



Turmoil shakes up agency in charge of vast US lands

AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty

Mount Katahdin, just west of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, is a site administered by the U.S. Interior Department near Patten, Maine.

By MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik
Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke

BILLINGS, Mont. — A year of upheaval at the U.S. Interior Department has seen dozens of senior staff members reassigned and key leadership positions left unfilled, rules considered burdensome to industry shelved, and a sweeping reorganization proposed for its 70,000 employees.

The evolving status quo at the agency responsible for more than 780,000 square miles (2 million square kilometers) of public lands, mostly in the American West, has led to praise from energy and mining companies and Republicans, who welcomed the departure from perceived heavy-handed regulation under President Barack Obama.

But the changes have drawn increasingly sharp criticism from conservationists, Democrats and some agency employees. Under President Donald Trump, the critics say, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has curbed outside input into how the land is used and elevated corporate interests above the duty to safeguard treasured sites.

The differing views illustrate longstanding tensions over the role of America's public lands — an amalgam of pristine wilderness, recreational playgrounds and abun-

dant energy reserves. A year into his tenure, Zinke, a former U.S. Navy SEAL and Montana congressman, has emerged as the point person for the administration's goal of American "energy dominance." He's targeted regulations perceived to hamper development of oil, natural gas and coal beneath public lands primarily in the West and Alaska.

He's also made plans to realign the agency's bureaucracy, trimming the equivalent of 4,600 jobs — about 7 percent of its workforce — and proposed a massive overhaul that would move decision-making out of Washington, D.C., relocating headquarters staff to Western states at a cost of \$17.5 million.

The intent is to delegate more power to personnel in the field who oversee activities ranging from mining to livestock grazing to protecting endangered plants and animals.

Staffing reductions would be achieved through natural attrition and reclassifying some positions to lower pay grades as employees are moved outside the D.C. area, Zinke spokeswoman Heather Swift said Monday.

Zinke's actions have stirred dissent within and outside the agency — from his claim that one-third of Interior employees were disloyal to Trump to a proposal to allow more drilling off America's coasts while carving out an exception for Florida at the request of Republican Gov. Rick Scott.

Along with Zinke's full-throated promotion of the Trump administration's new agenda came the transfer of at least 35 senior Interior employees. Among them was Matthew Allen, who was demoted from assistant director of communications at the agency's Bureau of Land Management.

He's now in a new position, performing "nonspecific duties" in an Interior branch that oversees offshore drilling. Allen sued in December, challenging his reassignment as retaliation for his support of government transparency.

"There appears to be a collective effort to suppress information being shared with the public, the press and the Congress," he said.

At the agency's highest levels, 11 leadership positions are

vacant a year after Trump took office, including the directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service.

Panels such as the National Park System Advisory Board have languished, according to a letter submitted by board members who resigned last month. Board Chairman and former Alaska Gov. Tony Knowles, a Democrat, complained that requests to engage with Zinke's team were ignored and members were concerned stewardship and protection of the parks was being pushed aside.

When the Park Service in October proposed increasing entrance fees at 17 of the most highly visited parks — from Grand Canyon to Yellowstone and Zion — the board wasn't consulted, said Carolyn Finney, a University of Kentucky geography professor who was among those who resigned.

"How do we make parks more accessible? It's cost," Finney said. She said the fee increase would hinder the ability of a "more diverse and wider group of the public to visit the parks."

The board's charter expired in December after it collected comments from more than 100 experts on how parks should deal with climate change, increase visitor diversity and protect wildlife.

Medina: Questioned truthfulness of two victims

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about a decade, and the couple had two children together.

"She was struggling with the loss of my parents," the mother said. "I believed that God placed him in our lives when we needed him most."

But the relationship soured over time, she said.

"I began to feel like I had lost her. She became so distant from her family because Gary was her whole world," the mother said before turning to Medina. "She was a vulnerable child and you took advantage of her and took control of every part of her life. She was brainwashed to love you, and she was brainwashed to defend you. I know you believe your lies. These little girls paid the price."

The victim then testified that Medina abused her.

"The wool was pulled over every person's eyes," the victim said. "Putting Gary behind bars may silence him for a while, but I know in my heart he will come back and start this cycle again."

Cherish Nunnally, who was staying with Medina at 17, talked about how Medina had used her vulnerability to manipulate her. The Daily Astorian does not typically identify victims of sexual abuse, but Nunnally agreed to have her name disclosed.

After being born to a heroin-addicted mother, Nunnally bounced between numerous foster homes as a child before living with Medina. She was given medication to treat an ear infection and migraine one night and climbed into Medina's bed in between him and his wife, who has since died.

"You and I didn't grow up



Damian Mulinix/For The Daily Astorian
Former Astoria High School wrestling coach Gary Medina after a court appearance in April.

with good role models to teach us what good boundaries were. I've had to be a mother as long as I can remember, so I don't mind being a mother to you now and telling you, 'No,'" Nunnally said. "Gary, you used your power and control to manipulate people, and today I am taking back my power."

Buzzard lauded the two women.

"Many people don't realize that Mr. Medina is the quintessential sex abuser," Buzzard said. "He's the one everybody should be mad at, but he flipped it around. It was genius, really."

'Me Too' movement

Christine Mascal, Medina's Portland-based attorney, filed two motions to reconsider the verdict prior to sentencing. McIntosh denied both.

"Nothing in the memo changes what was argued in trial," McIntosh said.

After everyone involved in the defense and prosecution said their piece, Medina, who did not testify at the trial, came forward.

He admitted to drinking heavily at the time of the crimes due to his late wife's cancer diagnosis, often impairing his judgment and his ability to be a good father and husband. He also described how his life was going smoothly — a new fiancée, a new house, multiple children to raise and recent success as a wrestling coach at Beaverton High School — before he was arrested in February 2017.

"While in trial, everybody got a two-day snapshot of me — only 10 percent of the entire truth," Medina said. "In the wave of this 'Me Too' movement, it seems like men are considered guilty immediately. It isn't fair all the time."

Medina pointed to what he believed were holes in the prosecution's arguments. He said he was out of town with the Coast Guard when he was said to have had sex with the 15-year-old victim. He said Nunnally's position in bed with him — and next to his light-sleeping wife — would have made it impossible to reach up her shirt and down her pants.

Medina also questioned the truthfulness of the two victims, saying he maintained a relationship with both for years afterward.

In her testimony, Nunnally alluded to the fact that several witnesses questioned the victims' veracity.

"If those same people were asked about Gary, there would have been significant pause before answering that question," she said.

At the end of his comments, Medina tearfully apologized to the victims for his behavior but said he did not commit the crimes.

"Every story has two sides," Medina said. "If I'm going to prison when I'm innocent, I wanted you to hear mine."

'Turned my stomach'

The comments did not sit well with McIntosh, who said she wished she could issue a longer sentence.

The judge said his comments were not subject to cross-examination and could not be construed as evidence, pointed to interview transcripts in which Medina discussed how teenage girls would flirt with him, and said a recorded conversation between him and one of the victims proved he was controlling.

"It turned my stomach to listen to you," McIntosh said. "The last 30 minutes of you talking about what liars they are did nothing but solidify my opinion."

The judge then turned to the victims.

"I found you incredibly believable. You withstood substantial cross-examination from a skilled lawyer," McIntosh said. "You have not been destroyed by this."

Cazee: 'I would deeply apologize to anyone who feels like a victim'

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Around 10 p.m. the night of his first arrest, sheriff's deputies found Cazee walking in the area without a flashlight minutes after yet another complaint of a man searching through windows. Authorities also found that Cazee, a surgical nurse in Portland at the time, had stolen mail from one of the victims and kept it at his Portland mobile home.

One of the victims, due to repeated suspicions of someone prowling outside her home, placed a surveillance camera outside her residence in early 2017.

"I felt like I was losing my mind," she said.

Victims speak out

In one of the videos, the man was wearing a camouflage jacket that appeared identical to the one Cazee wore when he was arrested.

Nearly all of the victims — and a few family members — spoke at the sentencing hearing. Common themes surfaced in their statements: anger, lack of sleep, weariness of surroundings at home, lost feelings of privacy and keeping weapons nearby as they sleep at night.

"This violation was not physical, but it was more difficult than I ever could have imagined. How could you know a year after a trauma like how much of a toll it will have on your life?" one victim said. "To put it freely, the thought of Mr. Cazee walking around in public, whether now or 30 years from now, makes me want to crawl out of my own skin."

Two other young women detailed how their lack of sleep has affected their performance at school. One dropped out of high school her senior year, while another — a college student — said she went from earning a 4.0 GPA to a 0.86 GPA.

"I will definitely not be the same person I was before," one victim said. "It has made my anxiety worse, my depression worse. I'm afraid to get out of my car in the driveway and walk in the front door at night."

Another victim described how she has been having a difficult time being intimate with her boyfriend out of fear that someone is watching. Some said they almost panic when they encounter someone who looks like Cazee.

"It wasn't just my anxiety or somebody playing tricks on me. Someone was actually outside my window," a victim said. "If he didn't get caught, what would've happened?"

For the parents and guardians of the victims, feelings of an inability to protect their children were pervasive. Some exuded their anger at Cazee, even asking him to look at them during their remarks and calling his facial expression "smug."

One of the victim's grandmother's said she and her husband moved to Surf Pines with their grandchildren because they heard the community was safe. They often left their blinds up and curtains open.

"Shame on you. Shame on you for doing this to my granddaughter and to all the other girls," she said. "It's so sick. It's really sick."

During the January trial, Cazee's wife and son testified that he often went for walks by himself late at night. They also spoke Friday.

"I love you and I will always love you, but I am deeply hurt and confused by your actions," his son said. "You've stayed my personal Superman until you were arrested."

Peering through windows

Cazee admitted to peering through windows in a psychosexual evaluation released minutes before the sentencing hearing. The evaluation, and several comments by lawyers in the hearing, revealed that Cazee is likely to face several other charges from the U.S. Department of Justice. He apologized to the victims during the hearing.

"I had absolutely no idea of the impact of my actions before. I do now," Cazee said. "I feel like some think that I have no remorse, but that is not true. I would deeply apologize to anyone who feels like a victim."

Soon before sentencing Cazee, Judge Dawn McIntosh said the psychosexual evaluation described a longstanding problem that he failed to address.

"The work that the sheriff's office did in this case is what got you," the judge said. "I don't think you cared. I don't think you thought about anybody but yourself when you were doing this. I think you're a dangerous man. I don't think you're likely to change your spots."

McIntosh commended the "articulate," "strong" and "heartfelt" words of the victims.

"I hope you were listening because I certainly was," she told Cazee. "You see words like 'invasion of personal privacy' and you don't think off the bat about the damage that is done."

Clayton: 'I'm still new to this. I want to learn'

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"I can't do anything artistic myself. But I appreciate the skill. I'm fascinated by it," he said. "My love of art always balanced out my career in the business world. Sure, you need creativity in business, but where do you draw that creativity from? Art was my way to balance my life."

So as he prepared to retire, Clayton stayed on the lookout for available galleries to manage. Clayton and his wife were also looking at the Oregon Coast for a summer home. At the same time, Bronze Coast Gallery became available, and the opportunity to manage a gallery by the water lined up.

With this being his first venture into the gallery world, Clayton doesn't plan to change much.

"Part of what made this gallery so attractive was

how not much needs to be changed. Kim has done a fantastic job," he said. "We have great clientele, great artists and a wonderful set of employees. So if we're not broken, then it doesn't need to be fixed. But it would be naive to say we can't do better."

Clayton hopes to maintain the gallery's relationships with artists, as well as expand and diversify pieces with new artists. The biggest change customers will see in the near future is an updated website.

"I'm still new to this. I want to learn," he said. "To change for the sake of change is not something I believe in."

While Clayton loves the beauty of the Oregon Coast, he said he plans to split his time between Cannon Beach and Phoenix, Arizona, where his wife still lives.

"Sometimes I need a week of sun," he laughed.