

Welcome to this week's presentation & conversation hosted by the **Canadian Association for the Club of Rome**, a Club dedicated to intelligent debate & action on global issues.

The views and opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker & do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of CACOR.

## Gag-Ordered No More: The 800-Pound Gorilla in the U.S. Government.

**Biography:** Dr. Brian Czech is the executive director of the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy, which he founded in 2003. From 1999-2017, Czech served in the headquarters of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. During most of that time (2001-2015), he was also a visiting professor at Virginia Tech. Czech is the author of four books, the latest being *Gag-Ordered No More: The 800-Pound Gorilla in the U.S. Government*.

**Description:** Brian Czech was the first “Conservation Biologist” (by that title) in the history of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He brought to FWS headquarters field experience, academic achievement, and a specialty in the conflict between economic growth and environmental protection. The latter was welcomed at first, but eventually the gag orders came, and a promising prospect for raising public awareness of limits to growth was destroyed. Czech's new book (and the CACOR talk) is a story about the 800-pound gorilla of economic growth, erosion of First Amendment rights in civil service, and a vision for conservation agencies going forward.

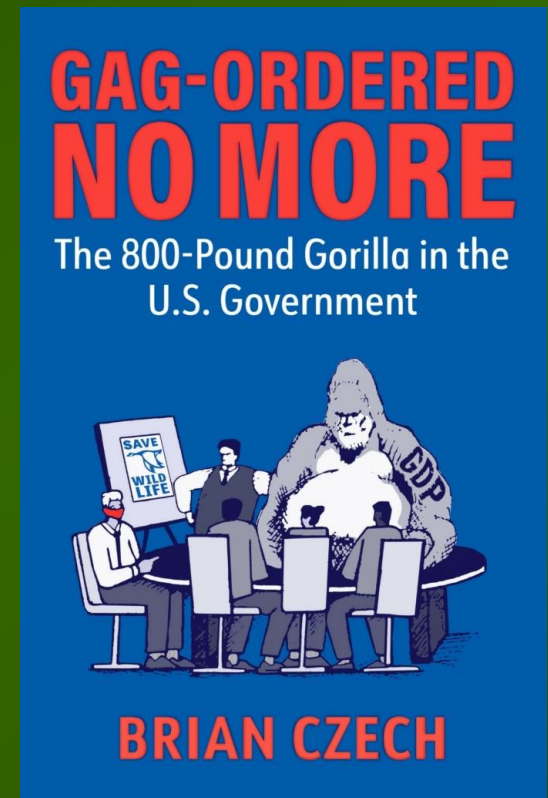
The presentation will be followed by a conversation, questions, & observations from the participants.

CACOR acknowledges that we all benefit from sharing the traditional territories of local Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, & Inuit in Canada) and their descendants.



Website: [canadiancor.com](http://canadiancor.com)  
Twitter: [@cacor1968](https://twitter.com/cacor1968)  
YouTube: [Canadian Association for the Club of Rome](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)  
2024 April 24 Zoom #194

# Gag-Ordered No More: The 800- Pound Gorilla in the U.S. Government



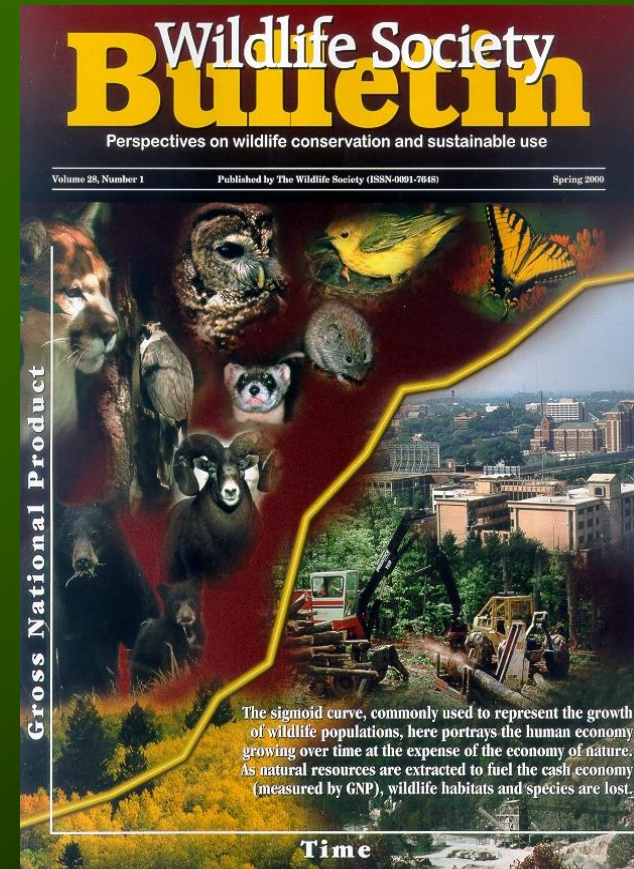
Brian Czech

Center for the Advancement  
of the Steady State Economy



# What's It About?

- *Conflict* between economic growth and environmental protection
- *Erosion* of First Amendment rights in the civil service
- *Vision* for conservation agencies



# What's It About?

- *Conflict* between economic growth and environmental protection
- *Erosion* of First Amendment rights in the civil service
- *Vision* for conservation agencies
- **Story of a gagged civil servant**



# Cast of Caricatures



# GAG-ORDERED NO MORE

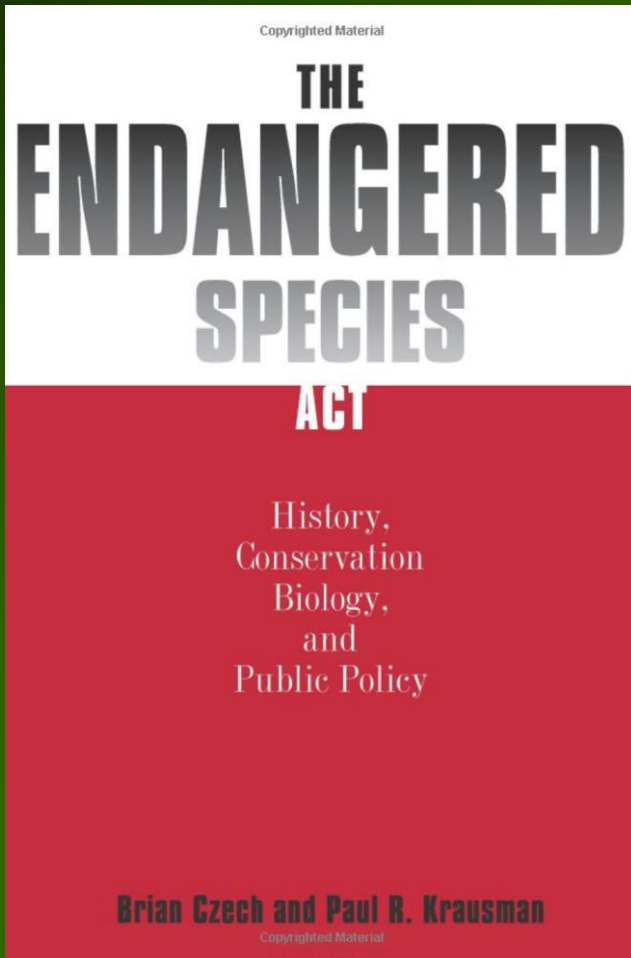
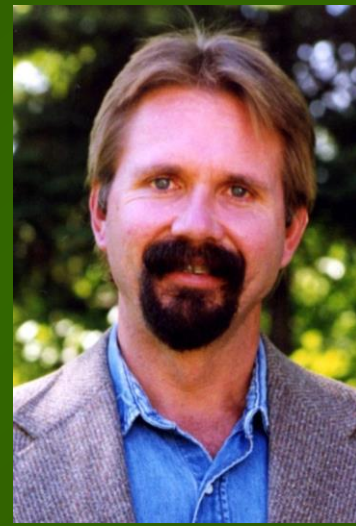
The 800-Pound Gorilla in the  
U.S. Government



**BRIAN CZECH**

“A rare and winning  
combination of policy  
analysis and expose.”  
*Kirkus Reviews*

# Prior to FWS Career



- 1998
- Fresh dissertation
- Policy analysis of ESA
- Causes of species endangerment, *Science*
- ESA an implicit prescription for a steady state economy

# Chapter 1. Pontius Pilate Comes to Tucson



St. Marks United Methodist Church



# Say What?

“We all know that there is no conflict between growing the economy and protecting endangered species.”



“Dan Crasche”

# Blowin' in the Wind

- “We all know that there is no conflict between growing the economy and protecting endangered species.”  
1998 public hearing, Tucson
- “We know there’s a conflict between economic growth and wildlife conservation.” Circa 2008, small session at TWS conference
- “I can drink politics with a firehose.”



“Dan Crasche”

# Chapter 2. The Perfect Job

- “Conservation Biologist”
- “...serve as the focal point for major management, legislative, and regulatory activities related to the Refuge System.”
- “...lead in developing national goals and evaluating key refuge programs.”
- “...current knowledge of conservation biology...emerging national priorities and developing critical issues.”



# Chapter 2. Did Not Say

- “Critical issues may not include the 800-pound gorilla of economic growth.”
- “Incumbent will be gagged if attempting to apply the principles of ecological economics.”



# Chapter 3. A Tale of Two Briefings

- Briefing #1, 1999, fundamental conflict between economic growth and wildlife conservation
  - “This has been the most intellectually stimulating briefing we’ve had!”
  - “Come back and tell us what we can do about this.”
- Briefing #2, 2000, program for raising awareness of the conflict
  - “This is certainly a challenging issue.”
  - “I’ll put you in touch with our speechwriter...”



Jamie Clark  
(circa 1999)

# Chapter 4. Non-Privy Presidents

- Cabinet meeting
- Focus on growth-rate slowdown
- Commerce, Energy asked to opine
- EPA asked to respond, then others
- Secretary of the Interior rises to occasion
  - 800-pound gorilla
  - Cites FWS Director et al.
- President goes away with new thoughts
  - Eschews the win-win rhetoric
  - Leads toward a 21st century paradigm shift



Barack Obama

# Delayed by Decades

- Too late for a lot of ecological integrity
- Damages can yet be lessened



Future Presidents of America  
Youth Leadership Camp

June 10-14, 2024

# Chapter 5. Ecological Integrity vs. the 800-Pound Gorilla

- “...biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health” pursuant to Refuge Improvement Act
- “Ecological integrity” well-established in academic and management literature
- 800-pound gorilla appears as endpoint of natural conditions frame of reference (1800)
- Gagged: No “ecological integrity” and no mention of “economic growth”



“Tim Dirth”



# Chapter 6. The Bible Club and Gag-Order Creep

- “Bible Club” — classic clique
- “Got religion” at The Willow
- What came out was gospel
- 800-pound gorilla prohibited
- Gag orders crept out to branch chiefs, recruits, and detailees



# Chapter 7. The “Bold Ideas Forum” Gets Scrubbed from the Internet

## Conserving the Future Community of Ideas

### Bold Ideas Forum

Sign in

When you think about the future of wildlife conservation and wildlife refuges, what bold ideas come to mind?

Tell us your ideas for the National Wildlife Refuge System and wildlife conservation, comment on the ideas of others, and be a part of the ongoing conversation.

20 votes left!

[What happens if I run out?](#)

top ideas hot new accepted completed

507 votes

#### Raise public awareness of the trade-off between economic growth and wildlife conservation.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System entails public outreach and collaborating with others to ensure adequate maintenance of wildlife habitats and populations across the landscape. The success of this approach depends on identifying the issues for which outreach and collaboration is e [more](#)

by Brian Czech | [28 comments](#)

390 votes

#### Prohibit mining and oil exploration on National Wildlife Refuges

Mining, including drilling for oil is a major disruption on National Wildlife Refuges across the nation. I would call for prohibiting these activities without a major environmental impact study.

by WColumbia | [3 comments](#)

349 votes

#### Prevent wolf control on Alaska refuges

The state of Alaska is pushing for aerial shooting of wolves on national wildlife refuges. USFWS should follow federal mandates and not yield to state pressure.

by vic van ballenberghe | [23 comments](#)

341 votes

#### Make the communication of environmental sustainability a high priority of the NWRs & USFWS

As we embark upon a new vision for the National Wildlife Refuge System I believe we strike closer to the real problem for conservation, management and restoration of fish, wildlife and their habitats when our leadership and organization acknowledges, as many professionals throughout the world have, [more](#)

by Jimmy Fox | [7 comments](#)

- “Think big or go home.”
- “Don’t hold back.”
- Winners central to new Refuge System vision
- Scrubbed from the internet, day after Earth Day

# 2011 Was Rough

- Bold Ideas Forum
- “The Carter Incident”
- PEER FOIA request



 **Conserving the Future Community of Ideas**

**Bold Ideas** Forum



# Chapter 8. Reprimands, Suspensions, and a Rigged Appeals Process

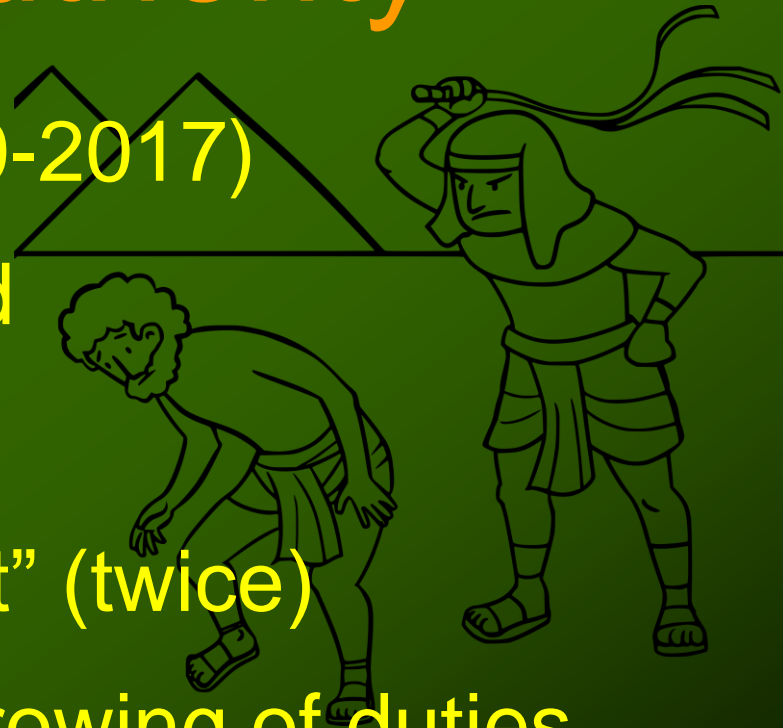
- “It’s not like it was a vote.” (Regarding Bold Ideas Forum)
- Two-week suspension; maximum allowed short of access to Merit Systems Protection Board
- Assigned to “the closet”



“Geoff Pudert”

# Disciplinary Action and Abuse of Authority

- Seven gag orders (2000-2017)
- Five letters of reprimand
- Four suspensions
- Relocation to “the closet” (twice)
- Change of position; narrowing of duties
- Network shredding and career blockage



# Meanwhile

- >50 peer-reviewed journal articles in > 25 journals
- 3 books
- 11 book chapters, forewords, or prefaces
- 10 book reviews



# Other Scholarly Activities

- >200 presentations
  - Conferences
  - Keynotes
  - Guest lectures
- Dozens of media interviews
- Three formal debates







# And in FWS

- Ecological integrity policy
- National Goals Team
- Land Acquisition Priority Team
- 136 SLAMM analyses
- *Planning for Climate Change on the National Wildlife Refuge System*



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Planning for Climate Change on the National Wildlife Refuge System



# Most Extreme Gag Orders

- Nothing “having to do with economics” (written order, 2011)
- No talking with anyone about anything without permission (verbal order, 2017)



“Debra Pock”



“Arun Lyze”

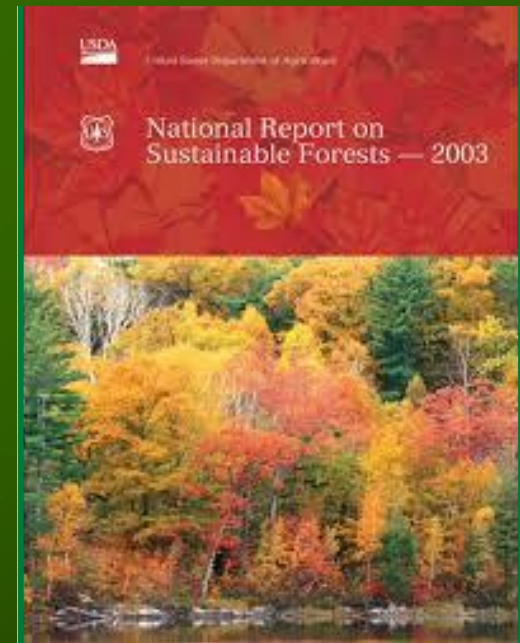
# Career and Agency Impacts

- Workplace sociology degraded
- Professional networks shredded
- Promotion potential eliminated
- Transfer prospects curtailed
- Government career trashed!+



# Chapter 9. Babies in the Bathwater of the 800-Pound Gorilla

- Interagency roundtables
- Climate change planning
- Land acquisition planning
  - Sea-level rise
  - Land prices
  - Conservation return on investment



# And... the Mobile-Tensaw Delta National Wildlife Refuge



# Reasons for Suppression (from least to most corruption)

- Ignorance of ecological economics (all)
- Unwillingness to deal with big-picture, long-term issues (most chiefs)
- Cliquish approach to hiring (Dirth)
- Political aspirations (Crasche)
- Protection of highly privileged, fairly lucrative Refuge System lifestyles (Pudert, Martinis, Lyze, et al.)



# Chapter 10. Joy-Riding on Taxpayer Dollars

- “The Refuge System can be a travelling life.”
- Refuges, national parks, national forests
- National Conservation Training Center
- Paris Agreement
- Chinese national parks
- *Tiglax*
- The “per-diem bonus”



“Cynthia Martinis”



*Tiglax*



# Responses to Suppression and Corruption

- Virginia Tech (et al.) affiliation
- Establishment of CASSE
- PEER networking; FOIA requests
- Grievances over disciplinary actions
- Requests for transfer
- Harassment claim
- OSC case, EEO case
- *Gag-Ordered No More*



# FWS Support

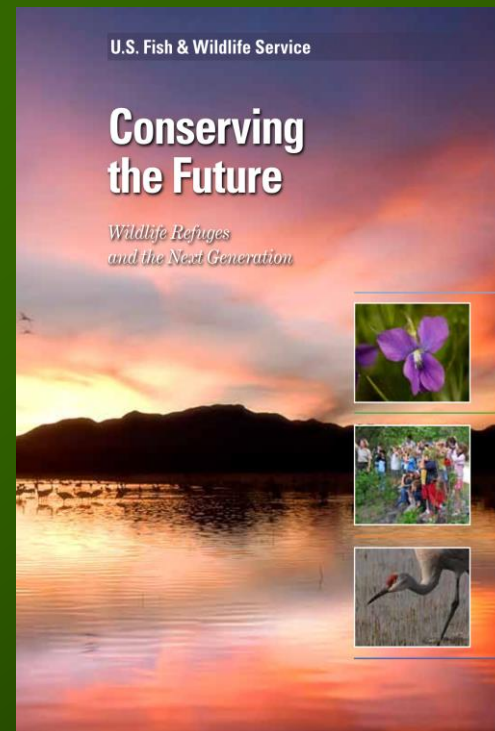
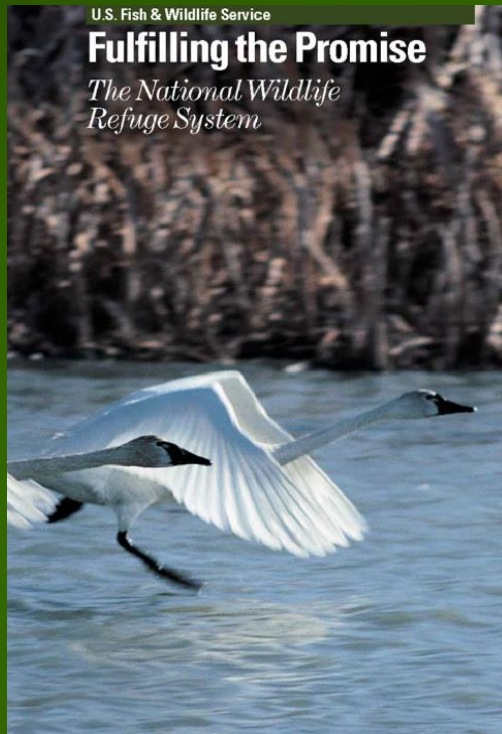
- Fisheries
- International Affairs
- Environmental Contaminants
- Habitat Conservation
- Ecological Services
- National Wetlands Inventory



Bill Wilen

# Refuge System Visions

- Fulfilling the Promise (2000-2010)
- Conserving the Future (2011-2024?) (sans bold ideas)



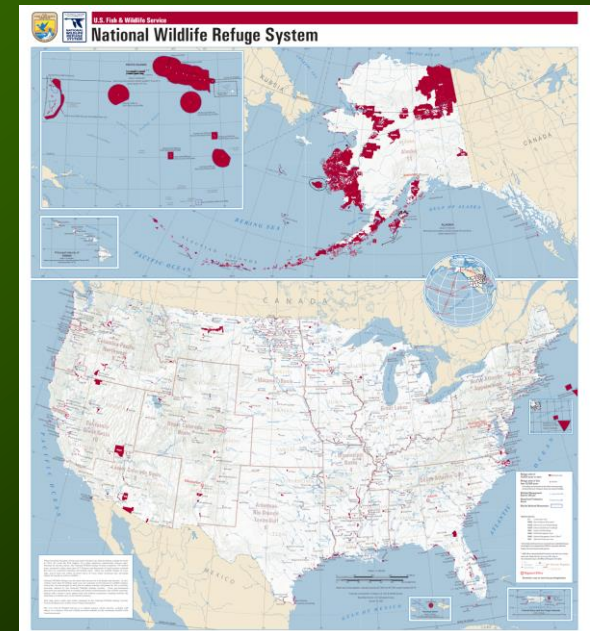
# Chapter 11. True Conservation: A Vision Worthy of a Director

- Recognized Episodes of Wildlife Decline
  - Overhunting
  - Habitat loss
  - Pollution
  - Climate change
- Decreasingly solved, and now #5
  - 800-pound gorilla of economic growth
  - Exacerbates or resuscitates earlier episodes



# True Conservation Themes

- Conservation ethic
- Steady-state economics
- Land conservation
- Ecological integrity
- Protecting the ESA
- Conserving biodiversity
- Climate change adaptation



# Steady-State Economics at FWS

- Director's leadership
  - Eschew win-win rhetoric
  - Explicate conflict
- Training of staff and partners
  - NCTC
  - All-hand meetings
- Publications
- Congressional testimony
- Upreach to Secretary of the Interior



# What Can We Do About the 800-Pound Gorilla?

- Doing *starts* with talking, planning, reforming
- Communicate with agency directors
  - Letters
  - Meetings
- Offer training
- Join PEER
- FOIA requests



Deb Haaland,  
Secretary of  
the Interior

# Writing to or Meeting With a Director or Secretary

- Concise to a fault
- No rocket science
- Demand leadership on raising awareness of “the conflict between economic growth and environmental protection”
- Leave a briefing, brochure, or book
- Request follow-up





# Agencies to Contact

- Interior

- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Park Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Geological Survey



- Agriculture

- Forest Service
- Agricultural Research Service



- EPA



- Commerce

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Marine Fisheries Service



- General Services Administration

# Same with Big Green



Environmental  
Defense  
Fund



NRDC



# “Acknowledgements”



# *Gag-Ordered No More*



(But Done for Now)