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Subject: : Conservation

Topic: : Just take the environment into consideration when voting for elected officials

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I don't mean to turn this into some sort of political diatribe but the environment is one of the main factors that I look at when considering to vote for a candidate. Please read this article because it simply shows how the laws enacted to protect our environment have been disabled to protect & serve special interests.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19448394/>

WASHINGTON - Sue Ellen Wooldridge, the 19th-ranking Interior Department official, arrived at her desk in Room 6140 a few months after Inauguration Day 2001. A phone message awaited her.

"This is Dick Cheney," said the man on her voice mail, Wooldridge recalled in an interview. "I understand you are the person handling this Klamath situation. Please call me at -- hmm, I guess I don't know my own number. I'm over at the White House."

Wooldridge wrote off the message as a prank. It was not. Cheney had reached far down the chain of command, on so unexpected a point of vice presidential concern, because he had spotted a political threat arriving on Wooldridge's desk.

In Oregon, a battleground state that the Bush-Cheney ticket had lost by less than half of 1 percent, drought-stricken farmers and ranchers were about to be cut off from the irrigation water that kept their cropland and pastures green. Federal biologists said the Endangered Species Act left the government no choice: The survival of two imperiled species of fish was at stake.

Law and science seemed to be on the side of the fish. Then the vice president stepped in.

First Cheney looked for a way around the law, aides said. Next he set in motion a process to challenge the science protecting the fish, according to a former Oregon congressman who lobbied for the farmers.

Because of Cheney's intervention, the government reversed itself and let the water flow in time to save the 2002 growing season, declaring that there was no threat to the fish. What followed was the largest fish kill the West had ever seen, with tens of thousands of salmon rotting on the banks of the Klamath River.

Characteristically, Cheney left no tracks.

The Klamath case is one of many in which the vice president took on a decisive role to undercut long-standing environmental regulations for the benefit of business.

By combining unwavering ideological positions -- such as the priority of economic interests over protected fish -- with a deep practical knowledge of the federal bureaucracy, Cheney has made an indelible mark on the

administration's approach to everything from air and water quality to the preservation of national parks and forests.

It was Cheney's insistence on easing air pollution controls, not the personal reasons she cited at the time, that led Christine Todd Whitman to resign as administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, she said in an interview that provides the most detailed account so far of her departure.

The vice president also pushed to make Nevada's Yucca Mountain the nation's repository for nuclear and radioactive waste, aides said, a victory for the nuclear power industry over those with long-standing safety concerns. And his office was a powerful force behind the White House's decision to rewrite a Clinton-era land-protection measure that put nearly a third of the national forests off limits to logging, mining and most development, former Cheney staff members said.

Cheney's pro-business drive to ease regulations, however, has often set the administration on a collision course with the judicial branch.

The administration, for example, is appealing the order of a federal judge who reinstated the forest protections after she ruled that officials didn't adequately study the environmental consequences of giving states more development authority.

And in April, the Supreme Court rejected two other policies closely associated with Cheney. It rebuffed the effort, ongoing since Whitman's resignation, to loosen some rules under the Clean Air Act. The court also rebuked the administration for not regulating greenhouse gases associated with global warming, issuing its ruling less than two months after Cheney declared that "conflicting viewpoints" remain about the extent of the human contribution to the problem.

In the latter case, Cheney made his environmental views clear in public. But with some notable exceptions, he generally has preferred to operate with stealth, aided by loyalists who owe him for their careers.

When the vice president got wind of a petition to list the cutthroat trout in Yellowstone National Park as a protected species, his office turned to one of his former congressional aides.

The aide, Paul Hoffman, landed his job as deputy assistant interior secretary for fish and wildlife after Cheney recommended him. In an interview, Hoffman said the vice president knew that listing the cutthroat trout would harm the recreational fishing industry in his home state of Wyoming and that he "followed the issue closely." In 2001 and again in 2006, Hoffman's agency declined to list the trout as threatened.

Hoffman also was well positioned to help his former boss with what Cheney aides said was one of the vice president's pet peeves: the Clinton-era ban on snowmobiling in national parks. "He impressed upon us that so many people enjoyed snowmobiling in the Tetons," former Cheney aide Ron Christie said.

With Cheney's encouragement, the administration lifted the ban in 2002, and Hoffman followed up in 2005 by writing a proposal to fundamentally change the way national parks are managed. That plan, which would have emphasized recreational use over conservation, attracted so much opposition from park managers and the public that the Interior Department withdrew it. Still, the Bush administration continues to press for expanded snowmobile access, despite numerous studies showing that the vehicles harm the parks' environment and polls showing majority support for the ban.

Hoffman, now in another job at the Interior Department, said Cheney never told him what to do on either issue -- he didn't have to.

"His genius," Hoffman said, is that "he builds networks and puts the right people in the right places, and then trusts them to make well-informed decisions that comport with his overall vision."