

Statement of Katharine MacGregor
Nominee for the Position of Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior
Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
April 2, 2025

Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and Members of the Committee, I thought I had escaped Washington, DC, but as you all know, sometimes life presents you with different paths - and I am both honored and humbled that President Trump has once again nominated me for the position of Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

As a true hockey family, we have packed the proverbial stands this morning - and I am blessed to be joined by many family and friends, including: representatives of the 2004 University of Pennsylvania varsity women's crew team, members of the best women's hunting group this side of the Mississippi, my best Alaskan fishing and baking buddy, my favorite astronaut, and several individuals who have been amazing mentors to me in my professional career. Finally, and most importantly, I am joined by my parents, Jean and Peter MacGregor, my aunt and uncle - Sheila and Dick Sanford, and my brother Robert and his wife Michele.

When I testified here over 5 years ago, I explained my focus to achieve a balance in managing America's public lands, cultural treasures, and natural resources in order to advance the priorities of our President. I understand the deep personal connections that so many people have to the lands and resources managed by Interior. But in my work in Congress and at Interior, I also learned firsthand how the decisions we make in Washington impact American families and businesses far away from DC, sometimes for generations.

I remember Senator King telling me a story about traveling with his grandchildren in an RV to visit some of our nation's parks - and it makes me smile because I absolutely remember picnics with my grandparents and cousins at Valley Forge National Park in Pennsylvania - these are the happy memories that make us smile even long after our loved ones have passed.

But I also remember the tough stories of resource management plan delays impeding economic development opportunities in rural America, or a woman denied justice simply because law enforcement couldn't reach her due to weather, and of course there was no road.

For the last four years, I've been one of those people watching DC from afar - while falling in love with Florida. From the dangerous beauty of the Everglades and the invasive species issues we face, the importance of being prepared for natural disasters like hurricanes and wildfires, the incredible abundance of our offshore waters, the thrilling call of an Osceola turkey as you watch

the world wake up from inside a hunting blind, or even just the stunning red/orange glow of Jupiter Lighthouse at sunset (which is managed by the BLM).

But more importantly, in my time in the private sector, I have learned a lot. I have worked on environmental permitting and compliance for almost every type of energy infrastructure project around our great nation and have grown to appreciate the far-reaching consequences of decisions made in Washington, the durability of those decisions, and the timeliness of agency action.

And - as we all know - if there's a federal nexus, there's a federal official somewhere saying yes or no. Or in the worst case - just not responding.

What I have concluded from outside of DC is that the American people, your constituents, deserve better.

I cannot imagine any instance where it is just and right that someone wait over 30 years for the authority to build a road to connect their community to better services, 20 years for a habitat conservation plan, 15 years for a final resource management plan, or over a decade for a pastor in rural Arkansas to simply continue to bury his deceased parishioners in their 100-year old church yard - only because the land appraisal for a Congressionally-authorized land exchange sat on someone's desk. It is simply unacceptable and frankly it breaks my heart.

This is why so many rural Americans feel like their government has forgotten them.

Don't get me wrong - I've heard really great stories too. I was so proud to learn that several of the cold case offices that we established under President Trump's initiative to address Missing and Murdered Native American/Alaska Native women and children had solved several cases. Many of you on the dais helped us with this initiative. Sadly these little victories seem too infrequent. We need to turn that around.

Roads not built, cases left still unsolved, appraisal backlogs, obstacles to public hunting and fishing opportunities - these are the reasons I would like to return to Interior. I would like to come back to drive change and efficiency - and in doing so, I hope we can once again make a difference for the people who rely upon us to show up and do our jobs.

I am honored to have met with many of you and learn about the many missions at Interior that are important to you and your constituents. If confirmed, I will always keep at the forefront of my mind the needs of the American people. After all, it is they who are ultimately watching and hoping for us to work together, consider their needs, and frankly get things done in Washington.

Thank you again for having me here today and I would be more than happy to take questions.