

On January 20, President Biden focused in his Inaugural Address on the message of unity and needing to work together to address the many challenges the country faces. “This is a time of testing. We face an attack on democracy and on truth. A raging virus. Growing inequity. The sting of systemic racism. A climate in crisis. America’s role in the world. Any one of these would be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is we face them all at once, presenting this nation with the gravest of responsibilities. Now we must step up. All of us.”

The same day, President Biden signed an as yet unnumbered Executive Order (EO) on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis. The Order directs “...all executive departments and agencies (agencies) to immediately review and, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, take action to address the promulgation of Federal regulations and other actions during the last 4 years that conflict with these important national objectives, and to immediately commence work to confront the climate crisis.” The national objectives listed include: “...to listen to the science; to improve public health and protect our environment; to ensure access to clean air and water; to limit exposure to dangerous chemicals and pesticides; to hold polluters accountable, including those who disproportionately harm communities of color and low-income communities; to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; to bolster resilience to the impacts of climate change; to restore and expand our national treasures and monuments; and to prioritize both environmental justice and the creation of the well-paying union jobs necessary to deliver on these goals.”

The new EO states, “Climate change has had a growing effect on the U.S. economy, with climate-related costs increasing over the last 4 years. Extreme weather events and other climate-related effects have harmed the health, safety, and security of the American people and have increased the urgency for combatting climate change and accelerating the transition toward a clean energy economy. The world must be put on a sustainable climate pathway to protect Americans and the domestic economy from harmful climate impacts, and to create well-paying union jobs as part of the climate solution.”

President Biden’s The EO revoked former President Donald Trump’s E.O. 13778, Restoring the Rule of Law, Federalism, and Economic Growth by Reviewing the “Waters of the United States” Rule (February 28, 2017); and also revoked two Presidential Memoranda – one Promoting the Reliable Supply and Delivery of Water in the West (October 19, 2018) and a second Developing and Delivering More Water Supplies in California (February 19, 2020).

The Executive Orders can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/>, and the Inaugural Address at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/>.

Environmental Protection Agency

The Biden Administration has announced a number of personnel changes at various agencies. At the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the President has named **Jane Nishida**, a career official, as the Acting Administrator, pending Senate confirmation of his nominee **Michael Regan**, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ), for EPA administrator. Nishida, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator in EPA’s International Affairs Office, joined the agency in 2011 and has held a number of positions, including Secretary of Maryland’s Department of the Environment. President Obama nominated her to lead EPA’s international office in 2014 and 2015 (never confirmed). Wes Carpenter, an EPA deputy chief of staff and the agency’s transition director, announced the appointment.

Radhika Fox, has been named as EPA’s Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Water. Fox was the Chief Executive Officer of the US Water Alliance, a national nonprofit organization focused on building a sustainable water future. She has over 20 years of experience in developing policies and programs covering climate change, water infrastructure finance and investment, equity, and has worked with the One Water movement. She worked for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, and as the Federal Policy Director at PolicyLink, also working on transportation, sustainable communities, economic inclusion, and workforce development. She has a master of arts in city and regional planning from the University of California, Berkeley, and a bachelor of arts in religion and philosophy from Columbia University.

Casey Katims will serve as EPA's Deputy Associate Administrator for Intergovernmental Affairs. Previously, he served as Director of Federal and Inter-State Affairs for Washington Governor Jay Inslee. He also spent five years as a policy advisor to Congresswoman Suzan DelBene (D-WA), helping to manage her responsibilities on the House Ways and Means Committee. Casey has a degree in political science from Vassar College and grew up in Edmonds, Washington.

John Lucey joins EPA as a Special Assistant to the Administrator. He has served since 2019 as NCDEQ's Chief Strategy Officer, helping create and manage both North Carolina's Clean Energy Plan and Risk and Resiliency Plan. He also provided guidance on significant State initiatives including the Duke Energy Coal Ash Settlement, the North Carolina Environmental Justice and Equity Board and the Chemours Consent Order. John holds a bachelor of arts in political science from North Carolina State University and an associate of arts degree from Central Piedmont Community College.

Dan Utech is EPA's new Chief of Staff. He comes to EPA with over 20 years of experience in the federal environmental and energy sectors. He was a Presidential Management Fellow in 1997/1998 with assignments at EPA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Forest Service. From 2014 – 2017, he served at the White House Domestic Policy Council, including as Deputy Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change, where he led the White House and cross-governmental teams to implement and coordinate communications for President Obama's Climate Action Plan. He also oversaw the Administration's energy and climate change strategy. He served as Senior Advisor to the Secretary at the Department of Energy. He was a Senior Advisor to Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton on all energy and environmental issues, including climate change and energy efficiency, as well as air and water quality, toxic substances and endangered species. He has been a lecturer at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, from which he received an M.E.S. degree. He also holds degrees from the Yale School of Management and Amherst College.

Department of the Interior

Tanya Trujillo has been named as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the Department of the Interior overseeing the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Geological Survey. Tanya is a former WSWC member and a water lawyer with over 20 years of experience working on complex natural resources management issues and interstate and transboundary water agreements. Most recently she worked as Vice Chair of the New Mexico Interstate Streams Commission and as a project director with the Colorado River Sustainability Campaign. Before then, she served as the Executive Director of the Colorado River Board of California. She has served as Senior Counsel to the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and as Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at Interior. A native New Mexican, Tanya has a bachelor of arts degree in political science and government from Stanford University and J.D. from the University of Iowa College of Law.

Maria (Camille) Touton will serve as Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation. Camille returns to Interior after serving on the staff of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, leading oversight of the resiliency provisions enacted as part of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020. Camille has also served as staff for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Natural Resources Committee. Camille was Interior's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science under the Obama Administration. Camille holds a bachelor of science in civil engineering and bachelor of arts in communication and rhetoric studies from the University of Nevada – Las Vegas, and a master degree in public policy from George Mason University.

Robert (Bob) Anderson comes to Interior as Principal Deputy Solicitor. Anderson is a law professor with extensive experience in American Indian law, public land, and water law. He is an enrolled member of the Bois Forte Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. He has taught and directed at the Native American Law Center for the past twenty years at the University of Washington School of Law. For over a decade, he has been an annual visiting professor at Harvard Law School. He served as the Associate Solicitor for Indian Affairs and Counselor to the Secretary under Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. He began his career as a staff attorney for the Native American Rights Fund.

Martha Williams has been named as Principal Deputy Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Growing up on a farm, she gained an appreciation and love for the outdoors. Her career has focused on public lands and wildlife, first as an attorney for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (DFWP), then as Deputy Solicitor Parks and Wildlife at Interior, as a professor at the Blewett School of Law at the University of Montana, most recently returning as Director of the Montana DFWP.

Janea A. Scott will serve as a Counselor to the Secretary. Most recently she was a Commissioner and Vice Chair of the California Energy Commission. Janea also served as the Vice Chair of the Western Interconnection Regional Advisory Body and is a member of the Western Interstate Energy Board and the Department of Energy's Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technical Advisory Committee. Janea previously worked at Interior as the Deputy Counselor for Renewable Energy and at Environmental Defense Fund as a senior attorney. She earned her J.D. from the University of Colorado Boulder Law School and her master's of science and bachelor's of science in earth systems from Stanford University.

Jennifer Van der Heide is the new Chief of Staff, bringing over 25 years of federal, state and local experience in legislative, legal and electoral sectors. She most recently served as Chief of Staff for Congresswoman Deb Haaland (D-NM), President Biden's nominee for Secretary of the Interior. She was also Chief of Staff and Political Director for Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA). She previously served as the Washington Director and on-reservation Tribal Attorney for the Hoopa Valley Tribe; Tribal Attorney for California Indian Legal Services; and in private litigation practice in California. She has a bachelor of arts degree in international relations from Tufts University, and a J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, with a focus on public interest law.

Andrew (Drew) Wallace will serve as Director of Congressional Affairs. A native of Houston, Texas, Wallace has worked in senior policy roles in both houses of Congress. Over the last twelve years, he has served in the office of former Senator Tom Udall (D-NM), most recently as Chief of Staff. He has a record of significant contributions to bipartisan legislative successes across a range of issues, in particular energy, the environment, and conservation. He received a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Kenyon College in Ohio and a J.D. from George Mason University School of Law in Virginia.