

TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET

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Fire William Perry Pendley

By Todd Brown, Telluride Mayor Pro Tem

As a Coloradan, many of my memories include recreating in the Colorado mountains, or exploring the wildest, most remote parts of the West with my family. These trips always reinvigorate my passion for our public lands and the outdoor life. These public lands are the backbone of our community and are in peril. Telluride is dependent on the tourism dollars that visitors to our public lands provide, and the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that to be truer than ever, with record-setting visits to our trails and rivers this summer.

In August, the Trump administration pulled the nomination of William Perry Pendley to be director of the Bureau of Land Management. This seemed like a good thing — blocking this anti-public lands zealot from permanently leading this crucial agency. Yet, nothing has really changed, because Pendley is still serving, as he has for over a year — likely illegally — as acting director. It's very troubling that he's still the de facto leader of the agency and the Senate still has not appropriately vetted him — a blatant and direct violation of the U.S. Constitution. I urge you, Senator Gardner, who claims to want to protect our public lands, to join Senator Bennet, along with 46 other senators, and demand that President Trump fire William Perry Pendley.

For a year, President Trump and Secretary Bernhardt avoided the Senate confirmation process by continuing to temporarily appoint Pendley as acting director, rather than officially nominating him because they knew he was too controversial and too radical, likely breaking the law along the way. Pendley himself took the legally dubious step of signing his own succession order, ensuring that he would stay in power without requiring Senate confirmation or even another temporary appointment from Secretary Bernhardt.

Pendley has been given a free pass to hand over massive amounts of public lands across the West to the fossil fuel industry, dismantle the very agency he was appointed to run, and put wildlife, communities and tribes at greater risk. Trump and Bernhardt were proven right; Pendley is too

extreme to ever be confirmed, but now they are allowing him to continue, likely illegally, to serve as acting director.

As our communities remain concerned about their health and safety in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, Pendley has failed at his duties, and is instead continuing business as usual by limiting local input and ignoring science and experts. He has failed to listen to regional input and instead is taking his long-standing preferential treatment of oil and gas executive friends to an egregious new level. The Bureau of Land Management is using taxpayer dollars to bail out fossil fuel CEOs and expediting requests from companies to reduce what they pay to drill on our public lands.

Pendley also has a well-documented history of bigoted views, rhetoric and of taking actions opposing virtually all issues of diversity, including mocking and opposing native communities, immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community and people of color. Public outcry against Pendley is loud, with civil rights groups, tribal rights groups and conservation organizations all speaking out against his nomination. While the nation grapples with its history of institutional discrimination, Pendley's lengthy record of inflammatory statements and opposition to diversity efforts make him uniquely unsuited to manage over 10,000 employees or impartially decide issues of public interest.

An unfit and unconfirmable acting director, likely serving illegally, runs contrary to the US Constitution and flouts the rule of law. Following the Senate's vote on the Great American Outdoors Act, there will be little goodwill left for senators who fail their next test by continuing to support Pendley as the leader of the Bureau of Land Management. Pendley has said that he supports diverting \$95 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Allowing him to continue as the leader of the Bureau of Land Management is a litmus test on whether senators like yourself, Senator Gardner, will continue to back President Trump's anti-public lands agenda. Senator Gardner, you have thus far failed to hold Pendley accountable for his radical positions and now appear to be sitting back as Pendley prepares to do more damage to the very programs you just supported in the Great American Outdoors Act.

As the nation continues to grapple with the pandemic, senators now face a choice between supporting our public lands, marginalized communities and the rule of law, or supporting Pendley's continued role at the Bureau of Land Management. Senator Gardner, I implore you to do the right thing and demand that the Trump administration fire William Perry Pendley.