

**Statement of Matthew Zane Leopold  
Nominated to be Assistant Administrator, General Counsel  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee  
September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, distinguished members of the Committee, I am thankful for the privilege of being before you today as the nominee for the position of General Counsel of the Environmental Protection Agency. I am honored that President Trump, Administrator Pruitt, and this Committee are considering me for this position.

I would like to begin by thanking my family who is with me here today for their tireless support in all my personal and professional endeavors. Behind me is my wife Kim, my daughter Ava, my son Zane, and my son Luke. I would also like to say hello to my two-year-old daughter Abby who is back in Florida with her grandparents. Finally, I'd like to recognize my father Zane Leopold who traveled from Florida to be here today. Thank you Dad for your many years of guidance and support.

The role of EPA's General Counsel, overseeing the implementation of the laws entrusted to the agency, is a public trust. If I'm fortunate enough to be confirmed, I would pledge to execute those duties with the utmost diligence and care. The EPA is quickly approaching its 50th birthday, and over those years it has already tackled some of the nation's most pressing problems. When President Nixon and the Congress created the agency in 1970, there were environmental issues that abounded from the choking smog in Los Angeles to toxic dumping in our oceans to an infamous burning river in Ohio. The environmental laws passed by Congress in

the decades that followed EPA's creation have been essential to securing the promise of environmental and human health protections while at the same time allowing for economic growth and prosperity. There is no question that EPA has made great strides, significantly improving the quality of the air we breathe and the waters we depend on. EPA must always continue to ensure that we don't backslide from those important protections.

To accomplish this important mission, the federal environmental laws harness the strength not only of the federal government, but the resources of the states in a unique partnership known as "cooperative federalism." Having served in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as well as the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice, I saw firsthand how that cooperation could yield incredible results on issues big and small. For example, the federal-state partnership to restore America's Everglades is the largest ecosystem restoration project in the world and has significantly improved water quality, timing, and delivery in a vast and rare environment, benefiting state, tribal, and federal lands. On a smaller scale, I observed the State issue permits, inspect facilities, and collect air and water quality data, which enabled EPA to better understand, manage, and ultimately prevent pollution. Leveraging the assets of state and federal environmental agencies continues to be a key strategy for protecting and improving the environment.

On enforcement of our environmental laws, I've also seen how the federal government and the states came together to address what has been called the greatest environmental disaster of our time, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. I'm proud to say that I played a small part in securing that funding by participating in the United States' civil enforcement case. This massive

effort, led by the Department of Justice, resulted in a \$20-billion-dollar settlement that has already begun flowing to federal, state, and local government entities around the Gulf of Mexico. These funds are going largely to restore and enhance the environment, creating a once in a generation opportunity to address damages to natural resources and conserve sensitive lands along the Gulf Coast.

I have been engaged in environmental law and policy issues for my entire legal career, and for most of those years I have been in public service. Through that experience, I developed great respect for my fellow career civil servants who carry out the day to day work of the federal agencies. And I think it's important for political appointees in any administration to listen to, understand, and collaborate with the career staff. I plan to do nothing less should I have the opportunity to lead the Office of General Counsel. Having been in private practice, I also would emphasize to EPA employees the importance of listening to the regulated community who understand – often times better than government – what it takes to comply with environmental regulation in the real world.

In closing Mr. Chairman, I again thank the President and this Committee for the opportunity to be here today. I would be humbled to join Administrator Pruitt to carry out EPA's important mission. I respectfully request your support, and I look forward to any questions you or your colleagues may have.