



RISE DECLARATIONS

Sharing the experience & insights of Recent Involuntarily Separated Employees
working in place-based conservation

MARINE CONSERVATIONIST

ANONYMOUS RISE DECLARATION

“I think we took for granted the value of our service”

1. Describe your career trajectory from your education to your last position held.

I received a Master’s Degree at the University of Washington and joined NOAA immediately after graduating. I started as a staff person at a marine protected area, and then moved higher in the organization over the course of several job changes that included moving to four different locations, thereby gaining experience and insights about place-based management in a variety of contexts. During my career I also had the opportunity to travel abroad to support marine protected area capacity building in Asia, the Mediterranean, and South America. My final position with NOAA was in a senior leadership position within an MPA (marine protected area) program.

2. What do you consider to be the most important achievements of your career (including through partnerships across and outside government)? Why?

I consider my most important achievements to be the contributions I made that persisted after I departed—and remain in some cases more than two decades later. I had the privilege of supporting new infrastructure development (vessel design and procurement, visitor center and exhibit development, and initiating habitat restoration). In each case, something I was involved in starting has continued and provides value to the MPA and the community that depends upon it. In each case, success depended on having vision and connecting with partners outside of government to create the most impactful product or program possible.

3. What were the greatest challenges you faced? How did you overcome them, or not? If you weren’t able to overcome them, why not?

The greatest challenge during my career was consistently not having sufficient resources to accomplish the mission. We perpetually had less people, time, and money than we could have used to maximize impact. That said, we were able to do the very best we could (and learned

to be very creative) with what we did have in terms of time, people power, and funding. As my career progressed, the environmental challenges got bigger and more complex so the tension

between what we had to work with and what we were trying to accomplish intensified. However the increasing challenges brought more organizations (and sometimes funding) to the table as it was apparent that we needed to act and that the government couldn’t “do it alone.”

In each case, success depended on having vision and connecting with partners outside of government.

4. What are your views on how your career served the public, the environment, our cultural heritage, or the greater good, as applicable? Do you feel proud of what you accomplished, or frustrated, or both?

I am incredibly proud of my career as a federal servant. And I sincerely believe that is what I was doing—serving the American people by helping to protect our national treasures. As a public servant, I believed it was my responsibility (and privilege) to do the best we possibly could on behalf of the resources we were charged with protecting—and to set aside our personal opinions and preferences to serve the common good. It is therefore exceedingly frustrating now to watch the common good being tossed aside in service to a political agenda. It is frustrating to have been held to a

standard of ethics and non-partisan behavior (and to have been told we faced consequences if we did not uphold those standards) to watch some government representatives blatantly disregard those standards (and laws!).

5. What's the coolest thing that you've seen a government (local, state, federal, or another country) do for place-based conservation that you'd want to replicate or expand? What would make it easy to implement? How hard would it be to achieve?
[left blank by respondent]

6. What advice would you give to successors in positions you've held? What perspectives have been important to you in your career, and which can be passed on to young people contemplating a career in public service or academia?

Do a much better job of communicating the value of what you do and the risk of not doing it. I think we took for granted the value of our service/s and just assumed it was understood what was at risk if we weren't doing our jobs. I fear that in this current context, we will lose federal services and people will not see the connection between consequences of losing/diminishing federal programs/protections and the negative impact those decisions will ultimately have.

As for young people contemplating a career in public service—I fear that this administration's campaign of demonizing federal service and

Please continue to support the federal workforce that remains in service.
They are being intentionally traumatized.

programs will have a generational impact on the federal workforce. And sadly we all need a strong, talented federal workforce to serve our collective interests—be those in health care, environment, education, or any other arena.

7. Please share anything else you think would be of value to fellow RISEs or to the general public.

Please continue to support the federal workforce that remains in service. They are being intentionally traumatized and the impact of that is significant and detrimental to their well-being and their ability to accomplish their mission. They need all of us to support them, speak to their value, and demand that they be treated with respect and dignity.