

**Department of the Interior Nominations Hearing
Tuesday, May 18, 2021**

Chairman Manchin's Opening Statement

- The Committee will come to order.
- We meet today to consider three nominations for senior positions in the Department of the Interior.
- The three nominees are:
 - Mr. Robert Anderson for Solicitor;
 - Ms. Shannon Estenoz for Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Park; and
 - Ms. Tanja Trujillo for Assistant Secretary for Water and Science.
- Welcome to all three of our nominees. Thank you for being here this morning and for your willingness to serve in these important positions. And welcome to each of your family members. Thank you, too, for joining you here today.
- The offices that the three of you have been nominated to fill carry with them responsibility for many of the oldest and most significant missions entrusted to the Department.

- Let me begin with you, Mr. Anderson.
- When Secretary Harold Ickes asked the Senate to pass the legislation that established the current office of Solicitor 75 years ago, he noted that “Because of the highly diversified range of activities entrusted to the Department of the Interior, the duties of the Solicitor extend into almost every branch of law and almost every type of legal practice.”
- The complexity of the issues facing the Department and the demands they place upon the Solicitor have only increased in the 75 years since.
- He concluded by saying that “The necessity for sound legal counsel in connection with the myriad legal aspects of these activities makes the position of Solicitor an office calling for a lawyer of great capability and intellectual integrity, of proven administrative ability, and of experience and wisdom.”
- I believe President Biden found such a lawyer in Robert Anderson.
- He has shown he can handle the job, because he has been serving as the Acting Solicitor for the past four months.
- He worked at the Department before, during the late 1990s. He brings to the job five years of prior experience, two of

them as an Associate Solicitor, and three as Counselor to Secretary Babbitt.

- And he spent 20 years as a law professor, teaching American Indian law, natural resources law, and water law at the University of Washington Law School and at Harvard Law School.
- I believe Mr. Anderson has the broad legal knowledge and experience that Secretary Ickes said the job requires.
- The office of Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks as we now know it was first established later, in 1965, by Tom Udall's father, Secretary Stewart Udall, when he gave the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife responsibility for both the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service.
- The merger of these two important services under one Assistant Secretary gives her responsibility over more than 400 national parks and over 500 national wildlife refuges, which are enjoyed by over 355 million people a year.
- Like Mr. Anderson, Ms. Estenoz will bring to the Department a wealth of professional experience.
- She is currently serving as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

- She spent over two decades helping to restore the Everglades—
 - at the Department of the Interior under Secretary Salazar;
 - as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of The Everglades Foundation,
 - at the National Parks Conservation Association and the World Wildlife Fund; and
 - on boards and commissions in Florida, under both Democratic and Republican Governors.
- At this point, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a letter from our colleague, Senator Rubio, in strong support of Ms. Estenoz’s nomination. Hearing no objection, that will be the order
- Senator Rubio writes of Ms. Estenoz’s “unwavering commitment to pragmatic environmental stewardship,” her “ability to ... understand complex problems, and her willingness to work collaboratively to reach consensus on contentious issues,” and of “her disposition for acting in good faith.”
- I trust that these attributes will serve you well in this role and enable you to make a lasting contribution to our

national parks and wildlife refuges.

- Our third nominee, Tanya Trujillo, is no stranger to this Committee, having served as valued member of the committee staff under Chairman Bingaman from 2009 to 2011.
- Senator Bingaman has written a strong letter of support for Tanya’s nomination, attesting to “her competence and professionalism.”
- I ask unanimous consent that his letter be made part of the record, and hearing no objection, that will be the order.
- The office of the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science is not nearly so old as that of the Solicitor or Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, it oversees two of the oldest bureaus within the Department, the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Reclamation.
- The Geological Survey is the preeminent source of scientific information about the Earth and our natural resources.
- The Bureau of Reclamation manages, develops, and safeguards our water supplies on which millions of Americans in 17 western states depend for their residential needs, to irrigate their farms, and to generate their

electricity.

- These two agencies are vitally important to meet our need for science-based information about critical minerals, energy supplies, and natural hazards, and to meet our water needs in a changing climate.
- Tanya has been immersed in these issues for over 20 years, most recently as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science.
- Western water issues are complex and contentious, and Tanya has demonstrated her ability to work with all sides to find acceptable solutions to these difficult challenges.
- I think we have three supremely well qualified nominees for these important positions, and I strongly support all three.