



## CleanLaw 49: Robin Just Speaks with Laura Bloomer about Managing Public Lands under the Trump Administration and Beyond, September 25, 2020

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Robin Just: Welcome to CleanLaw. This is Robin Just, I'm the Communications Director here at Harvard's Environmental and Energy Law Program. And I'm talking today with Laura Bloomer, one of my coworkers, and also one of my favorite people on the planet. It happens to be Laura's last day at EELP, and while I am very sad about that, I'm excited to do this podcast with her, since it's a project she's been working on for a long time, and we are really excited to be launching. Laura has been with us for a few years, first as a student researcher, and then after she graduated in 2019 with a joint JD from the law school and master's in public policy from the Kennedy School, she agreed to join us for a year as a fellow. Laura has contributed so much over the past few years to our program that I won't even bother listing it all, but she's been instrumental in keeping our regulatory rollback tracker, and EPA mission tracker relevant up to date and correct. And somehow she's managed to spin up this new project, which we will be talking about today.

Robin Just: Laura, will you please tell us a little bit about this project, what it is and what inspired such a massive undertaking?

Laura Bloomer: Definitely, and thank you Robin, for the very kind introduction. I will try my hardest to get through this podcast without being emotional after what a great time it's been at EELP.

Robin Just: Oh same.

Laura Bloomer: And also you are also one of my favorite humans, I should say.

Robin Just: Delightful, I'll take it.

Laura Bloomer: So this project came about because at EELP, we pay a lot of attention to the concept of good governance, what's happening that really undermines and affects the way that these administrative agencies can fulfill their missions, can actually govern and help the public like they're supposed to do. And often we're looking at EPA and we're looking at Department of the Interior. And our ears just kept perking up because we kept seeing all of these stories just for three years, honestly, about all of the changes at Department of Interior. So we decided to look into it a little more and with a team of incredible research assistants and what we found was there really were these four buckets of changes that seem to be happening during the Trump administration at the Department of Interior. And



they seemed really consequential. These were changes that were really impacting the way interior could manage lands, regardless of whatever policies they put out. It was just impacting their ability to even put out those policies and to have strong transparency and to be accountable to Congress and to the public.

Laura Bloomer: And so we decided that we really needed to write about this, that it was really important both if Trump gets elected to a second term to really know what's happening and what the baseline is that they're starting from. And also if we have a Biden administration, because Biden has these really big plans for public lands, he wants to increase renewable energy, he wants to use them as carbon sinks, or at least people want to use them as carbon sinks. I'm not actually sure that's in Biden's plan. And to do that takes a really functioning, robust, empowered agency. And it's unclear at this point if that's where the Department of Interior will be at the end of the Trump administration.

Robin Just: Interesting. And I'm looking forward to hearing more about the specifics you've discussed. But to back up a little bit, how did you decide which agencies to include in this report? Because obviously you couldn't include all of them.

Laura Bloomer: Yes, that's a great question. Department of Interior has a ton of sub-agencies within it. And so we are looking at just the three agencies that manage the most public lands and the vast majority of our public lands. So that is the Bureau of Land Management, who manage public lands for multiple use mission, which is extraction, recreation, conservation, timber harvest, a ton of stuff. You have the National Park Service and they manage public lands for preservation. So for the protection and conservation of public lands and for the use and enjoyment by this generation and future generations. And then the third one is US Fish and Wildlife Service. And so they manage a lot of wildlife refuges and hatcheries with a primarily conservation mandate. And there are other uses that occur on those refuges, but they must be compatible with the refuges primary purpose, which is conservation just depends on what type and for what species and what have you, refuge by refuge.

Robin Just: So that's really interesting and definitely something worth paying a lot of attention to, I think. And I'm glad that we are finally able to turn our eye to that. Are you seeing changes at the Department of the Interior in general as an agency and what are some of the, you talked about four buckets, what are the changes that you're seeing?

Laura Bloomer: So the four buckets that we found, which of course, have some overlapping parts were institutional capacity, and this really gets at the ability for Department of Interior employees to do their job and for management to manage well. Science informed decision-making, so what is the role of science when they're making these policies and decisions. Public accountability and engagement, these are



agencies that are working on behalf of the American public and so it is really important that they are transparent with the American public so that we know what's going on with our government. And also because not every expert can work in the agency and not every community member is at the agency or the department. And so when you're putting out these plans that are going to affect communities and affect land areas, you need to have input from those folks. You need to have experts weighing in, you need to have interest groups weighing on both sides, on industry side, on conservation side.

Laura Bloomer: The fourth is the nation to nation relationships with tribal nations. All of this land are the Aboriginal homelands of indigenous communities and were tribal lands. And so beyond just public accountability, the government actually has a special relationship, a nation to nation, an inter-governmental relationship with these tribal governments. And so there are requirements that the federal government has to consult with tribal governments before taking action beyond what is just expected of the public input and public accountability piece. So those are the four buckets, institutional capacity, science informed decision-making, public accountability, and consultation and collaboration with tribal nations, where we really saw big changes under the Trump administration.

Robin Just: That's really interesting. And I'd like to get a little deeper into each of those buckets in a minute, but first I'd like to back up and ask you how you did your research. How you got all this information to understand what's been happening at interior and be able to ultimately make some recommendations going forward. What was the process?

Laura Bloomer: Yeah, that's a great question because as mentioned in the intro, I recently graduated law school. I've been working at EELP for a year and I didn't magically also hold a job at the Department of Interior in that time. And so it was really important to me just seeing how big these impacts were and how massive the changes were that was happening. It was important to me that I talked to experts and folks who had spent careers or large chunks of careers at the Department of the Interior and could really shed some light on this and provide incredible context. And so I was working with a team of research assistants who are also really devoted to these areas, really committed to public lands. And we ended up interviewing, with the help of Joe Goffman, our executive director, 25, former officials or public lands and American Indian law experts, and just had incredible conversations with these folks.

Laura Bloomer: And really, I mean, honestly couldn't have done the report without them, especially to the degree that we did. And so that was the biggest chunk of our research. After we did a lot of this initial, just regular research, we then teed up all these interviews and had just really great conversations with folks.



- Robin Just: So when you spoke with all of these experts in general, were they glad to be talking to you and did they give you good ideas of what direction to follow in your research?
- Laura Bloomer: Yeah, definitely. And I should also add that a big part of this report, are recommendations for a Biden administration, if Vice President Biden wins the presidential election. And so these were folks who really could tell us what it takes to improve the department and what the Biden administration should really be looking at in their first day and first a hundred days of office. So yes, folks were happy to talk with us and just really helpful.
- Robin Just: That's great. So if you're up for it, let's maybe jump into the buckets and go one by one and talk a little bit about what you found and some of the recommendations you've made going forward.
- Laura Bloomer: That sounds great.
- Robin Just: Great. How about we start with institutional capacity. What's happened on that front?
- Laura Bloomer: This is probably maybe one of the areas where you've seen the most in the press. And a big thing here is that you have the secretaries of the interior, both Zinke and later Bernhardt who have really, and especially Secretary Bernhardt, have really centralized decision-making at interior and really broken down some of the management structures that are just essential to these departments. And so in a normal time, you would have Senate confirmed directors running these agencies, you would have secretary of the interior and then beneath him or her, you would have a director of BLM. You would have a director of the National Park Service, you would have a director of US Fish and Wildlife Service. But under the Trump administration, this really hasn't happened with the exception of two years into the Trump administration Fish and Wildlife Service finally got a confirmed director and even she was from Monsanto and just, we could get into that, but that's in the report.
- Laura Bloomer: And so the point is that you have a lack of leadership at the top, and instead of having Senate confirmed folks, so people who have gone through that process, been vetted by the Senate, you have people that are in these acting positions. What does that mean? Two things? Well, one, it means that they can be more extreme and they can have a lack of experience. So for instance, the BLM director right now has been on the record saying egregious things, but also saying among those that he thinks that we should sell off public lands. He's not even in this to maintain these lands for the American public. And so that's obviously very problematic to the bureau's mission. And then at National Park Service now, we've been through a few acting directors and this final acting director actually



doesn't have experience at national parks, which is something that's written into NPSs statute and so that's its own issue. And beyond that, one of the interviews when we were talking about this, the problem is these acting directors, lack authority.

Laura Bloomer: And so Secretary Bernhardt can really exercise his authority and really interfere with a lot of the work that goes on with the career staff, because these agencies are staffed with a massive, thousands of career staff who do really incredible work. But under this current structure, you have a secretary of the interior who's really interfering with that work and also just centralizing all the decision-making. So not only is it that you have these acting directors who lack authority, it's also that you now have the secretary saying, "Well, those decisions that normally were going to be made in the field, maybe among State or regional offices, maybe just with park superintendents by themselves, actually those need to get cleared through the secretary's office." And it just creates backlog, it creates inefficiency, it creates a bias towards, I would hope I could say the status quo, but in fact, what we've seen is a bias towards whatever the secretary wants. Which under the Trump administration is this energy dominance agenda, really going hard, leasing a bunch of public lands for oil and gas development, especially.

Laura Bloomer: And so you just get all of these inefficiencies in the systems and all of these politicization of decisions that previously didn't need to be that politicized. And of course, with this also comes lower staff morale. I mean, we heard from folks about how the Trump administration really wasn't interested at all in listening to career staff when they came into office. And used a variety of tactics that we saw in the news about moving folks around, transferring them to positions that were just totally not suited for their skillset. In a way to force them out of the department or to really minimize their voice in the department. And so you just have this really overall lack of capacity right now under the Trump administration.

Laura Bloomer: And the last thing I'll add that's really stuck with me and we can talk about it a little later when we get to the nation to nation relationships with tribal governments is that one of our interviewees mentioned how, when you have these folks in acting capacities, when you have parks superintendents who have been moved around, they've been transferred by this administration and maybe not replaced with someone with full authority, just because of the new management structure. You end up really destroying those relationships with the tribal leaders as well. These are relationships that were built up over time. Now you have a new superintendent, you have someone who doesn't have the same authority because of these changes to decision making and the change to management structures. And so you can't get anything done. And so it ends up having these ripple effects on what happens at the Department of the Interior.



Robin Just: Wow, that's somewhat discouraging to hear. That's a lot of hits to the capacity of these agencies.

Laura Bloomer: I will add it is really discouraging I agree, these interviews were really tough, but for the most part, people did think that if Trump wins a second term, folks are pretty afraid obviously of how bad this can get. But if Trump doesn't win a second term, a lot of folks thought that this is something that maybe wouldn't have too lasting of impacts. That a Biden administration could come in and could restore a lot of this capacity and work with career staff and be able to bring the department back to where it was at. So that part was at least less discouraging. And of course, our report has a bunch of those recommendations and you can check out how folks suggested that the Biden administration should approach them.

Robin Just: That reminds me of a smaller version of this experience. I used to work for the New Mexico Environment Department in their groundwater quality bureau. And it was a unique agency. A lot of States don't have this kind of system in place to regulate groundwater. And we were very empowered to do the monitoring and the science and work with the permittees who were permitted to pollute groundwater basically. And when the administration changed, we had a new governor in New Mexico. One of the first things she did was to shuffle all the bureau chiefs at the environment department around. And it really did destabilize the work that people were doing, because you would get people in bureaus who had no experience. They had 20 years experience in water and no experience in air, and they would end up at that bureau. So I've seen how de-stabilizing that can be. And in fact, a lot of my coworkers ended up leaving as a result of that. Anyway, that's just my small version of this.

Laura Bloomer: Destabilizing is the key word that I probably left out. That's exactly what happens. It's universal, the impacts for sure when you have something like that happen.

Robin Just: Yeah. So the second bucket you talked about was science informed decision-making, what did the interviews have to say about that?

Laura Bloomer: So changes to science we've really seen across this administration, and I think has been getting a lot of press, which is great because it goes without saying that when you have a department, that needs to manage public lands for the future, the BLM, Park Service, Fish and Wildlife, they all have different statutory mandates, but they are intended to manage these public lands for the future. It's not like we want to just use these lands and be done with them, right. And so of course, that takes science. You need to know an integrated science, when you're a park, you need to have both the biological science, oh, I'm not a scientist, we're going to get in over my head, but it's not just about the science of how the ecosystem work. It's also a bit of social science, about visitation and how you can balance the two and have a sustainable park.



Laura Bloomer: And so anyway, the point is, it's incredibly important. And what we've seen under this administration is just a total lack of trust in the science, care for the science and just really sidelining it. Not just at Department of Interior, but came in the way of intimidating scientists or interfering with their work. That's something we've seen a lot, is these departments have scientific integrity policies, they have policies around ensuring that science can remain independent. And that's just really gone out the window in a lot of cases with this administration. And I should say that it's not that we have a Department of Interior that's always going to make decisions that are solely science-based right. This is a political entity, it's governing for more than just science, it's governing for communities, it's governing for us as the American people. And so the decisions are supposed to be informed by the science and it's that moment that this administration's really done away with.

Laura Bloomer: And then there's a second aspect of it. It's also that they've changed a lot of the policies and regulations and cut out science there. And of course, the best example of this is climate change. When they undertake land planning and when they are leasing public lands for oil and gas development or other purposes, there's environmental reviews that have to happen under the National Environmental Policy Act. And this administration has not, either ignored climate change or not considered its impacts, or really downplayed it. And honestly, to the detriment of their work, because you have courts that are throwing out those lease plans and throwing out those decisions because you do, you have to consider climate change. I mean, it's just so obvious that it impacts all of these decisions and that you're exacerbating problems when you're drilling from oil and gas and also the cumulative effects of these projects really matter over time.

Laura Bloomer: And so here, it's this two-pronged approach where it's limiting the science that informs the decision making, and then also just totally cutting out climate change and other science and their policies. And so the other good example of that, that I'll touch on really quickly is there were these policies called Compensatory Mitigation Policies, which under BLM and Fish and Wildlife Service and across DOI, but these are just two examples. Basically, said that when you have someone who's going to use public lands for a project, that's obviously going to disrupt ecosystems, it's going to disrupt the lands. And often it's a issue for threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. And so those folks managing the projects they need to make up for that disruption, they need to mitigate that, right? They need to compensate. And so that's where you get compensatory mitigation.

Laura Bloomer: And under the Obama administration, those policies had been strengthened, although in many people's minds, not enough, but still they've been strengthened to say that actually were possible, you should even try for net gain. You should try



to not just make up for these disruptions to the environment, you should try to have a gain overall of beneficial environmental projects. And the Trump administration has canceled those Compensatory Mitigation Policies. So it's no longer required for BLM or the endangered species, fish and wildlife species. They can still be voluntary, of course, and you see this sometimes with projects, but it's just a huge loss at a time when we're facing a really large biodiversity crisis.

Robin Just: And so how as a lay person, can you explain how the Trump administration was able to get rid of those policies, were these guidance documents, or how did they say no, we're not going to look at climate change anymore, or we're not going to mitigate to compensate for environmental destruction?

Laura Bloomer: Yeah. Great question. It's a combination. So compensatory mitigation, those were mainly guidance documents if I'm recalling correctly, but NEPA the National Environmental Policy Act, environmental review guidance, those were regulations. This was a full put out a proposal, got public comment, which I will say was primarily all negative and then put out a final rule. And so those are regulatory changes that are now being challenged in court, but that are significantly harder to change in the future, just because of the legal process requirements for changing regulations.

Robin Just: I see. That segues nicely into the third bucket. You said that people commented negatively on these changes, but it sounds like they happened anyway. And the third bucket you talk about is public accountability and engagement. And so what's happened to those processes?

Laura Bloomer: It's funny that you mentioned that as a segue, there are actually a lot of reports where you have groups that have analyzed the comments received and have these astonishing numbers about, I can't think of them off the top of my head, but X percent of folks, let's say 80% of folks said that this was a bad idea. And yet the administration has gone ahead. So that's a whole different story, but beyond just that, there's been this effort to really minimize comment periods. So a ton of actions that the government takes, including regulatory changes and leasing decisions go to the public for comment, to have the public weigh in and to have interested groups weigh in. And this administration has just tried to put out the shortest of comment periods, so you hold public hearings as part of this as well. And they've held those in obscure locations or not in enough locations that make it really difficult for folks to come in and give their comments. So they've really just tried to minimize that requirement.

Laura Bloomer: And a good example of this is during the beginnings of the coronavirus pandemic, at first and actually throughout it, they weren't really willing to slow down much. They did extend some comment periods, but it's still, these are folks, especially scientists who are extremely busy right now and who we want to be focused on



other things. And instead you have the Department of Interior and frankly other Trump administration agencies moving forward rapidly with some of their decisions. And so that's obviously a big issue. Some of the other ways that they've really cut out the public and I should say, and I should've said this at the beginning, these are public lands. These are not, as you will say, constantly Robin, these aren't BLM lands, they are public lands, it's ours. And so it's especially important for these processes to be really robust. But also it's complicated, if you have a parcel of land, there's a lot of folks that want to use that for different purposes. There's people that want to extract, there's people that want to conserve it, there's people that want it for recreation and these are often pretty incompatible with each other.

Laura Bloomer: And so over time, there's been this move towards more collaborative decision-making and there's some really good examples of this under the Obama administration. Where they tried to really get stakeholders from a bunch of different backgrounds at the table and early on and through long processes and get them all together to come up with a collaborative solution. And one of the best examples of this is sage-grouse protection, but there's others too. And under the Trump administration, you've really seen them stop those processes and in fact, backtrack on some of them. Like with the greater sage-grouse, there were prohibitions on where you could have oil and gas leasing in order to protect the sage-grouse and the Trump administration went ahead and leased in that area anyway. And so that's another example of how they've just really had this one tunnel vision towards oil and gas leasing, despite having a mandate for needing to use these public lands for different uses. And so you've just cut out a ton of the public and making those decisions and elevated the role of industry often.

Robin Just: I would imagine that the speed with which the Trump administration began carrying out this energy dominance agenda and what we've seen on our rollback tracker, how fast and furious the rollbacks started happening in January when he took office. And I'm guessing just the sheer volume of things to keep track of made it even harder for the public to engage, because it was hard to know where to focus your efforts. And so then when you truncate comment periods and don't account for things like pandemics, it would be impossible I would imagine for most people who also have day jobs to get engaged in public lands that mean a lot to them.

Laura Bloomer: Yeah, absolutely. I couldn't agree more. And one way that's supposed to help with this because it is impossible even if you have all the time in the world to engage fully, is advisory committees. The department has advisory committees that are supposed to engage with the department and help with the planning as well. And the Trump administration dismantled those, suspended them for a long period of time, filled them with folks that only cared about extraction and recreation and such. And so, yeah, it's just across the board, a lot of really significant changes.



Robin Just: I think that was the point in your report because I've been working with you as you've written this report. That's the point where I always get so angry, I do stop and take a deep breath and remind myself that there are a lot of ways we can mitigate what's happening and that's the whole point of us understanding what's happening. That is the first step towards being able to do something about it. But I know you share this, that it's difficult sometimes to bear witness to this day after day, rule after rule, land after land, species after species. So I would just like to throw in an aside in here, it's been nice to have such a great coworker and friend to work on this stuff with, because it does get you down sometimes. Anyway, I'd like to go into the forth bucket that you talk about, and that's the government to government relationship that the US is supposed to be cultivating with tribal nations. How has that changed?

Laura Bloomer: So there's a lot of aspects to this nation to nation relationship with tribal nations and tribal governments. And in our report, we're focusing just on two, really. And that is consultation with tribal nations before the government acts in a way that will affect resources or hopefully significant sites. And the second is collaboration generally, but also a focus on cooperative or co-management of public lands. And so what this means is that there's requirements in the law for consultation and they're procedural, and that's an issue they're not really substantive, they don't have a lot of teeth. And that's certainly something that a lot of folks think should be fixed moving forward. And consultation isn't always meaningful, of course, we have a history of really bad relationships to put it mildly, but the Trump administration has really backtracked on a lot of progress that was made during the Obama administration.

Laura Bloomer: And frankly, even before then, one of the biggest ways is that under Clinton, for the first time, there was a reaffirmation of the government to government relationship and this recommitment to tribal sovereignty that came via an executive order. And since then you had President Bush and you had President Obama reaffirm that and the Trump administration has yet to do this. And that is seen as a foundation that's missing to all of these other responsibilities. And then when it comes to consultation on public lands, there's just all these reports and the interviewees said almost unanimously, or actually unanimously, it's really not been meaningful. There's been a lot of check the box exercises, last minute consultation, and just really not engaging with tribes in the way that really adheres to that government to government relationship. And of course, that's not to say, there are tribal nations that work well with the Trump administration and that share similar goals for public lands.

Laura Bloomer: But in general, you've really seen this backsliding on consultation at a time when frankly, there's just a lot of progress that needs to be made to make it a better requirement. To ensure that public land's manager and regional representatives and such, are really engaging it in a meaningful way, and working with tribal



nations to figure out what that means. And then the second change we focus on is there's opportunities, especially for the Department of Interior to work with tribes collaboratively, to either cooperatively manage lands, or even to give back lands for management by tribal nations. And I think probably the best example that folks know of is Bears Ears, this was a national monument that President Obama designated and in that there was an intertribal coalition. That was a advisory group essentially for Bears Ears.

Laura Bloomer:

And when the Trump administration, not only did it come in and shrink the monument, which of course, was protecting these sacred sites, they also just got rid of that advisory board and really disempowered the tribal nations that had been a big part of, in fact the impetus for getting this monument passed in the first place or proclaimed in the first place. And they replaced it with a separate advisory board. And there were two tribal representatives on that board, but none of the folks who originally supported the monument. And so that's just an example where it's just really, at times an affront, what this administration is doing to that government to government relationship. And is really important that our next administration comes in ready to restore it and to do the work because there's over 500 federally recognized tribes. And so it is, of course, it's a big undertaking and really important that it happens.

Robin Just:

And as you mentioned, those are relationships that general there had been bipartisan support towards building before this administration. So hopefully, that can get back on track when we have a new administration, hopefully soon. So those are a lot of big unpleasant changes that you've outlined for us and in the report, which I recommend everybody read, it's up on our website, we'll have the link in our show notes. In each section, for each agency, you mention, you describe specific actions that the people you interviewed have suggested could be taken to get back on track, to have these agencies fulfilling the missions that they are supposed to be doing. And I know we don't want to go through all of those now because we want you all to go read the report. And it would be a lot to just list here, but in general, what are some of the things overall that interviewees mentioned that could be done once a new administration takes office?

Laura Bloomer:

Well, I think first and foremost, the new administration really needs to talk with career staff. They need to listen to them about what's happened, about what resources they need, they need to do some listening and then put that into action. And the same is true for tribal nations, like I just mentioned, those are two groups who really can provide a lot of insight on these categories that we've been talking about, about what needs to happen. A second thing is there needs to be a strong statement through who's appointed to these positions, who's confirmed the Senate, that they really are committed to the missions of these various bureaus and that they're committed to scientific integrity, to public accountability. And a lot of folks recommended that there is a public statement that goes out, made



from the secretary and then can be additional ones from the directors of the various bureaus that really says, here's the course we're charting, here's what the priorities were getting back to, here's how it's going to work with our missions.

Laura Bloomer: And here's what we want to advance in the next four years to really get folks re-centered essentially and try to restabilize everything. And then there's a lot of more specific suggestions around how do you increase the comment period? What do you really want to look forward to involving the public more? What kind of roles at the agency can bolster science? Do you want to put in an independent science advisor for each agency who could help the director or the secretary understand the science when you have a decision to make? What type of review do you need to do of all of these changes to the policies that have happened? What kind of leadership structure do you need to put in place? My gosh, I forgot to even mention that BLM moved their headquarters from Washington DC to Grand Junction, Colorado. Okay, well, that's incredibly destabilizing. Now you have some of the staff in DC, most of the staff in Grand Junction, you already had an agency where 97% of the staff were in field in regional offices.

Laura Bloomer: So the next administration has to deal with, well, what do we do there? Do we pull everyone back? Do we move the whole headquarters back? Do we leave some folks out there? And that's something that they really need to think deeply about as well. So we have tons of more recommendations in the report. I don't want to get into too many of them here, mainly because I don't think I'll do them justice just talking about them in a podcast. Because I think they're really worth digging into, especially for folks who are going to be helping people think about this if we do manage to elect President Biden.

Robin Just: As I mentioned, you do go through a lot of specific recommendations in the report. And even though as awful as it is, that this is your last day with us, this is a project that we plan to keep going with. And it will be a nice springboard to go deeper into some of these rules and policies and guidance documents, and really analyze as we've done with our EPA mission tracker, how this happened, what the consequences of this was and how we can turn it around. So you are really leaving us in good shape, having managed to interview all of these people and get all of this expert advice and condense it into a very readable report, if I do say so myself as the editor of this report. But I would like to say, thank you so much for your hard work on this. It's I think something that we will be building on for a long time.

Laura Bloomer: Well, thank you, Robin. And I should have said at the beginning, when you asked how this report came about, that a lot of this was inspired by you. I think your commitment to public lands and keeping them managed well for the public and understanding that commitment of where the department's supposed to be coming from. It's a lot of the inspiration that got me behind this. So thank you for that, it really helped out.



Robin Just: That's great to hear. I appreciate it. Yeah, it is being from the West something dear to my heart that I think sometimes people in the East don't quite grasp, is how important these lands are to so many people and how they are ours. These are our national treasures. This is not BLMs land. This is not Department of the Interior lands it's our land. And I'm just really glad that we've taken a step toward helping reorient the next administration positively towards protecting these lands and using them as Congress intended. Laura, it has been one of the great joys of my time here at EELP, working with you. And I'm not going to say mushy things because I will definitely cry, but thank you so much for all you've contributed to our program. And for all you've contributed as a friend and a fellow person who cares about the world and making it better. I wish you every luck as you go forward. And I know that we will stay in touch, but I will miss you dearly when you leave.

Laura Bloomer: I couldn't agree more Robin, right back at you with everything you just said.

Robin Just: All right. Well, Laura, thank you so much for talking to us about this important work today.

Laura Bloomer: Thank you for having me Robin and thanks for being the person to interview me. It's been really great.

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