

**Dr. Maria Caffrey Responses to Questions from Democratic Members
Following Testimony on July 25, 2019 Before the House Committee on Natural Resources**

Questions from Chair Grijalva for Dr. Maria Caffrey, Former Partner, National Park Service:

- 1. You stated that your role at NPS was a Partner, not a contractor. Could you provide additional information about what that means?**

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

Yes, I was a National Parks Service (NPS) Partner and not a contractor. The distinction is important because, unlike a contractor, I functioned the same as a full-time NPS employee. I worked exclusively and full-time for the NPS, in an office in an NPS building surrounded by NPS employees. All of my supervisors were NPS employees. I participated in departmental meetings and decisions just as all the other NPS employees I worked with did. All of my work was performed in my NPS office using computers, phones and other equipment provided by NPS. NPS also provided me with an NPS Partner email address – which, importantly, is not provided to contractors – as well as with NPS business cards. As part of my job duties I occasionally represented NPS at public events. Although my funding did need to be renewed periodically, that renewal happened routinely throughout my tenure at NPS. Additionally, and very crucially, both I and my supervisors and co-workers at NPS had every reasonable expectation that it would continue to happen indefinitely into the future. Indeed, at the time of my termination, I was managing multiple on-going projects for which my supervisors and colleagues were counting on my continued participation, and which have been difficult or impossible to continue without my input.

This is all quite different from the role of contractors, who generally do not function as full-time NPS employees, are not indefinitely provided offices in NPS buildings and fully equipped by NPS, do not participate in internal NPS departmental meetings, deliberations and decisions, do not represent NPS at public facing events, and are funded for discrete projects with no expectation of indefinite funding.

I appreciate the opportunity to clarify my comments on this subject during the hearing, where I did not have the opportunity to give a nuanced response. As should be clear from my comments above, I worked full-time at NPS and effectively functioned as a salaried employee.

- 2. Can you provide more information about the scientific integrity complaint you filed and your experience with the complaint process?**

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

I filed a scientific integrity complaint on June 1, 2018. Both the Department of Interior (DOI) and NPS have Scientific Integrity Policies in place, and both of them prohibit DOI and NPS employees from engaging in censorship or coercive manipulation. My scientific integrity complaint focused on all the instances in which various NPS employees had repeatedly attempted to censor my work because it discussed human-caused climate change, and in which those same employees had repeatedly used harassing tactics to attempt to coerce and manipulate me into accepting the censorship or into censoring my work myself.

As is the required procedure, I filed the complaint with the Department of Interior's Scientific Integrity Office. From there, it was directed to the Scientific Integrity Officer for the

NPS, Sara Newman. Unfortunately, Ms. Newman and her office never appeared to take my complaint seriously. A little more than a month after I filed, I received a letter from Ms. Newman stating that she was closing my case because my report was ultimately published with the references to anthropogenic climate change included. Subsequent conversations with Ms. Newman, together with agency counsel, further elucidated that her office had reached this outcome by adopting an extremely literal and overly narrow interpretation of the Scientific Integrity Policy, concluding that because the work product had not ultimately been affected, the attempted censorship and the intimidation and coercion tactics I had been subjected to could not constitute a loss of scientific integrity and were of no concern to them. This seems extremely far from the spirit, if not indeed the explicit written intent, of the relevant policies.

It is worth noting that DOI's Office of the Inspector General had also become aware of my situation, and I did communicate with them about it. The involvement of both the OIG and the NPS Office of Scientific Integrity became very muddled, however; there seemed to be considerable confusion as to which office should defer to the other, and ultimately it seemed that neither investigative body felt empowered to do anything about my situation. I was particularly frustrated when, several months after the SIO had summarily dismissed my complaint, Ms. Newman told me in a phone call that she had only ever read a 3-page summary of my (much more detailed) scientific integrity complaint that she received from the OIG, and she confessed being unaware of many important details of what I had reported. Most distressingly, she said she had not read my description in my Scientific Integrity Complaint of a meeting in March of 2018 with an Associate Director of the NPS, Ray Sauvajot, in which Mr. Sauvajot had been extremely aggressive and threatening towards me in attempting to convince me to accept the deletions of the phrase "anthropogenic climate change" from the report. Ms. Newman suggested in this after-the-fact conversation that such an incident should have been treated quite seriously. Thus, from what I could discern, neither she nor anyone else in her office ever read my full complaint before dismissing it.

3. You stated that the sea level rise report was not released as originally written. Can you provide additional information about this?

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

This is correct. While it is true that my report was released with the references to anthropogenic climate change restored, there was an important change from the original finished report: on the original report, Dr. Patrick Gonzalez (National Park Service Principal Climate Change Scientist) was listed as a co-author. On April 18, 2018, Dr. Gonzalez removed his name as a co-author of the sea level rise report to protest the violations of scientific integrity by the National Park Service. During the hearing, I inadvertently misstated his reason for removing his name. It was not out of fear for his work, it was to protest the National Park Service violations.

4. You mentioned other violations of scientific integrity at NPS. Can you provide additional information about any of those other incidents?

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

Dr. Gonzalez, mentioned above, also faced attempts by NPS to get him to remove mentions of anthropogenic climate change from an unrelated manuscript he submitted to a

scientific journal. Dr. Gonzalez was successful in protesting this violation of scientific integrity, and did not change a word; the scientific journal published his article intact. I am sure that Dr. Gonzalez and I are not the only scientists at NPS who have experienced this violation.

5. In May, this Committee held a hearing to examine the President’s budget at the Department of the Interior, at which Secretary Bernhardt testified. During the hearing, Secretary Bernhardt said he’s “not losing any sleep over climate change.”

a. Your report examined the impacts of sea level rise and storm surges on National Parks. Given the findings of your report, do you believe Secretary Bernhardt understands and appreciates the severity of the impacts of climate change on public lands managed by the Department of the Interior?

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

No, I do not believe he does. As the introduction to my report explains, global sea level rise and the impact of storm surge caused by stronger and more frequent storms, both driven by anthropogenic climate change, will have significant negative effects on coastal parks in the future. Not only are these parks important from an environmental perspective – many of them are important habitats for nesting shorebirds or sea turtles, for example – they are also important from an archeological and cultural perspective, housing historical forts, lighthouses and other structures, as well as attendant artifacts. They further provide important places for public recreation and enjoyment.

DOI, and under it the NPS, are charged with maintaining and preserving these lands for the benefit of the public and for future generations. While my report is just one contribution to the scientific literature on climate change among many, my research unequivocally concluded that climate change poses a substantial threat to coastal parks in the future, and that our choices about fossil fuel emissions will affect what level of threat these parks face.

b. How do you think his statement impacts the employees of the Climate Change Research Program within which you worked?

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

I think statements such as the one mentioned above have absolutely affected the employees of the CCRP. Even if there has not been any explicit directive not to work on climate change, this statement and others like it have unequivocally created an environment in which well-meaning agency employees are afraid that if they do research around climate change, write grant proposals for work relating to climate change, or even mention climate change in their work they may be punished – they may be reassigned, even relocated far from their homes and their families; their programs may be defunded or eliminated. This fear absolutely affected the people I worked with in CCRP, some of whom explicitly referenced such concerns in their attempts to get me to self-censor and remove references to climate change from my scientific report.

Questions from Rep. TJ Cox for Dr. Maria Caffrey, Former Partner, National Park Service

- 1. Why is it important for us to have accurate science about the effects of climate change on our national parks?**

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

If we do not have accurate science on how climate change will affect our national parks, then we cannot even hope to take appropriate steps to do what we can to protect the parks, as well as the monuments and artifacts they contain, from the effects of climate change.

- 2. Why is it important for us to recognize the human impact on climate change when we talk about our National Parks?**

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

One reason it is important to recognize the human impact on climate change when we talk about our National Parks is that means that our choices will impact how much and in what ways climate change actually affects national parks in the future. The mission of NPS is to protect and preserve the parks for future generations, and it is not possible to do that without acknowledging that human greenhouse gas emissions levels will dictate what conditions park managers need to anticipate.

In addition, national parks educate visitors about relevant environmental issues affecting the parks. Climate change is having and will have huge impacts on parks, and it is impossible to meaningfully educate park-goers about how climate change is affecting or will affect what they see around them without acknowledging that it is driven by human activity.

- 3. In other words, why did you fight so hard to keep that piece in your report? What could Interior have done in your situation to better foster a culture of scientific integrity?**

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

I fought so hard to keep the references to anthropogenic climate change in my report for all the reasons described above. But, even more importantly, it was crucial that those references be included in my report because they were scientifically relevant. They were relevant for understanding the datasets and assumptions underlying my work. In addition, “anthropogenic climate change” is a scientific term of art, meant to distinguish the kind of future climate change I was working on from non-human-caused climate change in the geologic past. Thus, I was not engaged in a policy battle but was rather fighting for the scientific integrity and accuracy of my work.

Questions from Rep. Horsford for Dr. Maria Caffrey, Former Partner, National Park Service

1. I have witnessed a concerning trend showing disregard for transparency and an unwillingness to facilitate communication between lawmakers and experts within the BLM, and other agencies in the DOI. On several occasions, after reaching out to local BLM officials to speak with experts on the ground, who have hands on experience related to Nevada, my staff has been redirected to DOI congressional liaisons in D.C., who then stonewall my office from connecting with officials who can help us develop the most informed policy.

a. Dr. Caffrey, in your experience is this standard or advisable practice within the National Park Service?

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

Open, frequent and consistent communication between scientists working at federal agencies and lawmakers is essential for the development of evidence-based policy. This is why many of the scientific agencies have included provisions in their Scientific Integrity Policies acknowledging that the free flow of scientific information is an essential component of scientific integrity, and at least some explicitly mention the importance of open communication of scientific information to Congress.

I do not believe that preventing scientific experts at agencies from communicating with Members of Congress who are seeking information in order to inform policy making is an advisable practice. On the contrary, I believe this undermines the scientists' work, impedes the agencies in carrying out their missions, and leads to bad policy-making.

b. What role should federal agencies and their experts play in informing federal lawmakers?

Response from Dr. Caffrey:

I can think of almost no circumstance in which federal lawmakers should not at least be *informed* of the best possible science when making any decision in which it is implicated. Thus the scientific agencies (and the scientists who work there) should regularly and freely communicate with federal lawmakers in order to ensure that lawmakers act with the best possible information at hand.