

CONFIRMING AURELIA SKIPWITH AS FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE DIRECTOR

Confirmed 52-39

SUMMARY:

The Senate confirmed Aurelia Skipwith, a nominee with ties to interests opposing endangered species protection, as director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (*December 12, 2019, Roll Call No. 395*).

BACKGROUND:

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is the principal Federal agency dedicated to fish and wildlife conservation. The position of director is a vitally important one that oversees the management of our National Wildlife Refuge System and implementation of an array of conservation laws including the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act and international agreements such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. At this time, when scientists estimate that one million species are at risk of extinction, now more than ever strong leadership at FWS and active enforcement of our nation's wildlife protection laws is needed.

Revelations about Ms. Skipwith's ties to problematic interests, along with the many anti-environmental policies that have been enacted during her tenure as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Interior Department, raise significant concerns about her ability to act in the public interest and to protect our nation's treasured fish and wildlife. For example, Ms. Skipwith previously worked for a lobbying firm which represented a water district in California that has worked to undermine Endangered Species Act protections for salmon and other critically endangered native fish in California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta. Senator Tom Carper (D-DE), the ranking member of the Committee on Environment and Public Works which has jurisdiction over the agency and the nomination, stated his belief that Ms. Skipwith had not been completely forthright in her responses prior to the confirmation vote regarding potential conflicts of interest.

OUTCOME:

On December 12, 2019, the House confirmed Aurelia Skipwith 52-39. "No" was the pro-conservation vote.