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Scorched Earth Public Trust Illuminates Presidential Proclamations

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

I imagined my second 2020 Mountainfilm Festival selection would be a Ken Burns-style documentary on our nationâ??s public lands. Director David Garrett Byars begins *Public Trust*, a Patagonia Films production, with a soft opening of luscious landscape photography accented by a voice-over narration of a man from Northern Alabama having relocated to a Western State pontificating on the joyous freedom of fishing and hunting in the vast open spaces in the West.

After the stunningly beautiful opening sequence, however, *Public Trust*, executively produced by Robert Redford, turned into a wild ride through the United States of Americaâ??s exploitation of pristine public lands with roguish, jackaloon demagogues sowing fear and distrust in any receptive audience at their disposal. Truth is damned as greed, hate-mongering, and sheer stupidity rear their disgusting, revolting, and reviling heads as the public is duped time and time again with misleading rhetoric from politicians and Trump Administration department heads. Alaskan public lands are salivatingly seen as gravy trains with stores of oil, gas, uranium, and copper as mining revenues traditionally have been dispersed to Alaskans with royalty checks. As one commentator noted, â??itâ??s akin to a heroin addict getting a fix.â?•

Utilizing recent news footage, present-day interviews with tribal leaders, historians, government whistleblowers, journalists, added perspective and insight emanate into the bold and brazen Trump Administration political appointees to the United States Department of the Interior. The once protected public lands are being moved under individual statesâ?? control to maintain â?? although the states cannot afford to protect and maintain the lands for public use. As a result, much of the land is being sold to the highest bidders, those with the deepest pockets. As one particularly ignorant pol snidely commented, â??just let me know what my piece of the public lands is so I can sell it.â?•

The newest Secretary of the Interior, David Barnhart, has relocated his office into the same building with Exxon and numerous oil and gas mining corporations after Ryan Zinke, who now serves as â??an advisorâ?• to Turnberry Solutions, a lobbying firm stacked with former Trump administration advisers and campaign aides, resigned in 2019 among numerous ethics violations. The powerful extractive

industries, backed by similar regulation-slashing state legislators and federal agencies, believe public lands across America should be unlocked for mining and exploration with little if any, regard for the environmental scarring and cultural diminishing effects. And, these entities say whatever it takes to get their way.

Interestingly, in closing *Public Trust* Byars leaves the viewer with pertinent questions about the future of Americaâ??s public lands. For instance, who will have unfettered access to these lands? Because as it stands right now it appears the oil and gas industries, in conjunction with mining operations, will solicit more revenue-generating activities from the American people. Imagine futuristic concessionaires charging fees to take you and your family to the mountaintop for sunset while the surrounding lands are stripped until all profit has been removed, and the lands permanently abandoned in an unrestored, highly toxic state. Itâ??s the Trump Administrationâ??s vision of the new American Way of Life.

Public Trust is a very-well researched and thought-provoking documentary. For me as a person who has enjoyed public lands immensely, the film is revealing not only from a cultural and environmental perspective but even more so from a political perspective. Highly recommended.

Category

1. Documentary
2. Mountainfilm

Tags

1. Film Festival

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