

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RHEA SUH
NOMINEE FOR
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE AND PARKS
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Thank you also for the opportunity to meet with many of you in person.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my husband, Michael Carroll who agreed to come with me on this journey four years ago and my daughter Yeumi, who was a blessing for us nearly three years ago now. And while my parents—Chung Ha and Young Ja Suh—cannot be here today, I want to acknowledge them as well. They were young immigrants from Korea who came to this country in the early 60's with nothing and in turn gave me and my sisters everything. From my love of the outdoors to my commitment to public service, I am instilled with their love of this country and I owe everything to their sacrifices and courage.

For the past four years, I have had the honor of serving as the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget at the Department of the Interior. It is chiefly a management position that is focused on the financial and administrative policy for the Department. I have had the privilege of working with each of the nine bureaus on a broad array of issues, but I have primarily been responsible for leading efforts to secure the resources to enable each of the bureaus to uphold their missions but also to ensure that we manage those resources in a manner that is both effective and efficient. In these challenging fiscal times, I have led the enterprise to achieve more than \$500 million in savings and untold millions in cost avoidance, including \$160 million associated with real estate consolidations and \$200 million in smarter purchasing agreements. I have also led the longer-term efforts around workforce and succession planning and the policy efforts on youth.

I am now before you today as the President's nominee for the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks—a position that would allow me to focus more concertedly on the critical work of conservation.

For the members of the Committee whom I have not had the chance to get to know, I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself. I was born on the edge of the Rocky Mountains in Boulder, Colorado, and raised by Korean immigrant parents who found their way to that great State like so many other pioneers with the dreams of freedom and of a better life for their family. Like so many other westerners, I grew up reaping the benefits of the lands and waters managed by our Federal Government. My dad first taught me how to fish in waters managed by the Bureau of Reclamation. As a Girl Scout, I camped out under the starry skies in Rocky Mountain National Park, and in high school, I helped build a section of the Continental Divide Trail, which is in part managed by the Bureau of Land Management. This tapestry of lands, the backdrop of my childhood, has influenced me and my values throughout my life.

I come to this opportunity with great humility, as it would afford me the chance to work with two of the most storied and venerated agencies in the federal government: the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. These agencies are the caretakers of some of our nation's most special places and most vulnerable species. And uniformly, I have never met a more passionate set of employees—dedicated in the missions of their organization and in their commitment to public service. At the top of the list are the directors of these agencies Dan Ashe and Jon Jarvis—public servants who have dedicated their careers to these special missions and to the critical work their organizations do on behalf of the American public.

Before I joined the government four and a half years ago, I spent my career focused on conservation issues. I started off as a senate staffer for Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, from my home state of Colorado, where I worked on energy and natural resource policy. I also had the unusual opportunity to work on both sides of the aisle during this time, spending two years on the Democratic side and a year on the Republican side. This unique circumstance profoundly shaped my views on policy and left me with the strong belief that collaboration, while often not easy or straightforward, can result in the most creative and durable policy outcomes.

These beliefs helped me in my tenure as a program officer for both the Hewlett and the Packard foundations, where I continued to work on natural resource issues. Both institutions have a keen interest in building institutional capacity within the non-profit sector, and I focused much of my efforts on helping the variety of NGOs we worked with on strategic planning and on developing appropriate metrics to help evaluate progress towards their goals. I also supported a number of efforts designed to create opportunities that could not only balance economic development and conservation but also that saw those twin goals as inexorably linked. My foundation experience also uniquely equips me to be able to work on innovative public-private partnerships to advance successful models that leverage Federal resources with those provided by the philanthropic community, partners, and other interested entities.

The opportunity to balance our economic needs with conservation is illustrated in fact that both the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service are significant contributors to local economies. According to the Department's FY2012 Economic Report, recreation alone drove an estimated 417 million visits to DOI managed sites, generating \$45 billion to the American economy and supporting 372,000 jobs.

The national wildlife refuge system is truly America's backyard—the places where millions of us go to hunt, fish, hike and explore the outdoors. Hunting and fishing are among our nation's most popular pastimes; more than 41 percent of the US population 16 and older participated in wildlife-related outdoor recreation in 2011 and in some states, more people have hunting and fishing licenses than vote. However, as more and more children become attuned to technology and the internet rather than the natural chorus of the outdoors, the Fish and Wildlife Service can work to ensure that the next generation is also connected to the natural heritage that is our birthright as Americans.

The National Park Service manages Interior's most visited lands, and arguably the country's best known and loved sites. These destinations draw visitors from across the globe, and these visitors support over \$30 billion in economic activity. When the National Park Service celebrates its

100th anniversary in 2016, we will have an even greater opportunity to renew the bond that Americans have with their parks. The beginning of the National Park Service's second century is a defining moment, offering us an opportunity to celebrate America's historical, cultural and natural heritage and to lay a strong, sensible foundation for the next century of stewardship.

Although it is clear that there are many challenges facing the two agencies, and conservation as a whole, I believe we have enormous opportunities in the near term. My skills in constituency building can help guide the agencies to ensure that our work is meaningful to all Americans, regardless of where they live or what cultural background they represent. And my experience in the Department, working side by side with these bureaus and others toward effective financial management, equip me to assist them in a constrained budget environment to effectively utilize their resources. During my tenure at DOI and in my previous work, I have developed relationships across government and with diverse stakeholders that will assist me in fostering a pragmatic, collaborative approach to conservation that builds coalitions across all of our constituencies in the interests of the American public we serve.

I am a child of the West. From the first time I hooked a rainbow trout with my Dad, I became the beneficiary of our nation's rich natural heritage. If confirmed, I hope to continue the legacy of this bounty by connecting the next generation of American's to their outdoors and of pursuing pragmatic, balanced conservation solutions that contribute to the sustainable use and management of the Department's lands and waters for the benefit of all the people of this great country.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.