

Former Monsanto Employee to Utilize Trump's Revolving Door to Join US Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt

Fish and Wildlife Nominee Aurelia Skipwith to Face Senate Committee Today

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On September 11, the Senate heard from Trump's nominee to be the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Aurelia Skipwith, a former employee of agrochemical corporation Monsanto.

"Skipwith has a history of working with big-time special interests like Monsanto. Outside of her days at the agrochemical corporation, her resume is surprisingly scant for someone that would be charged with managing America's fish and wildlife. But like so many other Trump political appointees, Skipwith has already rubbed elbows with oil and gas interests and is poised to continue to curry favors for special interests at the expense of our public lands, fish and wildlife if she is confirmed," said Jayson O'Neill, Deputy Director of the Western Values Project.

While Skipwith was [working](#) for Monsanto, the corporation [lobbied](#) the department of the Interior, Congress, and other federal agencies on the [Endangered Species Act](#). In 2012, Skipwith even [won](#) an award from the agrochemical corporation for her work.

After Skipwith joined FWS as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Fish, Wildlife and Park, FWS decided to [rescind](#) a ban on farms within national wildlife refuges using bee-killing pesticides – a decision highly [favorable](#) to Monsanto. This wasn't the only departmental action that would ostensibly benefit agrochemical corporations. Secretary Bernhardt is under [investigation](#) by Interior's Inspector General for his role in [suppressing](#) a scientific assessment on the impacts of pesticides on endangered and threatened species.

According to her publically released [calendars](#), Skipwith has been deeply involved in the administration's rollback of habitat protections for the imperiled sage grouse and [spoke](#) at the oil and gas association Independent Petroleum Association of America's (IPAA) regulators' forum. The IPAA is a [former client](#) of Secretary Bernhardt's whose political director was caught on tape [laughing](#) about the connections and access they have within the Trump administration.

In July 2017, Skipwith sent [memos](#) to the National Park Service and FWS requesting they review rules that prevented hunters from killing bears and wolves using extreme techniques, like "baiting the animals with greasy doughnuts, ambushing mothers with pups in dens and shooting animals from boats while the bears are swimming."

Skipwith's qualifications for the nomination have been called into [question](#), given that her [resume](#) offers no previous experience working within FWS, aside from her work as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks over the last two years within the Trump administration. She was originally nominated under the tenure of former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke – who ran in the same [circles](#) as Skipwith's then-fiance. [Recently](#), 27 former FWS employees united in opposition to her nomination, critiquing her background and experience.

Her nomination was [celebrated](#) by both scandal-ridden Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who resigned in [disgrace](#) in late-2018, as well as [current](#) conflict-ridden Interior Secretary [David Bernhardt](#). Her original nomination [died](#) at the end of the previous Congress, but she was renominated for the same position on July 17, 2019.

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