

**Jackson, Ryan**

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**From:** Jackson, Ryan  
**Sent:** Friday, May 18, 2018 9:17 AM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** Re: Will Trump's pick to run EPA in California show up for work?

Well, Oklahomans know what a bull wrangler is. If that's what you are, that's what we need. Welcome to the EPA.

Ryan Jackson  
Chief of Staff  
U.S. EPA  
(b) (6)

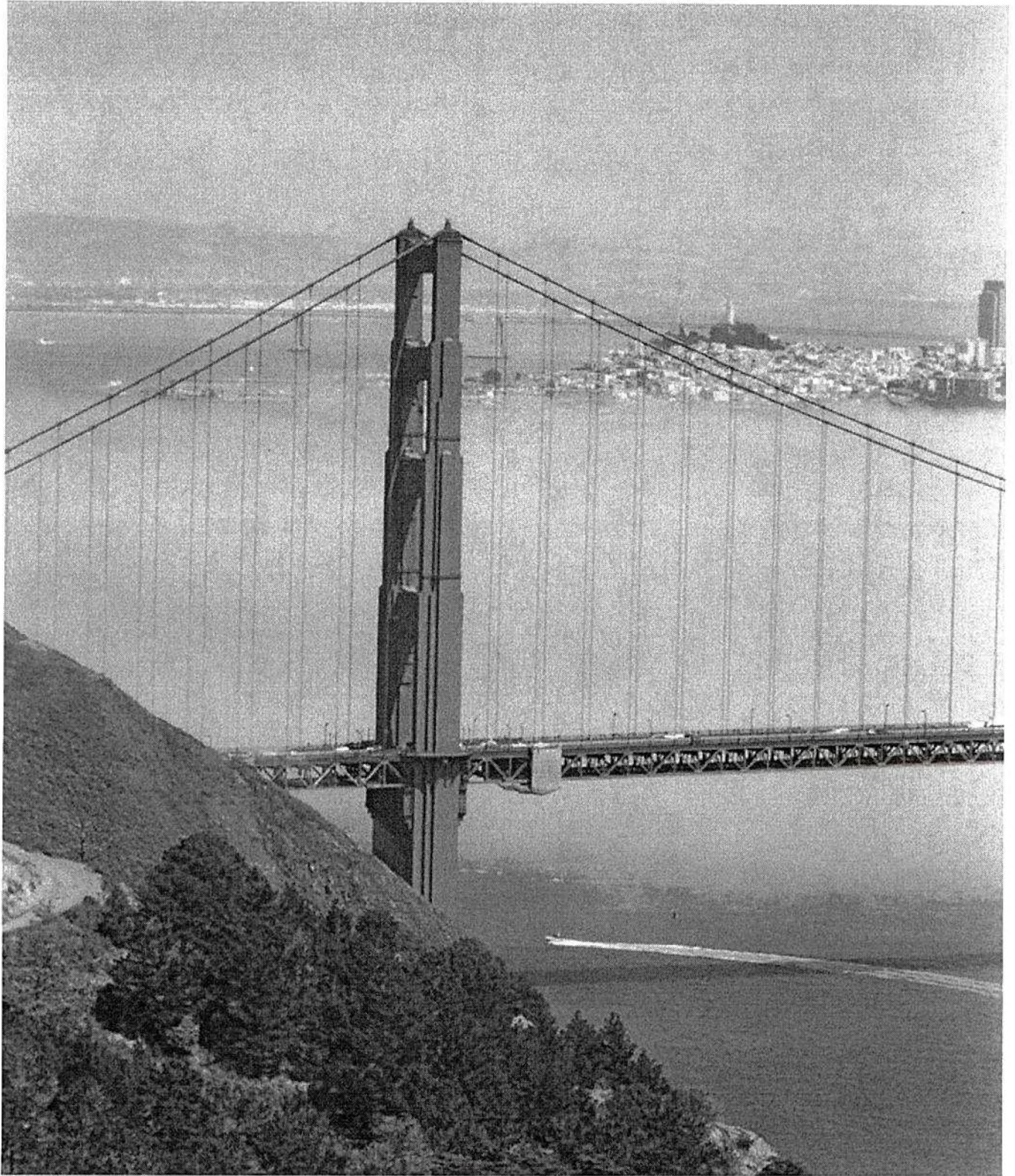
On May 17, 2018, at 11:46 PM, (b) (6) wrote:

Almost funny. I am sure our distractors would love it if I didn't show up to work. On the contrary I look forward to showing up 24/7  
7 days a week 354 days a year non-stop.  
I am relentless.  
Best regards,  
Mike

<http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-epa-pick-san-francisco-20180517-story.html>

## **Will Trump's pick to run EPA in California show up for work?**

By [Tony Barboza](#) and [Evan Halper](#)



The Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco skyline from the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

The White House may have finally found someone to take on the stress of overseeing President Trump's fossil fuel-friendly environmental agenda in the heart of hostile territory: California and nearby states.

But there's one glaring problem.

The guy officials have queued up to lead the Environmental Protection Agency's headquarters in San Francisco doesn't want to live anywhere near San Francisco.

That doesn't appear to be stopping the administration from hiring Santa Barbara County GOP stalwart Mike Stoker, a politico well positioned to annoy the powers that be in California.

He credits himself with conceiving the "lock her up" chant that Trump rallygoers shouted in their rage against Hillary Clinton. He was the spokesman for one of the state's most embattled oil companies. He questions the scientific consensus on climate change.

None of those things are disqualifying, even if some in California think they should be. But Stoker's refusal to work in the liberal City by the Bay has put the administration in a pickle. Instead he wants to oversee the 700 or so enforcement officers, scientists, researchers and others guiding environmental protection in California and nearby states from a small, sparsely staffed Los Angeles satellite office.

That's a big ask in an agency already reeling from investigations into the travel habits of its leaders, including the taxpayer-funded flights back home to Oklahoma by EPA chief Scott Pruitt, some of which were in the first-class cabin.

California Sen. Dianne Feinstein fired off a letter to Pruitt on Thursday warning of the consequences of allowing Stoker to be an "absentee" chief of EPA Region 9. She demanded to know how the arrangement could possibly work, and what costs taxpayers would bear.

The EPA weeks ago alerted Stoker allies in Santa Barbara that his appointment was imminent. But no official announcement has come as his backers, including EPA political appointees, scramble to figure out how he can run a large San Francisco-based bureaucracy without showing up there, according to staffers inside the agency who spoke on condition that their names not be used. Some longtime career officials at the EPA are deeply skeptical, and warn such an arrangement could create yet more ethics troubles for the agency.

The last time a regional EPA chief tried juggling work at the San Francisco headquarters with trips home to Southern California, federal investigators discovered some \$69,000 in flights they said may have been inappropriately billed

to taxpayers. That was during the late years of the George W. Bush administration. Feinstein reminded Pruitt about that investigation, and questioned if his EPA is heeding the lessons learned from it.

Stoker, a former Santa Barbara county supervisor who made his entry into politics in the 1980s as a strident opponent of a ballot measure limiting offshore oil development, did not return calls and emails. A statement from the EPA said only, "we have no personnel announcements to make at this time."

Environmental groups joined Feinstein in expressing bewilderment that the region chief may keep living in Carpinteria, which is hours from even the Los Angeles office.

"You can't do that job without face-to-face contact with the scientists, engineers, lawyers, and other professionals in Region 9's office who do the heavy lifting," said Eric Schaeffer, a former chief of civil enforcement at EPA who now runs the nonprofit Environmental Integrity Project. "Phoning it in is not going to work."

Finding a leader for Region 9 has been vexing for the Trump administration. One ally of industry after another rejected its overtures to lead the feisty office of career professionals who have little enthusiasm for the Trump agenda. The pay hardly compares to what potential recruits are making in the private sector, the cost of living in San Francisco is crushing and the neighbors are not particularly hospitable to folks carrying the "Make America Great Again" torch.

For such reasons, Stoker seemed a good fit. A Trump delegate at the 2016 Republican National Convention who delights in mocking liberals on social media, Stoker is a rare commodity on the California coast: a resilient Republican.

"He's a bull wrangler, and that's exactly what we need," said Andy Caldwell, executive director of the Santa Barbara County Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business. Caldwell learned of the coming appointment when the EPA sought a quote from him to put in its news release. He said Stoker is skilled at brokering deals among disparate interests.

Not all Stoker's fellow Republicans are as impressed. Dale Francisco, a former chair of the Santa Barbara County GOP, wrote several senators in March to urge they reject Stoker's appointment for a different high-level job in the administration, running the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Francisco said in an interview that Stoker has never managed a major organization.

"You can be the world's most wonderful guy, but without any management experience, you should not be managing as large an organization as EPA Region 9. Period," Francisco said in an interview. "How is he going to manage this agency in a state where elected leadership is utterly opposed to Trump and get anything done?"

Other Republicans attributed Francisco's attacks to bitterness over Stoker's role advising the local GOP party in its dispute with Francisco's girlfriend, who was fired as the party's executive director. The woman brought her complaints of discrimination and retaliation to state labor investigators, who declined to take any action.

Stoker's record suggests he would be an unflinching champion of the rollbacks of fuel economy standards, air quality rules and other federal environmental protections that are riling California's leaders.

He criticized lawsuits that California municipalities filed against the oil industry for their role in climate change, telling the Santa Barbara News-Press last year that they ignore "the conflicting evidence about global warming, and as we all know, there is conflicting evidence."

One of the oil companies in the area most despised by environmentalists, Santa Maria-based Greka Oil & Gas, which has a history of regulatory troubles, spills and violations at its California facilities, was represented by Stoker.

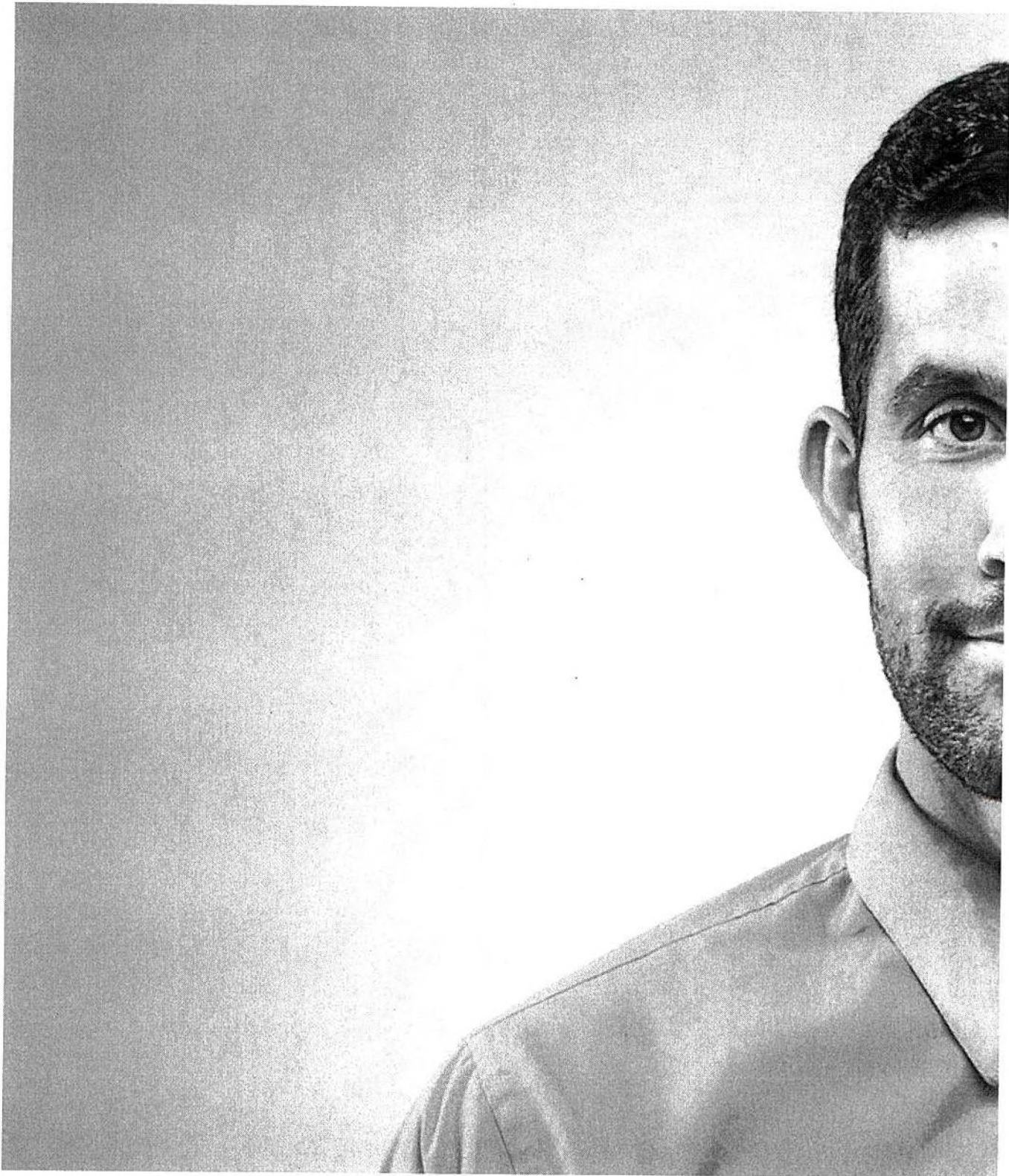
That company, now known as HVI Cat Canyon Inc., has been in a years-long legal fight with the EPA and federal prosecutors over pollution from its operations. In 2011 the Department of Justice [filed suit](#) alleging a series of spills at the company's California facilities violated state and federal environmental laws. Last month, the company was hit with a \$12.5-million fine by state regulators over violations at an oil field in Orange County.

Stoker's alignment with forces long at odds with the EPA makes him a particularly troubling pick for environmentalists. "Once again," said Linda Krop, chief counsel of the Environmental Defense Center in Santa Barbara, "it's putting someone in charge who actually opposes the mission of the agency."

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Tony Barboza is a reporter who covers air quality and the environment with a focus on Southern California. He has been on staff at the Los Angeles Times since 2006, is a graduate of Pomona College and completed a Ted Scripps Fellowship in Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado.



