

**Statement of
Shannon A. Estenoz
Nominee for the Position of
Deputy Secretary of the
United States Department of the Interior
Before the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate**

July 10, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you as President Biden's nominee for Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

I want to thank my husband Richard for being here today, and to say hello to our sons Nick and Spencer, my mother, and my friends and extended family who are watching.

I was honored in 2021 to have been reported by voice vote by this Committee, to have been reported 19-1 by the Environment and Public Works Committee, and to have been, a little over a month later, confirmed by the full Senate by unanimous consent. It has been the greatest honor of my professional career to serve in this role for almost three years.

I am a fifth generation Floridian – born, as were all of my grandparents, in Key West where I grew up on the water - swimming, fishing, snorkeling and boating.

I, like my late father, am a civil engineer. For the first ten years of my life, his career took him to oil platforms off the coast of Louisiana, the Tennessee Valley Authority in Knoxville, the Army Corps of Engineers in Kansas City and finally back home to Key West. I spent my own career in the Everglades – wearing many hats over many years working on the world's largest hydrologic ecosystem restoration program.

The vast majority of my 29-year career has been spent on the ground, in my big and complicated home state of Florida. I have been a stakeholder, a state water manager, an appointee of both Democratic and Republican governors of Florida, and, for more than seven years, the Director of Everglades Restoration at the Department of the Interior.

In my career, I have spent thousands of hours engaging on these issues in community centers, private kitchens, under live oak trees, at boat docks, and on tree islands because in a big diverse state like Florida, where most of the land is privately owned and where ranching, farming and mining are adjacent to huge metro areas, the only way to get anything done is to talk to everyone – not because you think you can get everyone to agree, but because understanding diverse perspectives always drives better decision making.

Since 2021, as the Assistant Secretary, I have overseen two of the Department's larger bureaus – the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – as they steward the Nation's most iconic places and important history, work with communities to protect and promote the recovery of imperiled species, and implement some of the most important environmental laws enacted by Congress. I have also had the pleasure of working with many of you on issues in your home states and that affect national parks, wildlife refuges, species, industries, resources, and livelihoods across the country.

To put Congress' landmark investments to work for the benefit of the American public – the Great American Outdoors Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, I have worked with offices and bureaus within the Department and their subject matter experts, scientists, resource managers and leaders, in addition to communities, stakeholders and the philanthropic sectors across the Nation.

We marked the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act with a call to action to focus more partnership energy on species recovery and listing prevention. We have downlisted or delisted more than 30 species due to improvement or recovery. We have strengthened existing partnerships and built new ones, so that today the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service counts the Department of Defense and the National Alliance of Forest Owners among its most valued partners in species recovery.

Having worked as a leader in the Department for almost eleven years, first as a career senior executive, and now as a policy official, I understand the responsibilities of the Deputy Secretary and the weight of the decisions that office must make. In essence, the portfolio of the Deputy Secretary is the portfolio of the Department.

I have been on the front lines of resource management for almost 30 years delivering consensus-based solutions to often very difficult problems. In that time, I have learned that people and communities are more similar than they are different – and without fail every issue I have ever worked on has been first and foremost, a people and community issue. At the Department, I know that there are many difficult issues, a few have been long running and we continue to work our way through them.

In 2021, I pledged to this Committee that as Assistant Secretary I would use the tools that have served me best in my career: communication, transparency, and intellectual honesty. If I am confirmed as the next Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior, I will continue to honor this pledge.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and I look forward to your questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.