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## Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility

*Protecting Employees Who Protect Our Environment*



### News Releases

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#### **CHAMBERS FILES FEDERAL LAWSUIT** — Seeking Damages for Destruction of Exonerating Documents

Washington, DC —Teresa Chambers today filed suit in federal district court on the grounds that the Department of Interior illegally destroyed documents showing charges used as the basis to remove her as Chief of the U.S. Park Police last year were trumped up, according to the complaint released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Chambers is suing to finally force the release of exculpatory documents or, if they are not produced, to obtain damages to compensate for their illegal destruction.

The key document is a performance evaluation of Chambers prepared by Deputy Park Service Director Donald Murphy, who later charged Chambers with misconduct relating to breaches of chain-of-command and other performance-related issues. According to Murphy's sworn testimony in depositions taken prior to Chambers' first hearing seeking reinstatement, his evaluation covered the periods during which her supposed misconduct occurred but his evaluation did not mention the issues or incidents that were later used as a partial basis for her firing last July.

“For Deputy Park Service Director Don Murphy the question is which time was he telling the truth – when he said he prepared an evaluation or when he said he has no record of the evaluation,” stated PEER General Counsel Richard Condit, who filed the suit on Chambers' behalf. “If Murphy's evaluation of Chief Chambers supported their charges, why have they been hiding it?”

The Chambers suit is filed under the Privacy Act which entitles individuals to see records about them maintained by federal agencies, particularly records created as part of a federal employee's personnel file. The Privacy Act provides for monetary damages. Chambers is suing the Interior Department because it is the parent agency of the National Park Service.

At the same time in a different forum, Teresa Chambers is also seeking reinstatement. Her appeal is now before the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board. Two of the six administrative charges that the Interior Department had leveled against Chief Chambers were thrown out at the trial level. If produced, Murphy's evaluation could knock out two of the remaining four charges. The remaining two charges involve an interview Chief Chambers gave to The Washington Post, and those charges will also be subject to First Amendment and other separate federal court challenges if they are upheld at this stage.

“Little by little, the bogus charges leveled against Chief Chambers are dropping away,” Condit added, noting that Chief Chambers was stripped of her badge, credentials and side arm and marched out of Interior headquarters under armed escort on December 5, 2003. “The wheels of justice turn slowly, but they are turning.”

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