respect with a diverse array of partners, including those who buy and hold land while the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completes its lengthy due diligence process. His vision and overall leadership help sustain all parties' engagement and focus. Mr. Clough worked with The Conservation Fund, the carbon industry, and a private landowner to acquire nearly 4,000 acres of agricultural and bottomland hardwood forest lands at Upper Ouachita NWR in Louisiana, to benefit migratory birds, fish spawning areas, and water quality. Keys to Mr. Clough's success include his ingenuity and persistence to keep transactions moving forward. In 2016, he completed a phased acquisition of almost 9,000 acres at Upper Ouachita and Felsenthal NWRs for a total value of nearly \$11 million. This acquisition benefitted local communities, thousands of wintering waterfowl, and scores of other species of migratory birds and other wildlife such as wide-ranging black bears. It also provided a long-envisioned landscape connection between two NWRs that are separated by the LouisianaArkansas State line.



Tammy J. Fairbanks

For nearly two decades, Ms. Tammy J. Fairbanks has served a distinguished career at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Bismarck Wetlands Acquisition Office, perpetually protecting wetland and grassland habitat of the Prairie Pothole Region through conservation easements and fee-title acquisition for the benefit of the American people. Between 2004 and 2008 as a realty specialist and from 2009 to present as the Bismarck

Wetlands Acquisition Office realty supervisor, she has protected more than 654,000 acres, investing more than \$342 million. These acres represent 45 percent of the 1.5 million total easement acres in North Dakota. For the past 14 years, Ms. Fairbanks



has led the North Dakota realty program, one of the most successful programs within FWS. The partnerships she has forged with nongovernmental organizations, including Ducks Unlimited, Audubon, Delta Waterfowl, and Pheasants Forever, as well as State agencies, have been key to her success. Nearly half of the funding spent nationally—and the resulting acres protected—has been a direct result of the partnerships Ms. Fairbanks has developed through the years. She is a cornerstone of conservation whose legacy extends beyond acres protected to our most valuable resource—our people. Ms. Fairbanks serves as a consummate mentor, teacher, leader, and friend to countless FWS employees.



Gregory W. Gerlich

As the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Assistant Regional Director of the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program (Program), Mr. Gregory W. Gerlich reinvigorated it by deploying his strategic vision of a people-first science-centric program, focused and prepared to meet current and future challenges to aquatic resource management. Mr. Gerlich pioneered new partnerships to build the next generation of conservation professionals while also promoting fish conservation objectives. Through his leadership, FWS partnered with Palisade High School in Colorado to develop an on-campus fish hatchery, enabling students to contribute to endangered species recovery and develop a passion for conservation professions. Mr. Gerlich worked with States and other partners to expand Asian Carp monitoring efforts into the Missouri River Basin, leveraging new appropriations and direction from Congress. His hands-on engagement with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law National Fish Passage Program ensured the FWS Mountain-Prairie Region funded five strategic fish passage projects in Utah, Wyoming, and Montana. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Gerlich directed hatchery managers to work creatively to maintain fish production goals, maintained the health and safety of employees by keeping residual risk to a minimum, and ensured that fishing opportunities were maintained throughout the region. His leadership and collaborative vision ensured greater quality scientific products, more efficient administration, and increased workforce morale in the Program regionwide. Mr. Gerlich also promoted diversity and inclusion by developing solution-oriented teams comprised of employees from all series and grades. He has left an enduring legacy that includes conservation of species and habitat, the advancement of collaboration, and mentorship of future conservation leaders.



Rebekah T. Giddings

The career of Ms. Rebekah T. Giddings has been marked by exceptional achievements and progressive leadership across several of the Department's Bureaus and Offices. She began her career as a human resources specialist with the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, which led her to take on larger challenges to develop workforce planning strategies and execute outstanding human resources services in multiple organizations. Ms. Giddings was instrumental in transitioning the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) distributed human resources entities into an integrated and highly collaborative organization that has succeeded in recruiting, onboarding, and supporting the 10,000 employees within FWS. Her passion for innovation has led her to develop technological solutions and support organizational change strategies that continue to put FWS and the Department on the forefront of human capital management across the Federal Government. The expertise Ms. Giddings possesses is frequently sought across the Department, and her strategic advice continues to aid the Department's Bureaus and Offices seeking innovative human resources solutions. She also directed FWS's Future of Work strategy, in which she personally led 60 employee listening sessions and held broadcasts for supervisors on implementing revised telework and remote work policies, managing a remote workforce, and transitioning to a return-to-workplace posture. Ms. Giddings sets an example for diversity and inclusion in her hiring and employee development efforts, utilizing various special hiring authorities to bring in talent and expertise across FWS. She maintains a positive attitude at all times and is known for her stellar customer service and employee engagement.



Rosemarie S. Gnam

Dr. Rosemarie S. Gnam is distinguished by her effective leadership to conserve the world's wildlife and their habitats. Throughout her 28-year U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) career, she has built a reputation as a conservation expert, who is recognized and respected throughout the world. Currently, Dr. Gnam heads the Division of Scientific Authority in the FWS International Affairs program. In this position, she is also the head of the U.S. Scientific Authority to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which is an international treaty ratified by 184 parties representing 183 countries and the European Union. Dr. Gnam is directly responsible for providing the technical and scientific advice needed to implement CITES in the United States and currently serves as chair of the CITES Standing Committee; co-chair of the Interagency CITES Coordination Committee; and co-chair of the CITES table for the Canada-Mexico-U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management. This work is extremely complex, and she expertly uses her vast knowledge, depth of expertise, and diplomatic skills to achieve global successes. Dr. Gnam passionately and skillfully performs these duties, often working late into the night to meet the time constraints of her international partners. She also invests time to support and mentor students and staff and acknowledges their



contributions. Dr. Gnam graciously shares her knowledge and skills in the belief that the stronger abilities of others will result in stronger support for plants and animals at a global level. It is certain that the world's wildlife has benefited from her expertise and years of service.



Edward Joseph Grace

Mr. Edward Joseph Grace is recognized as a leader in conservation law enforcement throughout the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), Department of the Interior, and international community of wildlife law enforcement officers. He is a constant source of inspiration to OLE employees, encouraging and motivating them to continually improve and advance their work to curb wildlife trafficking operations. During his 27-year career with OLE, Mr. Grace rose through the ranks from a field agent to finally leading as the chief. His criminal investigations of wildlife traffickers have saved numerous species from extinction. Along the way, Mr. Grace was the first to successfully lead an investigation that convicted an individual under the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act for trafficking Native American human remains. He was also the first to convict numerous individuals under newly passed laws for the trafficking of sturgeon caviar. Throughout his career Mr. Grace has been a trailblazer. He spearheaded Operation Crash, one of the largest, most successful, and far-reaching investigative operations ever mounted. Operation Crash involved the worldwide investigation of trafficking rhinoceros' horns and elephant ivory in response to the most significant wildlife-poaching crisis since the 1970s. His accomplishments and leadership were even documented in a 2020 children's book, inspiring a new generation of future conservationists. He has been recognized with numerous top honors, including a Presidential Rank Award, the Secretary of the Interior's Diversity Award, Service to America Medal, and Clark R. Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Award. His tireless dedication to conservation law enforcement and fairness has resulted in the effective enforcement of the Nation's wildlife laws, establishment of complex and successful multinational law enforcement partnerships and increased cultural awareness and diversity throughout the ranks of OLE.



Jacquelyn B. Hall

The career of Ms. Jacquelyn B. Hall has spanned 42 years with critical leadership positions at the Department of Defense, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Department of the Interior (Department). Following her military service, Ms. Hall's work with the CDC laid the groundwork for a public safety infrastructure that exists to this date. She implemented the Public Health Alert Network to disseminate real-time electronic, emergency preparedness information. When she joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) 20 years ago, she oversaw operations for the Southeast Region and took on the challenge of leading the region's storm recovery program, which included a clear audit plan and internal controls for managing progress. This strategy continues to be used for supplemental and infrastructure funding FWS-wide. Ms. Hall has been a leader in employee and workplace safety, implementing job hazard analyses for a wide range of positions and functions. She advanced efficiency by building a proactive workers' compensation program that focused on helping employees return to positions. Ms. Hall's efforts have saved FWS \$2.2 million in lost wages. She also led implementation of an administrative shared services organization, providing finance, human resource, procurement, and safety support for the entire FWS. Ms. Hall's passion for organizational efficiencies led her to seek and implement strategies that have placed FWS and the Department on the forefront of shared services across the Government. She is known for her stellar customer service, commitment to mission, and passion for employee and visitor safety.



Jason D. Holm

Mr. Jason D. Holm is recognized throughout the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Department of the Interior as a leader in communications. His relentless commitment to the FWS mission, his staff, and the American people has resulted in an exemplary career with FWS spanning more than 17 years. Through his fundamental belief that we are public servants first, Mr. Holm has focused on developing diverse teams in the Pacific and Midwest Regions that reflect the communities in which Bureau employees live and work and include unique cultural and Indigenous voices. He empowers staff to develop innovative, strategic, and inclusive communications practices, which ensure FWS delivers information furthering its conservation mission where, when, and in ways that the information is most helpful to the American people. Mr. Holm spearheaded the movement to help modernize both internal and external communications across FWS, streamlining and professionalizing the program, ensuring its messaging reaches both general and target audiences. His collaboration with the Department of Defense enabled FWS to utilize their highly regarded communications training and expertise, giving FWS communicators the tools needed to help transform FWS communications, particularly in times of crisis. During the



armed occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in 2016, Mr. Holm led a communications team that worked closely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and State and local law enforcement to share accurate, timely, and positive messaging with the media and public about the refuge and FWS. His philosophy of embracing communities and creative communications resulted in the development of strong relationships with the media and trust with community representatives. Because of Mr. Holm's leadership and vision, the public and media looked to FWS for trusted information, and refuge occupiers were unable to develop a strong foothold with the local community and media outlets.



Richard A. Johnston

Mr. Richard A. Johnston, chief of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) National Wildlife Refuge System law enforcement program, is highly regarded throughout FWS and the Department of the Interior as a leader committed to the protection and conservation of wildlife and habitat. Chief Johnston's career was distinguished by exceptional performance, unyielding dedication to the Division of

Refuge Law Enforcement, and demonstrated commitment to public service. Beginning as an entry-level field officer, his devotion to the well-being of officers and FWS employees was a career-long endeavor. Chief Johnston was the first career law enforcement professional to be appointed as chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System's law enforcement program. A leader in conservation law enforcement, his efforts to foster integrity, respect, professionalism, and excellence advanced the effectiveness of the program to unprecedented levels. Throughout his 21 years with FWS, Chief Johnston's tireless efforts were instrumental in defining a high performing, professional law enforcement unit as envisioned in "Conserving the Future" and guided by the founding principles of the National Wildlife Refuge System. His strategic leadership and inclusive approach brought the National Wildlife Refuge System's Division of Refuge Law Enforcement into alignment with the principles of 21st century policing and focused on integrity and compassion for all.



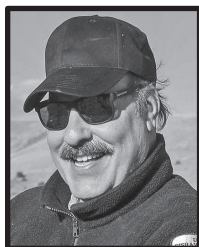
Scott D. Knight

Mr. Scott D. Knight's career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has been marked by exceptional achievements driven by innovation and efficiency improvements and carried out with unwavering customer service. Mr. Knight began his career with FWS as a trainer in the Financial Assistance Training branch, which grounded him in the many challenges facing both practitioners and customers of the complex

Federal financial assistance process. He has carried this understanding through his progressively more responsible leadership assignments, and he continuously strives to improve process efficiency through innovation while maintaining a high degree



of accountability and program integrity. Mr. Knight has demonstrated a unique skill set, combining a practical, customer-based approach with a deep understanding of how to use technology to drive innovation in the implementation of the more than \$2 billion of financial assistance that FWS awards each year. His expertise is frequently sought across the Department of the Interior, and his strategic advice and support continues to aid Bureaus and Offices seeking innovative financial assistance solutions. Mr. Knight is also a committed leader for furthering environmental justice in financial assistance, developing an innovative solution for the awarding of small grants to low-capacity recipients and removing a longstanding barrier to Federal financial assistance participation by many underserved communities. He always maintains a positive attitude and is known for his stellar customer service and employee engagement.



Kevin J. Kritz

Mr. Kevin J. Kritz was recognized throughout the Department of the Interior (Department), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the private sector, as a leader in the conservation of migratory bird populations and habitats. His primary goal was to help his colleagues, co-workers, external partners, and supervisors conserve wildlife and habitats. Mr. Kritz used science, exhaustive knowledge, and collaboration to minimize or avoid impacts to wildlife and habitats from largescale pipelines, wind projects, and powerline corridors. He shared his knowledge in multiple ways—regularly leading courses on Federal wildlife laws, regulations, and policies for the National Conservation Training Center; facilitating raptor research efforts across the United States; and articulating his support for the development and implementation of regulations and policies for the conservation of bald and golden eagles. In 2010, Mr. Kritz became the Mountain-Prairie region’s lead for minimizing the impacts of energy development on migratory birds. He led the migratory bird conservation efforts for FWS on highprofile projects, including the Keystone, Keystone XL, Ruby, and Bison pipelines; the Chokecherry-Sierra Madre, Top of the World, and Glenrock Rolling Hills wind power projects; and the Gateway and TransWest powerline corridors. Mr. Kritz served as the technical lead with the Department of Justice in its first two Federal settlement cases against large-scale wind projects, for incidental take of eagles and other migratory birds. His technical and regulatory expertise on matters regarding energy development and migratory bird conservation was highly sought after and valued by peers, colleagues, and the sectors the Department services. Every day, for more than 30 years, he worked with a passion for, and the goal of, conserving the wildlife and habitats under his purview.



Cindy Loban

Ms. Cindy Loban's professionalism, dedication to the job, and ability to work well with everyone have led to an esteemed career of wetland and grassland habitat protection within the Prairie Pothole Region of the United States, often referred to as "America's duck factory." For the past 14 years of her 34-year Federal career, Ms. Loban has served as a realty specialist in the Huron Wetlands Acquisition Office, acquiring conservation easements and fee-title lands. She has signed more than 450 conservation easements that invested over \$65 million to protect more than 80,000 acres of wetlands and grasslands. These lands will forever provide vital habitat for a variety of species that rely upon prairie wetlands and grasslands for their annual lifecycle. Ms. Loban's ability to work with various individuals and groups, including landowners, private companies, lending institutions, governmental agencies, and nongovernmental organizations, assured consistently smooth case flow in her daily activities. Her honesty and experience resonate with the landowners she has worked with. As a testament to this, nearly 80 percent of the landowners Ms. Loban worked with in the past 3 years signed conservation easements. Although the habitat protected by her work is truly impressive, her legacy will hold true in the numerous employees she has mentored and will replicate her conservation ethic for years to come. Ms. Loban leaves an everlasting legacy within the Prairie Pothole Region for the continuing benefit of the American people.



Damien Miller

Mr. Damien Miller is a leader in conserving Trust resources and engaging communities on behalf of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), Department of the Interior, and National Wildlife Refuge System. His collaborative work with FWS and its partners on endangered species recovery within the Willamette Valley contributed to delisting four species, including the endemic Oregon chub, the first fish species ever to be recovered in the United States. Mr. Miller spearheaded a lengthy land protection planning effort involving multiple partners, including the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, which culminated in the establishment of the Willamette Valley Conservation Area. His efforts will ultimately protect an additional 22,650 acres of important oak and prairie habitat for the American people. Mr. Miller's leadership and creativity in fostering conservation partnerships on refuge system lands and beyond, using the Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Visitor Services programs, has been essential to Endangered Species Act recovery, land protection efforts, and connecting people with nature. These partnerships include collaborating with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife to restore prairie and wetland habitats on nearly 15,000 acres of private land. He also partnered with a nonprofit environmental organization to design and build the



multimillion-dollar Ankeny Hill Nature Center at Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge. This partnership created an education center and community anchor that is advancing our mutual conservation mission. Mr. Miller also provided leadership in establishing a bilingual outdoor education program that enables FWS to directly engage Spanish-speaking communities in the Willamette Valley. He nurtured this pioneering effort that is connecting people with nature and establishing FWS as a community asset to the diverse cultures in the area.



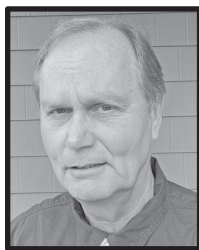
Edwin E. Muñiz

Mr. Edwin E. Muñiz has showcased unwavering dedication to safeguarding and conserving natural resources in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. He has been a driving force in fostering collaboration among Federal agencies, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands territorial agencies, and various conservation entities. Mr. Muñiz's ability to bring together stakeholders has been instrumental in addressing complex issues surrounding natural resources and natural disaster recovery. His achievements encompass successful delisting of the Monito gecko, *Adiantum vivesii*, and *Lepanthes eltoroensi* and reclassification of West Indian manatee, Palo de Rosa, *Mitracarpus polycladus*, and *Eugenia woodburyana*. Mr. Muñiz has championed the conservation of the Antillean manatee, Puerto Rican crested toad, and coral reefs. Under his leadership, the recovery efforts for the endangered Puerto Rican parrot have reached new heights. This includes the establishment of additional aviary facilities, leading to substantial growth in both captive breeding and wild populations. Moreover, new parrot populations have been established in critical habitats, even in the face of natural disasters like Hurricane Maria, which was devastating to the parrot program. Mr. Muñiz was pivotal in developing and leading continuity of operations plans during Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the 2020 Earthquake, and COVID-19 pandemic. His efforts ensured the uninterrupted operation of the Puerto Rican parrot facilities, even in the most challenging circumstances. Mr. Muñiz was vital in securing approximately \$18 million in supplemental funding, leading to facility repairs and infrastructure hardening for the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program and for the Antillean manatee, resulting in enhanced resiliency in the face of a changing climate. His dedication, leadership, and outstanding achievements have left an indelible mark on the Department of the Interior's mission, underscoring his exceptional service and commitment to safeguarding our Nation's natural heritage.



David L. Wedan

Mr. David L. Wedan has been integral to the development and implementation of watercraft safety training throughout his nearly 40-year Federal career. While serving as the Midwest Region's Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) coordinator for the last 26 years, Mr. Wedan played a leading role nationally in the development of hundreds of training courses, personally training thousands of watercraft operators and hundreds of watercraft training instructors. He has been instrumental in working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) instructors and the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) to transform the MOCC program from a single basic training offering to a comprehensive curriculum of courses and modules, including a 5-year MOCC refresher, and on topics such as MOCC instructor, shallow water drive, river operations, Great Lakes and open water operations, large vessel air boat, winter air boat, jet drive, and nonmotorized watercraft. Many of these courses are only offered in the Midwest Region. Mr. Wedan has also demonstrated outstanding leadership and collaboration in supporting the training needs of Tribal partners, partner agencies, and NCTC. As part of the national FWS MOCC coordination team, Mr. Wedan has led the way in developing boating policy and standard operating procedures across the Nation and has helped ensure the safety of thousands of employees during his illustrious career. He has humbly served as a leader and mentor to thousands of operators.



Carter Atkinson

Dr. Carter Atkinson is globally recognized for his decades of research leadership on diseases of forest birds in Hawaii. His extraordinary work over the last 30 years revealed the complex relationships between invasive mosquitoes, avian malaria, and climate change that is causing precipitous declines and extinctions among most Hawaiian forest birds.

Dr. Atkinson's work on the microbiology of bird diseases and their mosquito vectors also revealed that cytoplasmic incompatibility may prove to be an effective mosquito control tool. This research provided the scientific basis for the Department of the Interior's (Department) strategy for preventing the extinction of Hawaiian forest birds. In response to Dr. Atkinson's research findings, the Department's Bureaus, State agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private companies are investing heavily and rapidly to deploy landscape-level vector control tools such as the Incompatible Insect Technique that may prevent extinction of these bird species. Dr. Atkinson pioneered investigations of avian disease on other Pacific islands to understand the interplay between invasive species, disease ecology, and biodiversity in the Pacific basin. He recently used molecular methods to characterize the spread of a forest pathogen in Hawaii and developed innovative field sampling methods and equipment for field measurement of environmental DNA in air particles. Dr. Atkinson published more than 150 peer-reviewed publications that have been cited more than 8,500 times and possesses an extensive network of research colleagues



and management partners. He helped start the annual International Conference on Malaria and Related Haemosporidian Parasites of Wildlife. In addition, Dr. Atkinson mentored many interns and early-career professionals, many of whom have gone onto careers in research or resource management. Dr. Atkinson has been an exemplary employee, faithfully displaying the highest ethical and technical standards that characterize the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) science in the service of the American public.

Nicholas M. Beeler

Dr. Nicholas M. Beeler is an internationally recognized expert in rock mechanics, who is known for his fundamental contributions to our understanding of how faults work and their implications for earthquake hazards and impacts to human life and property. He conducted numerous cutting-edge laboratory experiments directly related to earthquake occurrence and source properties, including his laboratory studies of rock friction, faulting, poroelasticity, wave propagation and attenuation, fracture healing, and hydrothermal alteration. Dr. Beeler constructed theoretical physics-based models of earthquakes and earthquake-related processes. His work deepened our scientific understanding about how earthquakes operate, how often they repeat, and how they generate damaging ground shaking. Dr. Beeler's innovative findings illuminated our views of earthquakes in tectonic settings, ranging from strike-slip faults like the San Andreas to subduction zones like Cascadia. He made numerous discoveries, including how aseismic fault processes interact with and drive earthquakes, thereby providing insight to earthquake generation processes and to how the balance between seismic energy at an earthquake source and dissipative near-fault processes determine the frequency content and amount of shaking recorded by observers at Earth's surface. Dr. Beeler served as the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Earthquake Hazards Program Coordinator of Earthquake Physics and Induced Seismicity Science, guiding these aspects of both the internal and external USGS earthquake research program. He also served on the National Earthquake Prediction Evaluation Council, the Science Planning Committee of the Southern California Earthquake Center—a consortium of more than 60 research institutions—and the National Science Foundation committees designing and championing in-situ studies of rock deformation. Dr. Beeler served as a valued mentor and advisor and guided numerous early career and senior scientists in the United States and abroad in their own studies of Earth deformation processes and earthquake hazards.



Michael J. Focazio

Dr. Michael J. Focazio is recognized throughout the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Department of the Interior (Department), and other Federal agencies for his decades of scientific contributions and program leadership promoting the role of USGS in environmental health science that reflects the intrinsic linkage between human, animal, and ecosystem health (One-Health). As the Environmental Health Program Coordinator, he organized influential interdisciplinary research teams on One-Health science within and outside of USGS. Dr. Focazio instituted innovative review processes to ensure alignment with current and strategic science needs of the public—including underserved and under-informed communities—and of partners throughout the Department, USGS, other agencies, and academia. Dr. Focazio prepared briefings for Members of Congress and represented USGS on important interagency committees, including the White House National Science and Technology Council's National Emerging Contaminant Research Initiative Committee and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's Lead Exposure and Prevention Advisory Committee. He led workshops, including a Federal agency and public-health academia workshop focused on identifying and aligning USGS to support public health partner research on the role of drinking-water contaminants in human health outcomes. Dr. Focazio has fostered the professional development of many students, scientists, and managers. He authored four USGS circulars and influential journal articles on human and environmental exposures to naturally occurring, historical, and emerging anthropogenic contaminants in the Nation's water resources, including a highly cited seminal paper on pharmaceutical and other emerging, organic contaminants in drinking water resources. He served as editor of the GeoHEALTH-USGS Newsletter. Dr. Focazio has been an exemplary employee, unfailingly fulfilling the high technical standards and focus on transparency, accountability, and scientific integrity that is a hallmark of USGS science.



Ruth A. Harris

Dr. Ruth A. Harris is an internationally renowned expert known for her fundamental contributions to our understanding of the physical behavior of earthquakes. Her work has made it possible for the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) assessment of the Nation's earthquake hazards to capture the complexity of earthquake behavior. She is a pioneer of earthquake rupture dynamics as she quantitatively studies how changes in the dynamic and static stress fields due to earthquakes can change the earthquake potential of nearby faults. Dr. Harris has demonstrated that these interactions allow an earthquake rupture to grow larger as it jumps from one fault to another. Her innovative dynamic rupture models demonstrated that material-contrasts across faults are insufficient to control the direction that earthquakes propagate, an important factor for forecasts of shaking in future earthquakes. She is a world



leader in the field of earthquake interactions, building our knowledge of how one earthquake can trigger or delay another event's occurrence. Dr. Harris introduced the concept of a "stress shadow" where earthquakes are suppressed, an important testable hypothesis that has fundamentally moved this field forward. For her impactful research, Dr. Harris was elected a Fellow of the American Geophysical Union (AGU). Through her leadership of the Southern California Earthquake Center's (SCEC) Dynamic Earthquake Rupture Code Verification Exercise, she significantly advanced how seismologists collaborate. That massive project validated hypotheses about earthquake hazards at the proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain. She has served seismology's most important organizations as an editor of the AGU's "Geophysical Research Letters," on the board of SCEC, and on the board and as president of the Seismological Society of America. For two decades, she has led the USGS Earthquake Processes, Probabilities, and Occurrence Project, mentoring early career researchers, advancing diversity, and ensuring her colleagues receive recognition.

Stephen H. Hickman (*)

Dr. Stephen H. Hickman is an internationally recognized expert in geophysics, known for his fundamental contributions in the fields of faulting and crustal mechanics. His leadership and insight are valued throughout the earth science community. His key role in organizing and executing the San Andreas Fault Observatory at Depth remains the deepest land-based scientific drilling project to cross a plate-bounding fault and has become the standard for fault zone scientific drilling worldwide. Dr. Hickman's work on borehole logging of fracture networks and stress indicators is internationally recognized, and he has served on numerous planning and advisory panels for international scientific drilling programs. In 2010, Dr. Hickman was chosen for the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Response Team where his insights and recommendations contributed to successfully sealing the well and mitigating that disaster. He then served as the USGS representative on the Ocean Energy Safety Advisory Committee, tasked with advising the Secretary of the Interior on issues related to offshore energy safety. For his dedication and leadership in geophysics, Dr. Hickman received the American Geophysical Union's 2014 Paul Silver Award for outstanding scientific service. From 2015-2021, Dr. Hickman was the director of the USGS Earthquake Science Center, which he led through high-profile scientific and operational undertakings, including the rollout and expansion of our Nation's first Earthquake Early Warning system. During the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Hickman oversaw the successful continuation of the Earthquake Science Center's many field and laboratory operations while implementing innovative solutions to allow telework and other off-campus work strategies. Throughout these challenges, he maintained high morale and scientific vibrancy within his teams. Hallmarks of Dr. Hickman's many science and leadership accomplishments at USGS have been his unwavering commitment to his staff and his visionary guidance toward our current science and that of the future.



Randall J. Hunt

Dr. Randall J. Hunt is recognized throughout the U.S Geological Survey (USGS) for his decades of leadership and extraordinary contributions to hydrologic science. His contributions combine advances in computational and observational methods to address complex hydrologic and environmental problems with measurable societal impact. Dr. Hunt pioneered approaches in calibration and uncertainty analysis for groundwater simulations by leveraging advanced computational approaches such as high-throughput and cloud computing. His numerous publications, software codes, coauthorship of a widely cited textbook on applied groundwater modeling, and establishment of the T.C. Chamberlain Modeling Center have played pivotal roles guiding modeling practices and procedures within USGS and the broader scientific community. Dr. Hunt's foundational work in computational methods yielded impactful research for decision makers in fields of ecohydrology, groundwater pathogens, wetlands, surface water-groundwater interaction, and integrated water management. He initiated novel work on the vulnerability of drinking water wells to pathogens while pioneering the use of viruses as tracers for fast-path transport systems, challenging the Environmental Protection Agency and the water industry to reevaluate investments needed to protect human health. Dr. Hunt also led research that improved understanding of groundwater flow in wetlands that brought new understanding to the complex interactions among topography, geology, biology, and hydrology in these vital ecosystems. He delivered this understanding to the U.S. Department of Justice for a successful court case on illegal wetland filling. Dr. Hunt is a prominent mentor and volunteer in the scientific community, serving as an adjunct professor, associate editor, and a National Science Foundation panel member. He served as the first Chief Science Officer for the USGS Upper Midwest Water Science Center shortly after its formation from the merger of three individual State centers and helped build new scientific bridges among researchers across the region.

Jane E. Meyer

As an administrative officer (AO) for the Earthquake Science Center (ESC), Ms. Jane Meyer's innovative leadership and commitment to outstanding administrative support for more than 160 employees has been vital to the ESC's success in reducing risks that earthquakes pose to our Nation and to the world. Since Ms. Meyer joined the ESC in 2012, the center's annual budget has grown from \$26 million to \$45 million. During this period of unprecedented growth, she established new and innovative administrative policies and standards, and skillfully oversaw an administrative team managing financial, administrative, and human resources functions. Ms. Meyer improved the ESC administrative team's morale; deftly handled the influx of new reimbursable funding; facilitated the transfer of employee pay during an extended Government shutdown; worked wisely and effectively to maintain communication among dispersed staff during the COVID-19 pandemic; established working capital funds to facilitate moving offices, network operations, and laboratories from Menlo Park to Moffett Field; and led the ESC awards committee to provide fair and



equitable monetary awards to deserving employees. She is a highly knowledgeable and excellent communicator and is decisive, yet compassionate, in issue resolution, maintaining strong working relationships with the regional director's office, program mission areas, Office of Human Capital, Office of Financial Management, other AOs, and ESC staff. Ms. Meyer provides expert advice to ESC leaders through comprehensive financial analyses and projections, using historical data and anticipated future income and expenditures to ensure financial solvency, inform strategic planning, and enable hiring in response to high levels of retirement. Her business acumen and organizational skills have been critical in meeting increasing levels of congressional funding for and attention on the ESC-led ShakeAlert Earthquake Early Warning System, which has required substantial increases in staffing, external contracts, field work, and equipment purchases. Ms. Meyer's dedication, sound management practices, and innovative leadership have been instrumental in serving the needs of the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) programs and external partners.



Carolyn Ruppel

Dr. Carolyn Ruppel is an internationally acclaimed expert on the marine global carbon cycle. For more than a decade, Dr. Ruppel has served as project leader for the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Methane Gas Hydrates Project. By building strong intra- and interagency collaborations, she attracted the extensive reimbursable funding needed to expand the internationally renowned USGS gas hydrate research effort from its energy

focus to now include expertise in climate and environmental research. Mentoring the next generation of scientists continues to be one of Dr. Ruppel's top priorities. Combining her deep understanding of marine systems, her vision, and her trademark dedication, she continues to build and support a global network of scientists, many of whom are early career researchers. The highly regarded international Gordon Research Conference that Dr. Ruppel created has provided a dedicated space for career and student researchers to discuss gas hydrate research on a biannual basis for the last 12 years. Her influential research contributions to characterizing the role of methane in the marine subsurface, water column, and atmosphere led Dr. Ruppel to author an invited "Grand Challenge" paper solicited for the American Geophysical Union's 100th anniversary. Her perspective and guidance are broadly sought, and she has served as an advisor or USGS representative to Federal entities, the United Nations, and other international science centers of excellence. Dr. Ruppel has also served in key roles within USGS science leadership, including as the Senior Science Advisor to the USGS Chief Scientist. Within USGS, she repeatedly answers the call to guide important, demanding, time-intensive programmatic needs. Dr. Ruppel led the delivery of the USGS Coastal and Marine Hazards and Resources Program's Decadal Science Strategy, led the first paper on assessing the impact of controlled acoustic sources on marine species, and worked across Federal organizations to ensure that groundbreaking, essential USGS science could meet stringent environmental compliance objectives.



Gregory Steyer

Dr. Gregory Steyer is a recognized expert on the Gulf of Mexico and is known for his proficiency in developing ecological indicators, adaptive management approaches, and ecological and landscape models for natural resource decision support. Dr. Steyer's work is routinely commended by the Department of the Interior (Department) leadership and the Department's Director of Gulf Restoration. Both regularly depend on his expertise in support of the Department's Gulf of Mexico science activities and decision making. As the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Gulf of Mexico Science Advisor, Dr. Steyer regularly works with numerous high-level advisory committees, working groups, panels, and leadership teams to solve complex problems. His exemplary performance is enhanced by the significant engagement and collaboration he has established with Federal, State, academic, and nongovernmental organization partners. Dr. Steyer has authored numerous high-impact publications and developed information tools to help manage cumulative impacts of human activities and to enable interconnected restoration sites to achieve benefits at landscape and regional scales. He led the Department's Gulf Science Coordination Team for a science review in support of planning efforts by the Department's Director of Gulf Restoration. Dr. Steyer collaborates with scientists and managers throughout the Gulf of Mexico to facilitate understanding of Gulf Coast ecosystems and the restoration science that can be applied through integrated interdisciplinary assessments. His thorough and conscientious guidance to USGS and external scientists is highly valued, and his leadership is central to the success of USGS work for the Gulf of Mexico.



Curt D. Storlazzi

Dr. Curt D. Storlazzi is recognized internationally and throughout the United States for his stalwart and pioneering leadership in coral reef science. His extraordinary and unwavering dedication to the advancement of science, willingness to consult and collaborate with managers and colleagues alike, and effective sharing and communication of his research in actionable ways has created a legacy of knowledge. This new understanding has equipped the Nation's tropical coastal communities with powerful tools that can save lives and dollars and increase their resiliency against stressors, including those caused by climate change. Dr. Storlazzi presents high-level briefings to numerous and diverse Federal agencies and represents the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on key interagency committees, including the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, the U.S. National Climate Assessment, and the U.S. National Natural Capital Accounting effort. Dr. Storlazzi's leadership in the development of an interdisciplinary modeling system linking oceanographic, coastal engineering, ecologic, geospatial, and socioeconomic models is the first rigorous, quantitative national assessment of the hazard risk reduction provided by an ecosystem at a spatial resolution useful to managers and decision makers. The system has garnered recognition by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction,



the International Coral Reef Initiative, and the International Guidelines on Natural and Nature-based Features for Flood Risk Management. His science is referenced in the Federal Restoring Resilient Reefs Act and Coral Reef Sustainability Through Innovation Act, as well as in enacted laws of Hawaii, Florida, Guam, and Puerto Rico. These studies and their resulting laws are changing public and private sector policy to fund coral reef protection and restoration to make at-risk and minority coastal communities more resilient to storms and climate change. Dr. Storlazzi is an exemplary USGS employee, faithfully displaying the high personal and technical standards that characterize USGS science in the public service.



Michael A. Tischler

Dr. Michael A. Tischler provided the leadership, expertise, energy, and focus required to develop and implement the historic Secretary's Order (SO) 3404, which declared a particular word derogatory and called for renaming all Federal place names containing the identified word. Dr. Tischler contributed to drafting the SO and served as the chair of the Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force established by the SO. Through his leadership and expertise in the geospatial sciences, Dr. Tischler was able to design a solution and strategy for developing lists of candidate replacement names for the features that used the derogatory term. He guided the process implementation, including the public release and comment period on the proposed 650 replacement feature names. Dr. Tischler also oversaw three virtual Tribal consultations that allowed nearly 70 federally recognized Tribes the opportunity to provide comments or propose replacement names. Through Dr. Tischler's dedication and passion for completing this assignment over the course of 10 months, he was able to reconcile more than 6,000 public comments and advance the effort forward while always ensuring the engagement of stakeholders and management, particularly those within the Office of the Secretary. In the end, the Board on Geographic Names voted to approve all recommendations from the Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force, concluding the process directed by SO 3404 and forever erasing the use of the derogatory word in Federal place names. Dr. Tischler's leadership was a vital part of this success.



Vicki A. Brown (*)

Dr. Vicki A. Brown led four divisional offices providing the Department of the Interior (Department) with strategic employee learning development and policies for approximately 70,000 employees and furnishing strategic guidance to the Department's senior leadership on employee learning and development. She led numerous efforts to move forward the Department's Strategic Plan and Secretarial priorities by ensuring effective alignment of training while expanding learning opportunities for the workforce. Dr. Brown implemented the Department's inaugural coach training program, launched the DOI Career Connection, and updated the Departmental Manual chapter on Human Capital Training and Development. In support of Executive Order 13988, she served as a key member of the Gender Equity Committee, where she provided significant recommendations for the White House-approved Gender Equity Plan. She also served as an executive sponsor for training in support of the Department's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan where she provided oversight to training managers for more than 4,000 courses with a DEIA perspective and updated curriculum as needed. Through the Federal Consulting Group, Dr. Brown oversaw a variety of projects, including supporting the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education effort to return students to school safely and securely for the Santa Rosa Ranch School and Santa Rosa Day School project in Sells, Arizona. As one of the longest serving members on the Federal Chief Learning Officers (CLO) Council, she had a positive impact in developing future leaders in the Department and throughout the Federal Government. Dr. Brown supported the creation of the Federal CLO Charter, led the Federal Community of Practice for Reskilling the Workforce's focus on the 340 occupational specialty and career maps, and expanded external broadening opportunities by partnering with interagency programs.

Mariane Gately (*)

During her more than 36-year career with the Department of the Interior, Mariane Gately has consistently and masterfully orchestrated countless special events, planning 14 high-level Presidential visits, as well as Vice Presidential and Cabinet Secretary visits. She also has supported high-visibility Secretarial events and press conferences and many other major events, including 34 Departmental July 4th celebrations that brought 500 to 1,500 employees and guests, as well as Honor Award Convocations, cultural observances, White House-sponsored events, and public hearings. She has supported 10 Interior Secretaries for countless meetings and events. She consistently worked to provide event management for other federal agencies and non-profits from the private sector using our publicly accessible Departmental facilities. She dedicated countless hours of behind-the-scenes planning and execution to provide dependable event management and spaces, which has enabled numerous Administrations, Secretaries, and Bureaus and Offices to promote their programs, initiatives, and events. She maintained close professional relationships with all levels of leadership throughout the Department, but more importantly, she consistently and flawlessly sustained her professional relationships with each Administration. She competently navigated across the highest levels of the Secretary's Immediate Office, Advance



Office, White House, Secret Service, and Bureaus to plan and meet logistical and technical requirements to produce successful events.

Jonathan J. Mack (*)

During his 18 years of service with the Department of the Interior (Department), Mr. Jonathan J. Mack made significant contributions to the Office of Policy, Management and Budget's Office of Human Capital (OHC). As the Director of the Executive Resources Division (ERD), Mr. Mack oversaw improvements to the Department's executive resources program and consistently ensured compliance with a broad array of policies, regulations, and laws. He proved himself to be a strategic leader and partner with executives, senior leaders, and human resources professionals throughout the Department. Mr. Mack's expertise in building and sustaining critical working relationships proved incredibly valuable to ERD, OHC, and the Department. He earned the trust of the Department's most senior leaders and consulted on a variety of high-profile and sensitive executive resources issues. As a result of Mr. Mack's leadership, the Department regularly achieved success in many executive resources program goals, including consistent performance certification from the Office of Personnel Management. His achievements helped the Department become a highly in-demand employer for executives and senior leaders. Mr. Mack also exhibited exceptional skill in establishing a work environment built on the highest levels of customer service necessary to achieve optimal results in the executive resources portfolio. He implemented outstanding leadership and dedication to the Executive Resources Board and ensured that it possessed high-quality, accurate, and timely information to make critical, data-driven decisions regarding the executive and senior-level workforce. Mr. Mack also modeled empathetic leadership and supported his staff in their endeavors—both professional and personal. He successfully balanced the needs of a small, yet high-performing, team with an extremely stressful and highly visible mission is nothing short of extraordinary.

Robert Duncan MacLean

As the Director of the Office of Law Enforcement and Security, Mr. Robert Duncan MacLean is recognized throughout the Department of the Interior (Department), the executive branch, and the law enforcement, security, and intelligence communities, as a leader, collaborator, and humanitarian. Mr. MacLean is a U.S. Navy veteran with more than 32 years as a law enforcement officer, during which time he has exemplified the core values of the law enforcement profession—honor, integrity, and service. He served 9 years in the U.S. Navy Reserve and 28 years as a member of the United States Park Police, rising from patrol officer to Chief of Police. He joined the Senior Executive Service in 2019. Mr. MacLean's extensive accomplishments include (1) protecting civil rights and civil liberties at numerous first amendment-protected activities in our Nation's Capital; (2) securing special events on the National Mall, including Presidential inaugurations; (3) leading the oldest Federal uniformed law enforcement organization in our Nation; (5) enhancing the security of critical



infrastructure, facilities, and workforce, including numerous monuments and the Stewart Lee Udall Building; (6) updating the Department's use of force and body-worn camera policies and ensuring all law enforcement policies are made publicly available; (7) expanding and enhancing the Department's role in providing effective policy and oversight to its law enforcement programs; (8) demonstrating exceptional leadership and compassion as an advocate for victims' rights and human trafficking awareness; and (9) leading the Secretary of the Interior's Law Enforcement Task Force.

Donna M. Riley (*)

During Ms. Donna M. Riley's service at the Department of the Interior (Department), she has served with distinction. She has played a pivotal role in the Office of Human Capital (OHC), serving as the backbone, driving force, and gatekeeper of the premier human capital entity that leads the Department's strategic workforce planning efforts. Ms. Riley has consistently managed a yearly appropriated budget of \$1.5 million, with an additional \$2 million of working capital funds. The funds that Ms. Riley manages ensures the implementation of OHC's strategic human capital management efforts, which serve as the cornerstone for the Department's ability to accomplish its mission. Additionally, she facilitated the \$1 million expansion of My DOI Career—the Department's innovative tool for prospective and current employees that addresses the Department's recruitment and retention issues and advances the human capital lifecycle. In 2023, this platform earned an honorable mention for the prestigious Human Resource Management Impact Award, which recognizes organizations with outstanding evidence-based human resources management practices. Ms. Riley also significantly contributed to the Department's Efficiency 2020 initiative, which transitioned the Department to an integrated talent acquisition system that streamlined the workflow for all Department hiring managers, improved time-to-hire reporting, and increased consistency and transparency. Furthermore, Ms. Riley is an expert in utilizing the Department's Data Tracking System and readily provides support and training on the system to new employees in program offices across the Office of Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget. When the Department's awards coordinator departed unexpectedly, Ms. Riley assumed more responsibility and supported the 2022 Honor Awards Convocation. Her efforts transformed OHC's honor award tracking process and ensured all awards were appropriately reviewed, processed, and completed within a shorter approval timeframe.



Jeffery R. Rupert

In 2018, when Mr. Rupert was hired to lead the Office of Wildland Fire, the nation was recovering from devastating wildfire events like the Camp Fire in California that killed 85 people and a record wildfire year in 2017 when more than 10 million acres burned. These events set the stage for what would become Mr. Rupert's biggest challenges of his professional career: addressing critical wildland firefighter workforce issues and reducing catastrophic wildfire risk. In 2019, Mr. Rupert worked to secure an additional \$29 million in the Department's fiscal year 2021 budget to begin implementation of a key Wildland Fire Management initiative: "Transforming the Department of the Interior's Wildland Fire Management Workforce." This additional funding facilitated the Department's hiring of over 215 additional wildland firefighters and 560 schedule extensions or permanent conversions to address personnel shortages. Mr. Rupert was instrumental in establishing the Medical and Public Health Advisory Team in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and, with his guidance, the team established operational protocols that limited wildland firefighter exposure while maintaining a safe work environment and continued wildfire response throughout the nation. With passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in 2021, Mr. Rupert played a key role in establishing policy to implement authorities that provided wildland firefighters with supplemental pay increases. Mr. Rupert worked tirelessly to develop comprehensive wildland firefighter workforce reforms that would become a cornerstone of the President's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget request. The strategy included a new base salary rate for wildland firefighters and an increase of \$117 million in funding for wildland firefighter pay and to hire an additional 325 federal and 55 tribal wildland firefighting personnel. The entirety of this work is the direct result of Mr. Rupert's vision, collaborative approach, and skilled leadership that empowers employees and fosters organizational success.

Jodi B. Vargas

Ms. Jodi B. Vargas has overseen the Department of the Interior's (Department) labor relations program consisting of more than 114 bargaining units, with new units being recognized as recently as November 2023. Ms. Vargas has been responsible for and conducted statutorily required Agency Head Review of hundreds of negotiated term and mid-term agreements over her career. She advised on and oversaw unfair labor practice charges and other appeals to the Federal Labor Relations Authority and arbitrations occurring throughout the Department. As a valued expert, Ms. Vargas often served as an advisor on particularly complex negotiations, working closely with labor relations practitioners, legal advisers, and Bureau/Office senior managers to strategize how to overcome identified issues and advance the Department's position. She has served as the Department's senior labor relations consultant on labor obligations stemming from changes in policies, procedures, and working conditions throughout the Department. Ms. Vargas also provided expert guidance and strategy to the Department for numerous high-visibility changes in working conditions, including the changes that were necessary during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.



Lori Y. Vassar

Mrs. Vassar, CFE, CCEP served as the Suspension and Debarment Official (SDO) and Program Manager, in the Office of Acquisition and Property Management at the Department for the past 3 years. Her dedication and leadership have ensured Government award officials throughout the United States protect the integrity of the programs by only doing business with responsible companies. Mrs. Vassar has transformed the office by developing a case tracking module to create suspension and debarment related case entries and provide the ability to retain records, track, and report on administrative actions via reports and dashboards, ultimately transitioning the office from its paper filing system. Mrs. Vassar has dutifully served as the Chair of The Interagency Suspension and Debarment Committee (ISDC), established by Section 4 of Executive Order 12549, in addition to her role as SDO. As Chair, she prudently advised over 70 SDOs across the Federal Government while providing the Federal forum to discuss Government-wide non-procurement and procurement suspension and debarment related issues, helping to ensure compliance. As Chair, she also facilitated lead agency coordination, and assisted the development of unified Federal policy and regulations. She is an esteemed subject matter expert in all matters concerning suspension and debarment as well as compliance, and often conducts outreach training in this industry. Prior to her becoming the SDO, Mrs. Vassar served as an attorney in the Office of Inspector General at DOI, GSA, and Department of Treasury. She also served as a senior attorney advisor at the U.S. Customs Service/U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Compacts of Free Association Negotiations Team

The Compacts of Free Association (COFA) are international agreements that underpin our people-to-people relationships with three countries known as freely associated states—the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau. The Department of the Interior (Department or Interior) plays a central role in the implementation of these agreements, managing programs deploying aid to improve the quality of life for the citizens of these Pacific nations. The Biden-Harris administration was intent on strengthening and securing our relationships with the freely associated states for decades to come by negotiating to extend expiring provisions. This was accomplished, in large part, by the Department due to the work of its Compacts of Free Association Negotiations Team. In March 2022, President Biden appointed Ambassador Joe Yun as his special envoy for the compact negotiations. The dedicated negotiations team from Interior, along with Department of State partners, worked in support of Ambassador Yun on the United States Compact Negotiations Team for more than 18 months to successfully conclude agreements with all three freely associated states. Deputy Assistant Secretary – Insular and International Affairs Keone Nakoa led Interior’s negotiations team, which was heavily relied on by Ambassador Yun for its expertise in budget, program management, economics, and law. Interior’s negotiations team worked tirelessly to prepare and complete these negotiations with a successful outcome, all while its members maintained their regular duties on behalf of the Department’s



mission. At the conclusion of the negotiations, a package of \$6.5 billion in direct assistance for the freely associated states over the next 20 years was submitted to Congress for action.

Team Members:

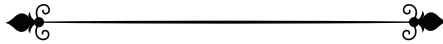
Melissa Braybrooks, PMB-PPA

Stephen Savage, OS-OIA

Jonathan Dunn, OS-OIA

Jeffrey Scott, OS-SOL

OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARDS



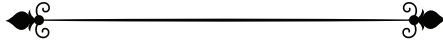
Established in 1972, the Outstanding Service Award may be granted to non-career employees for outstanding performance in a policy or personal staff relationship with the Secretary or the various Secretarial offices. This award gives the Secretary a means to recognize non-career employees for outstanding personal and policy service to his or her administration. Recipients receive a special certificate and citation signed by the Secretary.

Keone J. Nakoa

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior

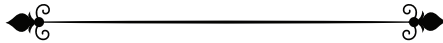
The Compacts of Free Association are international agreements that underpin our people-to-people relationships with three countries known as freely associated states—the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau. The Department of the Interior plays a central role in the implementation of these agreements, managing programs deploying aid to improve the quality of life for the citizens of these Pacific nations. The Biden-Harris administration was intent on strengthening and securing our relationships with the freely associated states for decades to come by negotiating to extend expiring provisions. This was accomplished, in large part, through the work and leadership of Mr. Keone J. Nakoa, Deputy Assistant Secretary – Insular and International Affairs. In March 2022, President Biden appointed Ambassador Joe Yun as his special envoy for the compact negotiations. Deputy Assistant Secretary Nakoa and members of the Department’s negotiations team, along with State Department partners, worked in support of Ambassador Yun on the United States Compact Negotiations Team for more than 18 months to successfully conclude agreements with all three freely associated states. Deputy Assistant Secretary Nakoa led the Department’s negotiations team, which was heavily relied on by Ambassador Yun for its expertise in budget, program management, economics, and law. Deputy Assistant Secretary Nakoa worked tirelessly to oversee the preparation and completion of these negotiations with a successful outcome. At the conclusion of the negotiations, a package of \$6.5 billion in direct assistance for the freely associated states over the next 20 years was submitted to Congress for action.

CITIZEN'S AWARD FOR BRAVERY



The Citizen's Award for Bravery is granted to private citizens for heroic acts or unusual bravery in the face of danger. Recipients have risked their lives to save the life of a Departmental employee or the life of any other person while on property owned by or entrusted to the Department of the Interior. A special certificate and citation signed by the Secretary is presented to each recipient.

VALOR AWARDS



The Valor Award is presented to Department of the Interior employees who have demonstrated unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger. The act of heroism is not required to be related to official duties or to have occurred at the official duty station. Recipients receive a citation signed by the Secretary and an engraved gold Valor Award Medal.





CITIZEN'S AWARD FOR BRAVERY

Award Recipients

NOMINATED BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Erin Laine

NOMINATED BY THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Connor Curtis *Jordan C. Shikles*



VALOR AWARDS

Award Recipients

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

James Boyle

Cody Marsh

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

David J. Arend

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Andrew Branum

Dylan Romine

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Diana A. Lundeen

Michael F. Rega

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Israel Aledo

Dylan O. Jennison

Gregory T. Mullin



VALOR AWARDS

Award Recipients



James Boyle

On March 14, 2022, at about 11 p.m., Mr. James Boyle, a ranger with the Bureau of Land Management, joined with Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department officers in responding to 911 calls reporting a flashing SOS beacon at the top of El Hijo Peak in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Climbers also reported hearing gunshots near the beacon. Ranger Boyle confirmed the SOS signal, which stopped flashing shortly after his arrival. He identified the registered owner of the only remaining vehicle in the conservation area's parking lot but was unable to contact them. Although it had been requested, air rescue was not feasible due to high winds. After reviewing maps, Ranger Boyle and one of the police officers determined that, despite cold and windy conditions, they could likely climb up a rock face of El Hijo Peak, an area with extremely difficult terrain, to search for the source of the SOS signal. Ranger Boyle, who is also an emergency medical technician, grabbed his medical bag and hiked into the area where the light was last seen. After walking for nearly 2 hours, scrambling up and over large boulders, and traversing up steep terrain, he located a male lying on the ground choking and unable to breathe. Ranger Boyle started immediate medical care. He cleared the patient's airway to enable him to breathe. For the next 6 hours, Ranger Boyle and the police officer monitored the patient and kept him warm using their own jackets. At daybreak, the winds finally slackened, making air rescue possible. Without Ranger Boyle's determination and the extended medical care, he provided in a remote and hostile environment, the patient would not have survived.



Cody Marsh

On the evening of August 20, 2022, the weather worsened as Mr. Cody Marsh, a field staff ranger for the Bureau of Land Management, was preparing for the end of his shift in the area of Moab, Utah. The skies darkened, and the Moab area experienced a rainstorm that quickly created what was labeled a 100-year flood. Ranger Marsh monitored radio traffic during the beginning of the flood and became aware that local resources were overwhelmed. Grand County dispatch personnel broadcast a 911 call from downtown Moab. The caller was frantic, reporting that she and her family were stuck in their hotel room with rapidly rising flood waters. Ranger Marsh was the closest officer to the caller's location and immediately responded. When he arrived at the hotel, the streets were flooded with several feet of fast-moving water, making travel dangerous. Ranger Marsh located the hotel room from which the 911 call originated



and saw three clearly distressed people inside the room. The water level in the room was rising quickly, but Ranger Marsh enabled the family to escape the flooded room by helping them exit through the window. While he was leading them back to his patrol vehicle through the raging flood, Mr. Marsh and one member of the family were swept off their feet and submerged by the swiftly moving waters. With significant effort and at risk to his own life, Ranger Marsh held onto the submerged person to prevent her from being swept away. He was able to deliver all three people to the safety of his truck and then transported the family to an emergency evacuation site where they sheltered for the night.



David J. Arend

On the afternoon of August 22, 2022, Mr. David J. Arend, Deputy Regional Director for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) Lower Colorado Basin Region, observed a man ready to commit suicide by jumping off the Galleria Drive overpass of U.S. Route 95 in Henderson, Nevada. Without hesitation, Mr. Arend stopped his vehicle on the busy overpass and rapidly navigated, on foot, through heavy rush hour traffic to engage with the despondent man who was determined to end his life. With no regard for his personal safety, Mr. Arend positioned himself on a concrete ledge and maneuvered himself to be closer to the suicidal man. As callous citizens were chanting obscenities, Mr. Arend worked relentlessly under extreme pressure to calm the man and maintain dialogue. At one point, the man handed a picture of his son to Mr. Arend and repeatedly threatened to jump. Mr. Arend continued to reassure the man and maintained critical eye-contact until first responders arrived. Henderson police officers arrived on the scene and supported Mr. Arend from afar as he successfully persuaded the troubled man to slowly move off the overpass. Continuing to risk his own life, Mr. Arend remained extended on the ledge of the overpass and carefully guided the man along the fence, off the overpass, and into the custody of first responders. Mr. Arend embodies BOR's core values of professional excellence, safety, and respect. His quick and heroic actions directly saved a distressed person from taking his own life. The unwavering courage and distinctive accomplishments of Mr. Arend reflect great credit upon himself, BOR, and the Department of the Interior.



Andrew J. Branum

In the early evening of October 28, 2023, Mr. Andrew Branum, a National Park Service ranger, and his partner were finishing a courtesy transport for some hikers, which brought them to a gas station outside the Blue Ridge Parkway. While in the parking lot, the rangers were approached by motorists who reported a dangerous motorist on the roadway. They all stated concern that an SUV was driving erratically, swerving, and forcing other



drivers off the road. The rangers contacted their dispatcher to notify local agencies. Knowing that there would be a delayed response and that there was an immediate danger to all motorists, the rangers attempted to locate the unsafe driver. A short distance up the road, the rangers came upon a large debris field across both lanes of travel, with an upside-down SUV matching the description of the reckless vehicle. Ranger Branum took command of the crash scene and found dust from the SUV's airbags still settling. The roof of the SUV had collapsed, with the driver trapped inside. Ranger Branum updated dispatch and requested appropriate resources. He broke a window and pulled items from the passenger compartment, following a muffled voice to the back seat. He moved miscellaneous items that were inhibiting the driver from breathing. He determined that the driver was pinned between the front and back rows of the SUV and had not been able to clear his airway. Ranger Branum laid on broken glass, partially inside the upside-down vehicle, to help maintain a clear airway for the trapped driver. He talked with the driver and helped him remain calm as he started to become aware of his surroundings. As additional emergency responders arrived, Ranger Branum was relieved of patient care and assisted in gathering witness information and maintaining a safe scene through traffic control.



Dylan M. Romine

On May 10, 2020, United States park rangers responded to a sinking boat with 15 people on board at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The boat had capsized during adverse weather conditions with strong winds and rough lake conditions. Rangers arrived on the scene in a National Park Service (NPS) patrol boat, and along with game wardens from the Nevada Department of Wildlife, they worked quickly to pull 13 of the struggling swimmers aboard to safety. At this point, two swimmers remained unaccounted for. With the limited equipment on hand, rescue attempts to stabilize and right the capsized vessel were not successful. As the rescue operations continued, Mr. Dylan M. Romine, an NPS ranger, observed one man continuing to thrash in the water near the sinking vessel. The man was the grandfather of a still missing 3-year-old girl. After the man was pulled to safety, Ranger Romine began a search of the immediate area for the missing child. Hearing a faint noise near the boat, Ranger Romine yelled for quiet. In the brief silence that followed, he heard the shouting of a child from within the capsized boat. After determining the situation, Ranger Romine entered the water to find the trapped child. Working with a Nevada game warden, he located the trapped child under the vessel in an air pocket near the stern and pulled the child to safety. In Ranger Romine's report, he vividly recalled the child's reaction to being freed from under the boat, stating that she appeared "shocked, confused, and happy" all at once. Ranger Romine brought her back to the waiting patrol boat, and on-scene NPS paramedics examined her. The child, while understandably upset, was unharmed and reunited with her family.



Diana A. Lundeen

Ms. Diana A. Lundeen, docket attorney and counsel to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, acted quickly and at great personal risk to save a young woman from a burning car. On May 26, 2023, Ms. Lundeen was driving on I-395 in Virginia with her 12-year-old daughter when she witnessed a multiple-car accident where one of the vehicles had rolled over several times and caught on fire. Ms. Lundeen, acting immediately, instructed her daughter to stay in their car and call 911. She then raced to the vehicle that was on fire, and, after yelling to others to help her, dragged the driver—a young woman who was badly injured—to safety through the car window. Ms. Lundeen then crawled inside the smoke-filled car to ensure that there were no children or other victims. She stayed to comfort the rescued driver and ensure that she remained conscious until the arrival of the ambulance. Ms. Lundeen’s quick and fearless actions, without regard for her own safety, helped save the young woman’s life.



Michael F. Rega

On the evening of April 29, 2023, Mr. Michael F. Rega and his spouse were driving through Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC, when a tree suddenly fell upon and pinned the vehicle in front of them. The tree landed across the hood of the vehicle, completely immobilizing it. The road was absent any other persons or vehicles at that time. Mr. Rega, a certified Emergency Medical Technician(EMT)-paramedic, turned on his hazard lights and positioned his vehicle as a blockade against any approaching traffic for the safety of the trapped vehicle’s occupant. While his spouse called emergency services, Mr. Rega got out of his vehicle, assessed the situation to ensure that it was safe to approach, and moved to aid the trapped driver, who was dazed by the incident. Mr. Rega spoke to the driver to assess her condition and then helped to cut away her seatbelt, as it was damaged and unable to be unbuckled. Mr. Rega forced open the driver’s door as far as possible to manually extract the driver from her vehicle. United States Park Police officers were the first emergency responders to arrive on the scene after the accident. When EMTs and fire personnel later arrived, they assessed the extracted driver and transported her to a local hospital, where she was treated for minor injuries. Mr. Rega was on the scene for approximately 1 hour until the patient was transported from the site. His quick response prevented an already dangerous situation from potentially becoming worse. His onsite assessment helped emergency services when they arrived, and the call to 911 ensured first responders arrived as quickly as possible to treat the injured driver.



Israel Aledo

On July 14, 2023, Mr. Israel Aledo, a special agent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), was enjoying his day off with his family at a beach in Isabela, Puerto Rico. When walking to his vehicle in the parking lot, he heard a woman screaming in distress. Special Agent Aledo rushed to the woman and asked if she was okay. She informed him that her small child was locked inside her car with her keys, and she had no way of opening the car. The outside temperature at the time was 95 degrees. Without hesitation, Special Agent Aledo sprang into action and called 911, as he knew that a child can be in danger inside a locked car in as little as 10 minutes. While waiting for EMS to arrive on the scene and realizing that time was of the essence, Special Agent Aledo retrieved a tire changing tool from his personal car and broke the vehicle's window. With his right elbow, he unflinchingly swept the glass out of the way and reached into the car to pull out the sweating and hysterical child before EMS arrived. The EMS determined the child was in good health thanks to the quick actions of Special Agent Aledo, who was taken to the hospital for injuries sustained during the rescue. He received stitches to his arm and was later released. Special Agent Aledo's actions are consistent of the selfless personality and character he demonstrates each day. Upon receiving any recognition of his heroic efforts, he remains humble and claims that he did what any law enforcement officer would have done. His actions and sense of duty to serve reflect great credit upon himself, FWS, and its Office of Law Enforcement. Without the quick action and bravery shown by Special Agent Aledo, the young child could have lost its life or been severely injured.



Dylan O. Jennison

On July 11, 2023, Mr. Dylan O. Jennison took leave from his job as a biological science technician for the Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Program to support the volunteer fire department in his hometown of Johnson, Vermont, where he has been a member since 2011. He responded to numerous 911 emergency calls requesting rescue from the rising and fast-moving flood waters of the Gihon River during Vermont's "thousand-year" storm event. Amid rising floodwaters and torrential downpours, Mr. Jennison conducted 63 water rescues within the town. During this time, his parents' home was ruined by the rising water, and they too had to evacuate. In addition to performing rescues, Mr. Jennison protected citizens and the environment by retrieving several hundred-gallon propane tanks that broke loose from their mounts and floated down the river. He was also involved in hazardous-material management as tanks of diesel fuel—used for home heating—were dislodged and began leaking their contents. Both personally and as a first responder, Mr. Jennison spent almost 24 hours helping his community dig out of the mud and rubble left by the flood. His dedication



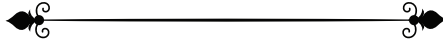
to his fellow citizens is second to none. While others fled the floodwaters, Mr. Jennison went in the direction of the danger, risking his life to save the lives of others in his community.



Gregory T. Mullin

On December 1, 2023, Mr. Gregory T. Mullin, a senior Federal wildlife officer, was called by a waterfowl hunter on the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. The hunter said his boat would not start, was disoriented due to inclement weather conditions, and was struggling to walk out of the hunting unit along with his hunting companion. The call disconnected before Officer Mullin could obtain additional information or the hunter's phone number. It was dark, and the refuge was experiencing severe winter weather with freezing conditions, high winds, and snow. Due to concern for the hunter's safety, including increased risk of hypothermia, Officer Mullin returned to the refuge, navigating miles of icy and snow-covered roads to search by airboat. He contacted Mr. Connor Curtis, a police officer in nearby Perry, Utah, who immediately agreed to help. Officer Mullin received the hunter's cell phone number from the local dispatch and called him. The hunter said he had a respiratory issue and felt very ill. He texted his location on a GPS map screenshot before the cell phone connection was lost. Officers Mullin and Curtis launched the airboat in steady snow with sustained winds that pushed snow horizontally, making visibility less than 10 feet. Using the GPS screenshot, Officer Mullin piloted the airboat in hazardous whiteout conditions for approximately 1 mile to the stranded hunters. The hunters were extremely cold and wet after having been on the water for more than 5 hours. Officers Mullin and Curtis brought the hunters onto the airboat and towed their boat back to the ramp. On shore, they warmed and provided supportive care to the hunters, who refused additional medical treatment. When the hunters felt capable of leaving and were in good cognitive condition, Officer Mullin escorted them safely off the refuge.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS



The Meritorious Service Award is the second highest honorary recognition granted to employees in the Department of the Interior. It is presented for an important contribution to science or management, a notable career, superior service in administration or in the execution of duties, or initiative in devising new and improved work methods, and procedures. A special certificate and citation signed by the Secretary, as well as an engraved silver Meritorious Service Medal and silver lapel pin are presented to recipients by their Bureau or Office Head. These are the recipients who have been honored since the last Departmental Honor Awards Convocation.





MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

Award Recipients

BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT
Darryl K. Francois *Douglas Piatkowski*

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Lonny Bagley *Jeffrey Brune*
Amber Cargile *Lisa Everett-Stringer*
Douglas Furtado *Williams Lambert*
Philip Lind *Joseph Mendez*
Shirley Montoya-Chavez *Lisa Morrison*
Karen Mouritsen *Darlene Ortiz*
Gwenan Poirier *Carrie Richardson*

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Rodney J. Bathel *Ernest A. Conant*
Jennifer M. Johnson *Kenneth C. Nowak*
Janelle M. Stefanic *Coleman W. Smith*
Richard A. Welsh

BUREAU OF SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT
Kristi McKinney *Steven Pearson*
Bryan Rogers

INTERIOR BUSINESS CENTER
Teresa M. Smigiel



MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

(Continued)

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Kathryn Bender

Monica Cunningham

Patricia Houghton

Jason Marineau

Jennifer Werner

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Matthew D. Baun

Richard O. Bennett

Holly N. Blalock-Herod

Samantha Elizabeth Johnson Gibbs

Sarah B. Hall

Anne Hecht

Chris Jussila

Wayne F. Kasworm

Alan L. Lagemann

Bridget Moran

Catherine J. Nigg

Kathleen A. Patnode

Michelle Rockwell

Daniel G. Spencer

Roger A. Taylor

Graham Taylor

Melvin L. Tobin

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Ginger A. Barth

David R. Boldt

Aimee Devaris

Jason Dunham

Paul S. Earle

Judith E. Fierstein

John W. Fulton

Daniel J. Gooding

Christopher W. Hammond

Leslie Hsu

Harry L. Jenter

Carolyn L. Mastin

Larry G. Mastin

Christopher A. Mebane

John E. Parks

Barbara E. Ralston



MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS

(Continued)

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Jennifer S. Sauer

Susan L. Stuart

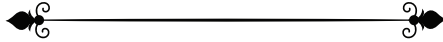
John F. Walker

Robin P. White

Frederic H. Wilson

Lisa Holly

EXEMPLARY ACT AWARDS



The Exemplary Act Award is an honorary recognition granted to employees or private citizens who attempt to save the life of a Departmental employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any other person while on property owned or entrusted to the Department when risk to their own lives is not in jeopardy. A special certificate and citation signed by the Secretary are presented to recipients by their Bureau or Office Head. These are the recipients who have been honored since the last Departmental Honor Awards Convocation.



EXEMPLARY ACT AWARDS

Award Recipients

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Brett A. Bowser

Jared P Brierley

Kurt W. Campbell

Tyler Christianson

Brad Kohn

Andrew Messner

Nathan A. Tillinghast

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

David Bunnell

Robert Gleason

Matthew Heartsill

Daniel Riddle

Joseph Ruocco

Mark Sherfy

Walter Stewart

Josh Wheeler

Bryan Wolla

Chris Zinke

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

Text: Francis Scott Key 1814

Music: John Stafford Smith

Oh say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,

Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?

And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,

Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.

Oh say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?



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