

Leah Sheppard

Allegations of Sexual Harassment in the Social Media Era

Heather Fuong, assistant director of development and communications for the Seattle office of Preserve, a national conservation agency,ⁱ sat at her desk on a rainy Thursday morning and pushed in on her temples. She could feel her pulse throbbing. She had just received an email from one of her direct reports who was serving on the hiring committee for a middle-management vacancy in her department. The e-mail contained information she had been dreading: the hiring committee wanted to offer the position to Marcus Holland. The trouble was that Fuong had just uncovered information suggesting that Holland might have sexually harassed his female colleagues in the past. The hiring committee expected to hear back from Fuong about next steps before the end of the workday. So, now what?

Preserve

Founded in 1963, Preserve was a private, non-profit, national nature conservation agency with offices in Seattle and New York City (NYC). The Seattle office, Preserve's headquarters, had 159 employees while the New York office had 109.

As the largest land conservation organization in the United States, Preserve protected nearly 35 million acres of wilderness and other property across the country. Preserve used monetary donations to purchase land and sometimes received land through bequeathment or conservation agreements with governments to protect ecologically significant regions.

Preserve also partnered with local agencies, activist groups, Indigenous peoples, and government agencies to fund sustainability projects, including research, removing invasive species, reintroducing species, cleaning up trash and oil spills along rivers and coastlines, and restoring degraded shorelines. In a typical year, Preserve applied about 82 percent of its received donations to land purchases and sustainability projects, with the remaining amount used on overhead and administration.

ⁱ Preserve is a fictional organization.