**A female US Forest Service employee who reported on a sexual assault by the then Chief of USFS has been terminated.**

*By Michael Volpe*

Shannon Reed first described widespread sexual harassment at the USFS when she was featured in my article in [The Daily Caller in November 2017.](https://dailycaller.com/2017/11/20/us-forest-service-finds-34-cases-of-sexual-harassment-after-internal-review/)

She then said- and reiterated now- that she and other females at the USFS was required to perform oral sex to get good assignments, be chosen for training, and to attend conferences.

More recently, she was featured in a [segment of Dateline](https://www.nbcnews.com/dateline/video/under-fire-1311215683836?v=raila&), which also explored widespread sexual harassment at the USFS.

On March 1, 2018, she also testified as part of a fact-finding investigation by the US Department of Agriculture Office of the Civil Rights, Labor and Employment Law Division, which was investigating sexual harassment allegations against then USFS Chief Tony Tooke.

Reed then described how Tooke sexually assaulted at a restaurant during her employee orientation in October 2016: “And we were coming into the restaurant, you know, people were just kind of coming into the foyer and were waiting for a table. And that’s when he grabbed my butt.”

“I was scared,” Reed said when she first learned [Tooke had been named Chief in September 2017](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Tooke).

The investigation into Tooke was triggered by a [January 2018 article in The Daily Caller](https://dailycaller.com/2018/01/05/ex-employee-says-forest-service-chief-had-relationship-with-woman-in-his-chain-of-command/), which accused Tooke of an inappropriate sexual relationship with a subordinate a decade ago.

[Tooke retired on](https://dailycaller.com/2018/03/08/forest-service-chief-tony-tooke-resigns-sexual-harassment-reports/) March 7, 2018, [after PBS- in another story about widespread sexual harassment at the USFS](https://www.pbs.org/video/forest-service-1519930453/)- mentioned the investigation against Tooke.

By retiring, Tooke maintains his pension.

According to an internal document, Reed was first suspended for a week on March 25, 2018.

“That’s no coincidence,” Reed said, referring to Tooke’s retirement and her suspension coming shortly after her testimony.

Reed said she was repeatedly sanctioned and set up for failure until she was terminated by email on October 10, 2018, with the USFS claiming her performance had deteriorated.

Reed has worked at the USFS since February 2015 and each of her prior performance reviews were “fully successful”, the highest grade, according to previous reviews provided.

On Dateline, Reed stated, “It’s not a fear of retaliation; it’s a reality. You will be retaliated against.”

**A Culture of Sexual Harassment**

Reed said she’s experienced sexual harassment at the USFS since her first day.

“On February 22, 2015, I began working for the Forest Service at the Supervisor’s Office in Region 8 in Montgomery, Alabama. It was a very sexually hostile work environment to include an assault by former Chief Tony Tooke.” Reed said in an internal document.

Reed said after asking to be moved repeatedly she was given an assignment working in the Region 3 Central Office in Albuquerque, New Mexico working for Francis [“Jack” Triepke, the Regional Ecologist for USFS.](https://www.fs.fed.us/air/contacts_triepke.htm)

Almost immediately, Triepke sexually harassed Reed, she said.

Within a month of arriving, Triepke asked Reed to a bar and to a hot tub resort; when she denied his advances, Triepke escalated.

“He yelled at me. He screamed at me; he spit in my face,” Reed said.

“On May 18, 2017, Mr. Triepke yelled at me over the phone while I was attending the National Air Program Meeting in Juneau, Alaska. Witnesses heard Mr. Triepke yelling at me.” Reed said in an internal document.

Despite the repeated harassment, Triepke continues to be Reed’s supervisor.

Triepke denied he ever harassed Reed, “I cannot represent my agency nor can I provide details of the ongoing investigation, other than to say the allegations are false and repetitive of previous complaints/investigation from which myself and fellow employees were cleared of *all* allegations based on comprehensive documentation and witness statements.”

The investigations Triepke referred to were internal investigations, which have been criticized by harassment victims for years.

Not only did Reed provide a detailed timeline of events, but she told Lesa Donnelley at the time, herself sent an email describing the events to superiors when it happened, but Donnelley also sent several emails as well.

Lesa Donnelley first filed a class action lawsuit against the USFS in the 1990s, accusing the agency then of widespread sexual harassment, and she now advocates on behalf of female USFS employees.

Donnelley said both sent the emails because: “The courts/EEOC have held that an employee must report harassment to management and avail themselves of the policy and procedures to address it in order to sustain the claims of harassment.

“Each email is considered a memorandum of record, i.e. it is on the record that we reported the harassment and asked that it be addressed.  At no time did any official respond to my emails.  The judge will look at these emails and ask the agency if they responded, i.e. deny that it occurred or provide a legitimate management reason to explain why the incidents occurred.  If they didn't respond, the record stands as evidence of harassment.  AT NO TIME, did any management official respond to any of our emails.”



**The Retaliation**

Reed said she did not report the abuse, fearing the retaliation which occurred.

She said her case is different than most because another USFS employee first filed an internal complaint, known as a HART complaint, on August 31, 2017.

She said Triepke and the USFS have retaliated against her since.

“On November 9, 2017, Mr. Triepke yelled at me and threatened to fire me during her (sic) performance appraisal. He did this even though I received a Fully Successful performance evaluation for FY2017.” Reed said in an internal document.

On January 25, 2018, Triepke handed her a “Notice of Proposed Suspension.”

Reed said her movements were then restricted, “I was under house arrest in my cubicle,” Reed said, “They told me I had to do all these things, but I could not move (from her cubicle).”

After her suspension, Reed said it was made clear, the USFS was setting her up for failure.

“The decision had already been made to remove me from service.” Reed said in the same internal document.

Reed told me that it was Sandra Watts, a [Deputy Regional Forester](https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r3/news-events/?cid=STELPRD3833166) in Region 3, who told her Reed’s termination was pre-determined.

“On April 24, 2018, I met with Ms. Sandra Watts. Ms. Watts told me that she was the one who gave me the 7-day suspension. She also told me that she did not know anything about my claims of ongoing harassment and workplace violence from Mr. Triepke.” Reed said further. “I had meticulously laid out everything in my response to the proposed suspension. I asked her how she could not know if she had read my response. She changed her story and said she had read it. This was very suspect. I question why she is the one now deciding to remove me.”

In the Decision Letter (to terminate Reed) which Watts wrote on October 10, 2018, Watts noted that she met with Reed repeatedly to assess Reed’s performance.

The two met on June 4, June 11, June 18, June 25, July 3, July 10, July 23, and July 30, 2018, according to Watts letter.

Watts directed all inquiries to the USFS media department, which declined to answer questions related to her role.

Reed told me that none of this is coincidental, but blatant reprisal.

“To be clear, I am hereby alleging that the action to remove me based on my performance is illegal reprisal against me.”

Others agree with her.

Lesa Donnelley for one.

She said that since Tooke was forced to retire the USFS has increased retaliation.

“Washington Office officials were publicly embarrassed and they're angry at us, exemplified by - refusal to address complaints of harassment; HART inquiries performed on the women after they report harassment; trumped up charges of misconduct and poor performance; suspensions and removals - it has all increased.  I've had as many contacts from women since March as I had when I filed the women's class complaint in 1995.” Donnelley said.

Denice Rice first spoke of being persistently sexually harassed by her superior, Mike Beckett[, to this reporter in 2014](https://dailycaller.com/2014/02/28/lawsuit-obama-admin-failing-to-address-rampant-sexual-abuse-in-forest-service/); she’s since [testified in Congress in 2016](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bmu-E9P1664) and participated with Dateline.

Beckett, Rice said, repeatedly sexted her, made lewd comments, and would even grope her.

“Denice is lying,” Beckett told Dateline.

Beckett, like Tooke, was allowed to retire before an investigation into his conduct was completed.

She said her career has stalled since coming forward; she’s been passed over numerous times and even had her qualifications manipulated, so she would not receive a promotion.

The US Forest Service declined to comment stating, “The USDA Forest Service does not comment on personnel actions.”

When a story about Tooke ran in The Daily Caller, [the USFS provided a statement which defended Tooke, by referencing his personnel file](https://dailycaller.com/2018/01/05/ex-employee-says-forest-service-chief-had-relationship-with-woman-in-his-chain-of-command/): “Tony Tooke has a clean personnel record and there is nothing in his employment record reflecting complaints against him of this nature."