



RISE DECLARATIONS

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

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"I could not be more proud of my work and the ongoing service of the men and women at NOAA's Sanctuary System"

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

My senior year of college I interned in the Senate for Senator Dennis DeConcini. When he retired I was hired at NOAA in the office of Public Affairs. After four years I was hired as the communications director for the Office of Marine sanctuaries. After 20 years I was hired as the Chief of Staff until I departed.

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

I ran the first Year of the Coral Reef (1997) and the Year of the Ocean (1998) campaigns. I started the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (2000). I initiated the PAC [ACRONYM SPELLED OUT HERE]. Funding line to support the creation of visitor centers at sanctuaries. I helped designate many new sanctuaries and elevated the profile of the Sanctuary System on the Hill and with the public.

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?
Sanctuaries have always been financially starved. The NPS (National Park Service) operates on \$32 per acre. Sanctuaries operate on 17 cents per acre.

The greatest challenge was getting the National Ocean Service and NOAA to advocate for an increased budget as well as OMB (Office of Management and Budget) and the Hill. Many years Congress allocated more funds than the President's request.

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Additionally managing a system of sanctuaries spread across the globe is challenging. Each superintendent wants to have a say in management of the system as well as ensuring that HQ doesn't get too involved in their operations.

My final challenge was the political environment in Florida where the management plan for the Florida Keys was vetoed by the Governor at the request of a former FWC (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) Commissioner who has great sway and wanted to protect his favorite fishing spots regardless of the environmental ramifications.

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 could not be more proud of my work and the ongoing service of the men and women at NOAA's Sanctuary System on behalf of the American public and for generations to come.

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?

I think for me the greatest movement has been in Alpena, Michigan, where the community went from passing a referendum against the Thunder Bay Sanctuary. Today the city embraces boasts about the sanctuary. When you land at the airport, there is a sign that reads "Welcome to Alpena, Home of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary." The visitor center has become the center of the community.

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?

Public service is an honor and privilege. I'd recommend that people in government mirror the efforts corporations do to gain public trust.

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

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