

Trump's Legacy Through The Eyes Of Those His Presidency Hurt

From inciting violence to separating families, the repercussions of the Trump administration's policies and rhetoric will be felt for a long time.

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Laiken Jordahl has been documenting the environmental damage at the U.S.-Mexico border.

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Trump campaigned on a promise to build a “big beautiful wall” along the southern border ?D one that he insisted Mexico would foot the bill for. Four years later, more than 400 miles of border wall have been built, most of it replacement of smaller existing barriers, without Mexico paying a dime of the \$15 billion price tag. In its rushed effort, the Trump administration has waived numerous environmental laws and forever altered the southern border.

In February 2020, the Trump administration began bulldozing and blasting sites within Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, a UNESCO biosphere reserve that is home to numerous endangered species, to make way for Trump's wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. The sites included cultural and burial sites sacred to the Tohono O'odham and other Native American tribes.

Along with that damage, migration routes for jaguars and other species have been cut off, fragile ecosystems damaged, whole mountains sliced in half.

***Laiken Jordahl**, a former wilderness fellow at the National Park Service, has been documenting the environmental damage in the borderlands, including Organ Pipe, as a campaigner at the left-leaning Center for Biological Diversity.*

I spent Trump's Inauguration Day wandering through a cactus forest in Organ Pipe National Monument, just north of the U.S.-Mexico border. At 26 years old, I'd landed my dream job: working with the National Park Service to protect Arizona's stunning wilderness lands for generations to come.

But as Trump was sworn in, I worried that he'd make good on his racist border wall promise and destroy so much of the wilderness I was charged with protecting. And even though Trump's plan to build a wall across the southern border was clearly the biggest threat facing Organ Pipe, I was told not to discuss, research or write about the horrific destruction a wall would cause. It was just "too political."

Years later, I find myself returning to Organ Pipe almost every week, but not as a park service employee. Now I return with a bullhorn and media crews. In the past year, Trump has dynamited sacred Indigenous sites, butchered hundreds of ancient saguaro cactuses, and pulverized swaths of wildlife habitat to build the wall along the monument's southern border.

I've done everything I can to raise the alarm as this ecological catastrophe unfolds before my eyes, but I can't help but feel like I failed to protect Organ Pipe. The wall through the monument is nearly complete. I've become a disaster tour guide. It's heartbreaking.

The damage Trump's border wall has inflicted is incalculable. Much of it will last forever.