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Lynn Scarlett Versus Former DOI Employees

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Part V of EnviroWonk writer Samantha's Hulkower's day at the National Integrity in Science Conference in D.C. Check out her previous posts on the big event [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

So there were some other panels, but at this point we were suffering from environmental terror fatigue and took a break until the last, and our most anticipated panel: "Conservation in a Hostile Climate" which promised to pit the Interior Department's Deputy Secretary against former federal career employees, debating the current administration's policy, record, and judgment.

First, Dominick DellaSala and James Furnish spoke about federal land policy and endangered species protection. The gist of their talk was "The Bush Administration disregards science that does not support their pre-existing development plans."

Next was Lynn Scarlett, the Deputy Secretary. Before Scarlett began her spiel, she made an effort to emphasize her environmentalist street cred: bird watching with her mom in Pennsylvania as a kid, living in Santa Barbara before she came out to DC, etc. We're not going to rehash her entire 15-minute talk, but here are some highlights:

On the role of politicians effecting scientific decisions: "Science can't determine what we want, politicians identify what we value."

On snowmobiles in National Parks: "Although some environmentalists wanted no snowmobiles, others wanted us to allow twice as many vehicles as was ultimately determined."

While addressing the previous scientist's claims that the Bush Administration "threw out scientific facts and bulldozed their own path," to logging in ecologically sensitive forests in western Oregon, she alluded to an entire forest burning down because the National Forest Service couldn't log, while DellaSala turned bright red ... perhaps trying to contain his anger.

Scarlett also said that DOI's endangered species record under Bush 43 is no different than under Clinton's.

Lastly, Noah Greenwald from the Center for Biological Diversity spoke (check out our upcoming interview with him and another CBD scientist discussing endangered species protection and federal policy). Greenwald tried to refute Scarlett's words by pointing out that most all of the positive accomplishments she listed came as a result of court orders.

The moderator had his hands full while attempting to give the scientists a chance to calmly lay out their facts undermining Scarlett's spin, while at the same time ensuring that she had the opportunity to support her statements. For example, DellaSala told the audience how Scarlett sent out a memo telling DOI employees they couldn't use the words "reserve" or "mapped", but rather "management area", which Scarlett insisted wasn't sent out by *her*.

We asked a question about a [federal judge throwing out a lawsuit challenging oil exploration around protected polar bears in Alaska](#), and what this case portends for threatened and endangered species who happen to exist around increasingly valuable oil reserves, but the panel devolved into a discussion of the polar bear's protected status under the Marine Mammal Protection Act versus Endangered Species Act. We decided to e-mail Greenwald and Scarlett to see if either of them would comment on our question or any additional issues they wanted to clarify. Interior did not get back to us, but this is what Greenwald had to say:

"I thought there were several things about Scarlett's testimony that were troubling. She denied her extensive involvement in weakening the spotted owl recovery plan, even though we have emails from FWS employees saying that she ordered them to take action to weaken the plan ... Finally, her one response to my talk was to clarify that when comparing their record to Clinton's, she only meant that they had a similar record at losing litigation, not that they had accomplished as much in terms of listing species, etc. This hardly seems like something to boast about and shows the callousness of her attitude towards DOI's responsibility to implement the Endangered Species Act and save species from extinction."