

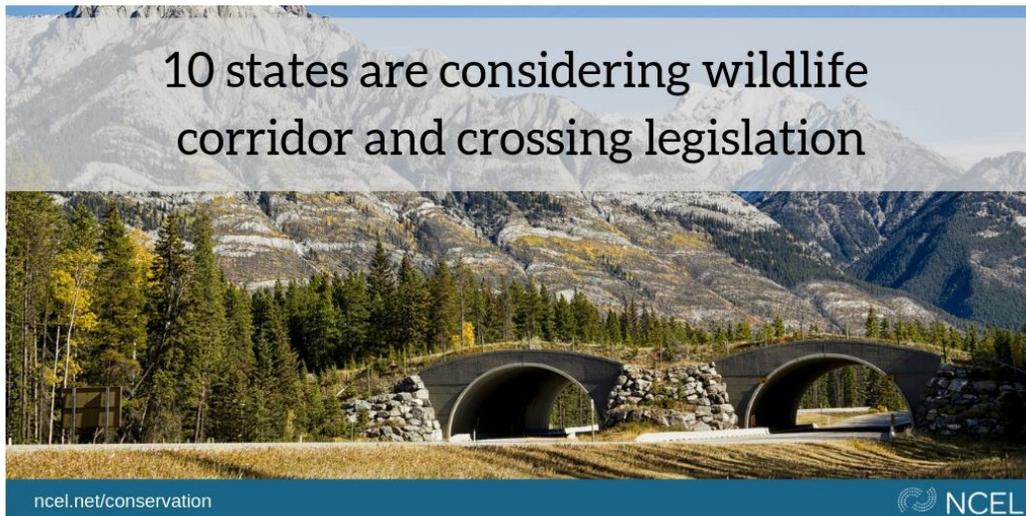
National Caucus of Environmental Legislators

By Karen Schumacher | July 8, 2019



The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators ([NCEL](#)) is a "nonpartisan network of legislative champions to protect, conserve, and improve the natural and human environment" for "advancing sound policy in the states...champions who can advocate on behalf of the environment, develop shared strategies, and educate their colleagues about coalition building and opposition tactics." Participation "is by invitation... regardless of political affiliation", and "does not lobby". Why would they need to lobby if they have legislative members to advance their objectives? After all, the NCEL "empowers state lawmakers to advance a pro-environment and conservation agenda." The NCEL is governed by a Board of [Directors](#).

According to the [NCEL](#) website, the following Idaho legislators are members. Rep. Elaine [Smith](#) (D) Idaho Minority Caucus Chair; Rep. Ilana [Rubel](#) (D) Assistant Minority Leader; Rep. Mat [Erpelding](#) (D) House Minority Leader; Rep. Melissa [Wintrow](#) (D); Rep. Paulette [Jordan](#) (D) NACNCSL Chair of Energy, Environment, Transportation; Rep. Phylis [King](#) (D); Rep. Sally [Toone](#) (D); Rep. Sue [Chew](#) (D); Representative John [McCrostie](#) (D); and former Rep. Hy [Kloc](#) (D). On the Senate side is Sen. Maryanne [Jordan](#) (D) Senate Minority Caucus Chair and Sen. Michelle [Stennett](#) Senate Minority Leader. Not one of their legislative biographies mentions their NCEL membership.



A few issues NCEL focuses on are Climate and [Energy](#), [Conservation](#), Environmental [Health](#), and Environmental [Justice](#). Part of the NCEL Conservation agenda includes wildlife [corridors](#), land conservation, and [support](#) for public lands, with a special [poll](#) on what Idahoans think about conservation. NCEL policy [options](#) include "interagency coordination", support for "private land conservation" meaning conservation easements, [rejecting](#) "state land grabs" and to "establish state parks". Reference is also made for the need to double land [conservation](#) by [2030](#). There is also a [link](#) to the Center for Large Landscape Conservation: A Strategic Framework for Policy and Action

report regarding wildlife corridors, however that link is broken but the report, written by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy can be found [here](#). This report covers many aspects of large landscape conservation.

These legislators, Rep. Jordan, Rep. Wintrow, former Rep. John [Gannon](#) (D), Rep. King, Rep. Erpelding, and Rep. Rubel all signed a [letter](#) to President Trump in 2017 [opposing](#) his intent to reduce the size of national monuments.

Sen. Jordan, Sen. Stenett, Rep. Kloc, Rep. McCrostie, Rep. Chew, Rep. Erpelding, Rep. Jordan, Rep. King, Rep. Smith, Rep. Toone, Rep. Rubel, Rep. Wintrow, and former Sen. Cherie Buckner-[Webb](#) (D), now Assistant Senate Minority [Leader](#), also signed a [statement](#) opposing President Trump's [withdrawal](#) from the Paris Climate Treaty in 2017.

This all begs the question as to who or what is leading this group of legislators, just how are their issues decided upon? Given the identified issues, it doesn't take much effort to find out.

The United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) "is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development...and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment", providing leadership and partnership in caring for the environment. Their topics include climate [change](#) and [energy](#), [forests](#) and [ecosystems](#), environmental rights and [governance](#), and of course [implementation](#) of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Among its many partners for implementation of these objectives, including the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the [NCEL](#). However, there is no mention of this partnership on the NCEL website.

So there you have it, UN influence over state policies through our NCEL Idaho legislators. Who are they really representing, the UN or their constituents? Or perhaps their constituents elect them for the purposes of advancing UN objectives. Does either group know this is happening through their NCEL membership? Fortunately at this point, out of 105 [legislators](#), it is a very small percentage. But, since part of their NCEL responsibility is to "[educate their colleagues about coalition building and opposition tactics](#)", how much influence will they have in bringing other legislators into their fold? Another reason to fully investigate all legislators for their activity, including what they hide from the public.



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