

**Statement of
Martha Williams
Nominee for the Position of
Director,
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
at the
U.S. Department of the Interior
Before the
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate**

November 17, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Moore Capito, and members of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

My name is Martha Williams and I have with me today my children Kate and Ian, and am joined virtually by my partner Doug, my parents, siblings, and family across the country. I am also joined in spirit by my late husband. It is an honor and privilege to be here as President Biden's nominee for Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

I believe that public service is one of the most important callings in this great nation of ours and, if I am confirmed for this position, I look forward to serving the President, Secretary Haaland, the Fish and Wildlife Service's employees, all of the American people and the resources we steward.

I come from a family that has served our country and communities with courage, my father and an uncle as Marines, my grandfathers in the Army, an uncle in the Air Force, and my father-in-law and another uncle in the Navy. My father is also a civil engineer, a bridge-builder, literally and figuratively, and he has been known to use his skills as a force in conserving working landscapes. My mother is infinitely capable and a fierce leader in her own right, most importantly as a teacher of nature.

During my youth, we spent our time together cutting and baling hay on hot summer days, often racing to beat the rain, and on the rare and special time off the farm, we ran barefoot on mossy paths in the Adirondacks, watched newts change colors, fished, swam, paddled, and hiked together.

Growing up on a farm taught me the joy and necessity of teamwork, how to work hard, and to appreciate nature and the natural resources that our great country is blessed with. Developing a life, family, and career in the West, made me realize the importance of context and place, both defined by the human need for autonomy and reliance on community. I have learned that the best way to build a team is to hold oneself to the highest standards, work side by side, sometimes literally mending fence, sometimes just lending a hand or an ear.

My life is steeped in conservation. It's what I think about, see, smell, hear, and dream about. I am a life-long student of nature, the outdoors, fish and wildlife management, people management, and what it takes to solve seemingly intractable natural resource issues.

I have worked on a number of these challenging issues and from various perspectives, whether as a customer of the Fish and Wildlife Service, as the Director of the State of Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, in the legislature, the judiciary, as legal counsel on issues before the Service, and as a teacher making sure to impart on my students those skills they need to lead us into the future.

Using a scientific wildlife management and collaborative approach, and always with others, I have tackled tough wildlife management issues head on. Sometimes we have made only small, yet durable steps forward, other times we have made great strides in habitat restoration and conservation, bison restoration, predator recovery, cold and warm water fish recovery, invasive species, law enforcement, wildlife movement, organizational and people management and development of conservation leadership.

Wildlife and natural resource conservation rests with all of us, from rural and remote communities to large urban landscapes, private land, tribal lands, and public land. It is a shared responsibility. We all play roles in this important American model, and it is with a strong commitment to collaborative conservation that we can achieve our collective goals.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's role in conservation covers inspiring breadth, depth, and importance. With at least one National Wildlife Refuge in each state and territory, the Service can make access to nature available to every American. Its mission, to steward migratory birds, wildlife, fish, plants and their habitats, and ultimately the ecosystem functions for all Americans, is critical to the health and well-being of our economy, communities and people. Each program and region within the bureau contribute to this collaborative and multi-disciplinary effort to steward the health of the interconnected, ecological processes that are so important locally, nationally, or internationally.

If confirmed as Director, I will apply two central tenets in leading the Fish and Wildlife Service to its conservation mission. The Service will adhere to its underpinning of scientific integrity and it will work collaboratively, leveraging the expertise of our many partners, whether state, tribal or local governments, private landowners, organizations, or industry.

This is truly an extraordinary time for the Fish and Wildlife Service, when both the challenge and opportunity to maintain healthy ecosystems and healthy populations of wildlife have never been greater. I make this promise, that if confirmed as the Service's next Director, I will give it my all to serve with courage and excellence.

Thank you, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Moore Capito, and members of this Committee, for your service and for your consideration. I look forward to answering your questions.