



Oct. 15, 2021

Dear Senator,

On behalf of Western Leaders Network, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization of more than 450 local and tribal elected officials across the Interior West, I write to urge you to support the confirmation of Charles “Chuck” Sams III for Director of the National Park Service.

Western Leaders Network organizes local and tribal elected officials in eight western states to protect public lands, culturally significant places and wildlife habitat; advocate for healthy air and waters; build diverse and sustainable local economies; restore salmon populations in the Interior West and Pacific Northwest; and advance the national 30x30 initiative to fight climate change.

Here in the Interior West, public lands and waters are the cornerstone of healthy and sustainable economies, our cultural heritage and our quality of life, but they are facing immense threats caused by climate change, such as prolonged heat and drought, the depletion of rivers and streams, extreme wildfire seasons and diminishing wildlife habitat. These problems are costly, devastating and threaten our very existence. The Interior Department has an outsized role in how our invaluable natural resources are used, managed and maintained, and so it is imperative that capable and experienced leaders are at the helm.

Sams holds a diverse range of experience that would ensure our national park system, which includes more than 131,000 square miles of parks, monuments and other landmarks, is managed responsibly and is accessible to all. As the agency’s first American Indian director, he would also bring a critical tribal perspective to the position, as so many of our national parks encompass indigenous lands. Sams has worked for 25 years in state and tribal government and in the nonprofit sector, including as:

- Executive Director of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, of which he is a member
- President and CEO of the Indian Country Conservancy
- Executive Director of the Umatilla Tribal Community Foundation
- National Director of the Tribal and Native Lands Program for the Trust for Public Land

Western Leaders Network

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- Executive Director for the Columbia Slough Watershed Council
- Executive Director for the Community Energy Project
- President and CEO for the Earth Conservation Corps
- A veteran of the U.S. Navy

Local and tribal elected leaders, particularly in the West where the vast majority of our public lands are located, must have strong relationships with the agencies that steward our natural and cultural resources. We need administrative officials who are willing to listen, approach difficult issues with a collaborative spirit, and will include local leadership in decision-making that affects our public and tribal lands and resources. We believe Sams has the ability to work successfully with Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and President Biden to achieve national conservation and climate goals, and the vision to steer us toward a healthier and more sustainable future.

Your vote to confirm Sams is a vote to protect our public lands and waters, and we urge you to swiftly confirm his nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gwen Lachelt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gwen Lachelt
Executive Director