



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on February 6, 2014

Rhea Sun Suh's Activism May Stop Interior Post Appointment

Rhea Sun Suh, President Obama's nominee to be assistant secretary of the Interior over the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), received a second grilling from Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) at her confirmation hearing on February 4 before the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.



In 2009, Suh was confirmed by the Senate as the assistant secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management and Budget. The February 4 hearing was Suh's second appearance before the committee for her newly nominated post; Sen. Murkowski, the energy panel's top Republican, called for an additional hearing after Suh failed to be responsive at the initial December 12, 2013 hearing regarding controversial Department of Interior policies and Suh's own knowledge of issues that are of great importance not only to the nation's energy security, but also to the millions of people (especially in the western states) directly affected by NPS and FWS policies and decisions.

"I have serious reservations about not only what I perceive is your lack of knowledge of western lands issues, but also with your unfamiliarity with Alaska's most pressing issues and unique governing statutes," Sen. Murkoski told Suh in her February 4 [opening statement](#).

"I'm not being overly parochial here," the Alaskan solon continued, "as we have over 70 percent of the National Wildlife Refuge System and two-thirds of the National Park System located in Alaska, so when you indicated in our meeting that you were not prepared to discuss any of my State's issues in any detail — that concerns me."

Sen. Murkowski was particularly insistent on holding Suh's feet to the fire over the Obama administration's December 23, 2013 decision to kill an emergency road across a tiny corner of Alaska's Izembeck National Wildlife Refuge (shown in part) to give the people of King Cove access to an all-weather airport and lifesaving medical treatment. The King Cove decision is one of numerous examples that have come to typify the federal government's standard response of siding with the radical agenda of the well-funded, militant environmental lobby, regardless of the pain, suffering, and harm its policies cause to people, local economies, regions, and states.



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Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell (Rhea Sun Suh's boss) announced the decision to reject the proposal for the emergency medical evacuation road two days before Christmas, inviting comparisons to the Grinch and Scrooge. The decision is considered by Alaskans to be all the more outrageous because Congress had already approved a land swap that vastly increased the size of the wildlife refuge, in exchange for a small parcel that would permit the much-needed road.

Reporting December 24 on the widespread Alaskan anger over Jewell's announcement, SitNews.us of Ketchikan, Alaska, noted:

This land exchange approved by Congress in ... 2009 — the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange Act — proposed adding more than 56,000 acres of state and tribal land to the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in exchange for a 206-acre road corridor through a corner of the refuge to connect King Cove with an all-weather airport in neighboring Cold Bay. Use of the road would be restricted to emergencies only by law.

In making her announcement, Secretary Jewell insisted that the administration's decision was the result of "a robust and transparent public process to review the matter from all sides."

Robust? Transparent? Taking into consideration "all sides"? Alaskans aren't buying it, and are saying the Obama administration is continuing the longstanding fedgov policy of siding with the moneyed Big Green enviro-activist organizations (Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Audubon).

"We are shocked that Secretary Jewell has made this dangerous, wrong-headed decision," declared Della Trumble, spokeswoman for Agdaagux Tribal Council and the King Cove (Native) Corporation. "We are very insulted that our health, safety and quality of life simply do not matter to her. Clearly, the Secretary's trust responsibility to the Native people is very subjective and, is in fact, meaningless."

SitNews summarized the long-brewing land battle, initiated decades ago, when the federal government expropriated a huge swath of territory for the wildlife refuge, isolating King Cove and denying its residents land access to nearby communities and essential services. According to SitNews:

King Cove residents have been fighting for decades for a single-lane gravel road corridor that would provide safe access to Cold Bay's airport, located just 22 miles away. When the federal government first created the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge more than three decades ago, it cut off the traditional land route between the Aleut community of King Cove and the old World War II outpost of Cold Bay. Community residents were never consulted. Because of that decision, King Cove is accessible only by sea or air. The remote community is often plagued by gale-force winds and thick fog, creating stormy, dangerous travel conditions, especially during medevacs.

"The lives of our people, our elders, children and grandchildren are at stake over this issue," said Aleutians East Borough Mayor Stanley Mack. "Are birds really more important than people? It seems so hard to believe that the federal government finds it impossible to accommodate both wildlife and human beings. Is the Obama Administration turning its back on Native Americans?"

The fact is that the road issue has nothing to do with protecting birds, fish, or any other wildlife; as with so many other policies of the NPS, FWS, EPA, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and other federal agencies, the alleged "environmental" concerns are merely the pretext for the real objective: omnipotent, oppressive government. That became unmistakably apparent when a video surfaced of EPA Regional Administrator Al Armendariz's speech to EPA regulators, encouraging them to "crucify" oil and gas producers. (See our earlier report with the Armendariz video [here](#).)



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The public uproar over the EPA bureaucrat's remarks forced his resignation. But Armendariz was simply following the extreme agenda set by the Obama White House. After all, as *The New American* reminded readers recently, when he was campaigning for the presidency in 2008, Barack Obama announced his plan to "bankrupt" the coal industry, and admitted that under his proposed regulations "electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket." We [reported](#):

Critics realize the EPA is taking its marching orders from a president with an avowed goal of bankrupting the coal industry. During his first presidential bid in 2008, candidate Obama told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "If somebody wants to build a coal-fired power plant, they can. It's just that it will bankrupt them because they are going to be charged a huge sum for all that greenhouse gas that's being emitted." He added, "Under my plan of a cap-and-trade system, electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket."

And Armendariz is but one of many extremely radical environmentalists in the Obama retinue. Remember Van Jones, the self-proclaimed Maoist communist who served as Obama's "green energy czar" until his fanaticism caught up with him and forced his resignation? Then there was "Climate Czar" Carol Browner, who was a big wheel at the Socialist International. More recently, top EPA officials were exposed in an e-mail scandal that revealed that they were colluding closely (and illegally) with the Sierra Club and other Big Green groups to kill the Keystone XL Pipeline, a major natural gas project.

Rhea Suh's vita gives no hint that she would feel out of place in such company. In fact, there is good reason to believe that, if confirmed, she would use the considerable power of her office to stifle all energy production other than that produced by those "alternative" sources — wind, solar, ethanol — favored by the Big Green subversives.

"If Rhea S. Suh is confirmed by the Senate, she would have the power to block natural gas recovery and eradicate resource production on vast swaths of America's federal lands, the coastal continental shelf, and astonishing amounts of private property," author/columnist Ron Arnold wrote in a *Washington Examiner* column for December 14, 2013. "She would control two major bureaucracies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (9,000 employees and more than 150 million acres) and the National Park Service (21,989 employees and 84.4 million acres, including more than 4.3 million acres in private ownership). Such power in Suh's hands would be a disaster for resource production and the national economy."

Arnold, who is executive vice president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise and a longtime nemesis of the Big Green activists, writes that Rhea Suh "spent more than a decade from 1998 to 2009 working for two major Big Green foundations, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (\$7.4 billion assets), and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (\$6.3 billion in assets)." This employment history is very telling, and should be disturbing to anyone who is familiar with the radical environmental programs financed by the Hewlett and Packard foundations.

But that is only part of the troubling story; it gets worse. Arnold explains:

Suh is an alumna of the Environmental Grantmakers Association, which includes more than 200 Big Green foundations that are dedicated to stopping development of America's abundant natural resources.

She joined the Interior Department in 2009 as assistant secretary for policy, management and budget, where she converted the mining-friendly Minerals Management Service into three industry-punishing agencies.

Suh's track record shows nothing but opposition to tapping America's natural resources.



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During her December 12 confirmation hearing, Sen. John Barrasso read a quote by Suh from 2007 attacking natural gas development that was published in a Hewlett Foundation newsletter. America's natural gas boom is providing a huge boost to our economy, creating numerous jobs, and slashing our dependence on foreign oil. But Suh, parroting the anti-natural gas propaganda of the Big Green lobby, stated that natural gas development is "easily the single greatest threat to the ecological integrity of the West."

"If confirmed," Barrasso told Suh, "it will allow you to essentially stop natural gas production ... so I want to know how members of the Senate who support natural gas could support your nomination."

The Obama administration has largely succeeded in keeping the Rhea Sun Suh nomination under the radar, thanks to the help of his allies in Big Media. Searches of Google, Yahoo, the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, Huffington Post, NBC, and CNN on February 4 and 5 for stories on the Rhea Sun Suh Senate confirmation hearing yielded zero story results, a suspicious concert of omissions, considering the importance of the highly charged issues involved and the mainstream media coverage of, and support for, the issues and organizations Suh (along with Jewell, Obama, et al.) is aligned with. Both of the Rhea Sun Suh confirmation hearings were carried on C-SPAN, so there is no difficulty in accessing the information and no excuse for the total MSM blackout. There appears to be a concerted effort by Big Media and Big Green to keep the Suh confirmation quiet, so that key senators will not be inundated with e-mails and telephone calls from concerned constituents and donors demanding a thumbs-down vote on her nomination.

It will be interesting to see how senators who posture as critics of the Obama administration's war against energy producers, and as being advocates of energy development — especially favoring natural gas — vote on the Suh nomination. Last July, the Senate voted to confirm Gina McCarthy as head of the EPA, following a contentious battle over the agency's oppressive and unconstitutional policies. Six Republicans crossed over to support McCarthy and the Obama EPA on that vote: Sens. Lamar Alexander (Tenn.), Susan Collins (Maine), Bob Corker (Tenn.), Jeff Flake (Ariz.), Kelly Ayotte (N.H.), and John McCain (Ariz.).

Democrat Sen. Joe Manchin, whose state of West Virginia has been pummeled by the EPA's war on coal, joined most Republicans in voting against McCarthy's nomination.

Contrary to the moderate image that the Obama administration and Big Media crafted for her, McCarthy has pursued the the Obama administration's radical environmental agenda with a vengeance, particularly pushing his destructive "Climate Change" CO₂ standards. Following President Obama's State of the Union address on January 28, McCarthy held a conference call with 15,000 environmental activists and outlined how she would use the EPA to work with them on their common agenda. The conference call was sponsored by the radical Environmental Defense Fund.

The senators who voted for her confirmation should have some tough explaining to do to the voters back home, and they should be faced with even more challenges if they also vote for Suh. This applies not only to the Republican senators who voted for McCarthy and may be leaning in favor of Suh, but also the Democrats who pose as champions of energy development, and whose states will especially be affected by Suh's decisions. That means Democrat senators such as Alaska's Mark Begich, Colorado's Mark Udall and Michael Bennet, Louisiana's Mary Landrieu, Montana's Max Baucus and Jon Tester, and Pennsylvania's Robert Casey.

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