



30x30 Conservation Agenda

A bold vision for the future: Protect 30 percent of lands and waters in the United States by 2030 to meet the challenge of climate change and provide space for wildlife and communities to thrive.

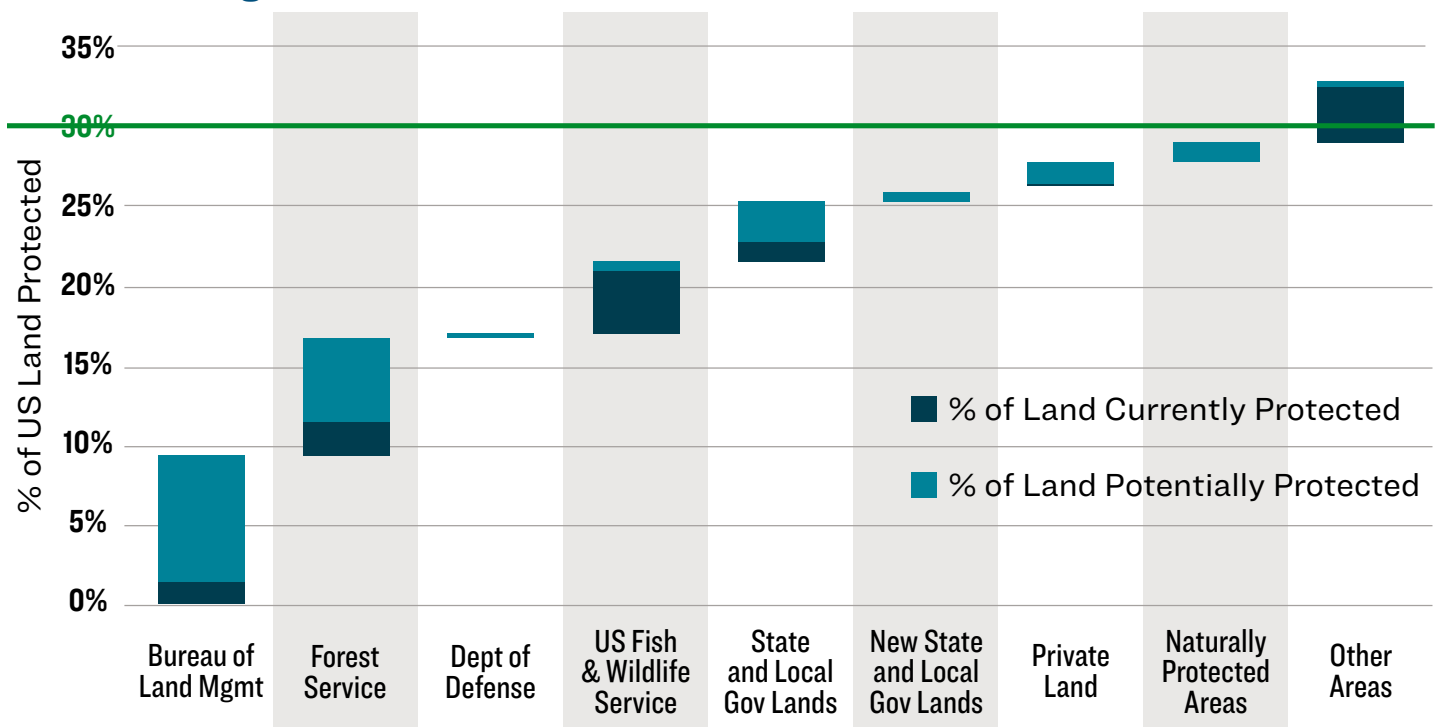
Background

Flourishing natural areas and parks are indispensable to people's health, prosperity, cultural traditions, and enjoyment. They also play a critical role in combating the climate and extinction crises. The Sierra Club, with great success so far, has protected over 200 million acres of public lands and waters across the United States, building power every step of the way to protect additional threatened landscapes. And yet it is clear that with the crises in front of us, we need to do even more to combat these unprecedented threats, including moving beyond historic conservation models to a more inclusive approach that promotes frontline and Indigenous leadership. In the past 40 years, wildlife populations have declined by 60 percent due to habitat loss, climate change, and other environmental factors.¹ Meanwhile, in the US alone, we are currently losing a football field-sized patch of nature every 30 seconds to industrialization, totaling one million

acres each year. We also know that fossil fuels extracted from our public lands are responsible for a quarter of our national greenhouse gas emissions,² and this is only being exacerbated by the Trump administration's willingness to offer up more than five million acres of our public lands to the fossil fuel industry.

There is still hope, but we must act now, and we must be bold. We know that to combat the climate crisis, we have to quickly decarbonize our economy and draw down significant amounts of carbon pollution from the atmosphere. Protecting public lands can help us do both. Keeping fossil fuels in the ground on public lands will help us move beyond a dirty-fuels economy. We can also use public lands to sequester carbon and decrease existing carbon pollution. With smart land conservation and management practices, we could offset 21 percent of US greenhouse gas emissions.³ All of this would also help preserve much-needed habitat for increasingly imperiled wildlife.

30x30 Building Blocks



We can achieve 30x30 in multiple ways. This figure shows one pathway that combines greater protection for federal, state, local, and private lands. Created with data supplied by the Center for American Progress USGS, PAD-US <https://www.usgs.gov/core-science-systems/science-analytics-and-synthesis/gap/science/protected-areas>

Path to Protection

Leading conservation scientists, Indigenous leaders, and international organizations like the UN International Convention on Biodiversity say that in order to stop the dual extinction and climate crises and preserve clean water, clean air, and a stable climate, we need to protect 50 percent of the planet by 2050. To meet that goal in the US, we need to protect 30 percent of our remaining undeveloped natural areas by 2030. It's an ambitious goal, but one that's achievable. This 30x30 Conservation Agenda will mitigate the climate crisis by providing carbon sequestration in large protected blocks of land, by connecting habitat for wildlife to thrive in a climate-changing world, and by boosting local economies driven by outdoor recreation. Plus, with 60 percent of the US population getting their drinking water from public lands, we'll be securing clean, reliable drinking water for communities across the country.

Our work to achieve the 30x30 target will energize and inspire conservation action as we build a movement that embodies the values and principles of a more expansive conservation ethic. Ultimately, we are building a movement powerful enough to change how we think about and relate to our natural world—shifting the balance of power to consistently and robustly protect natural spaces and ecosystems in a holistic manner.

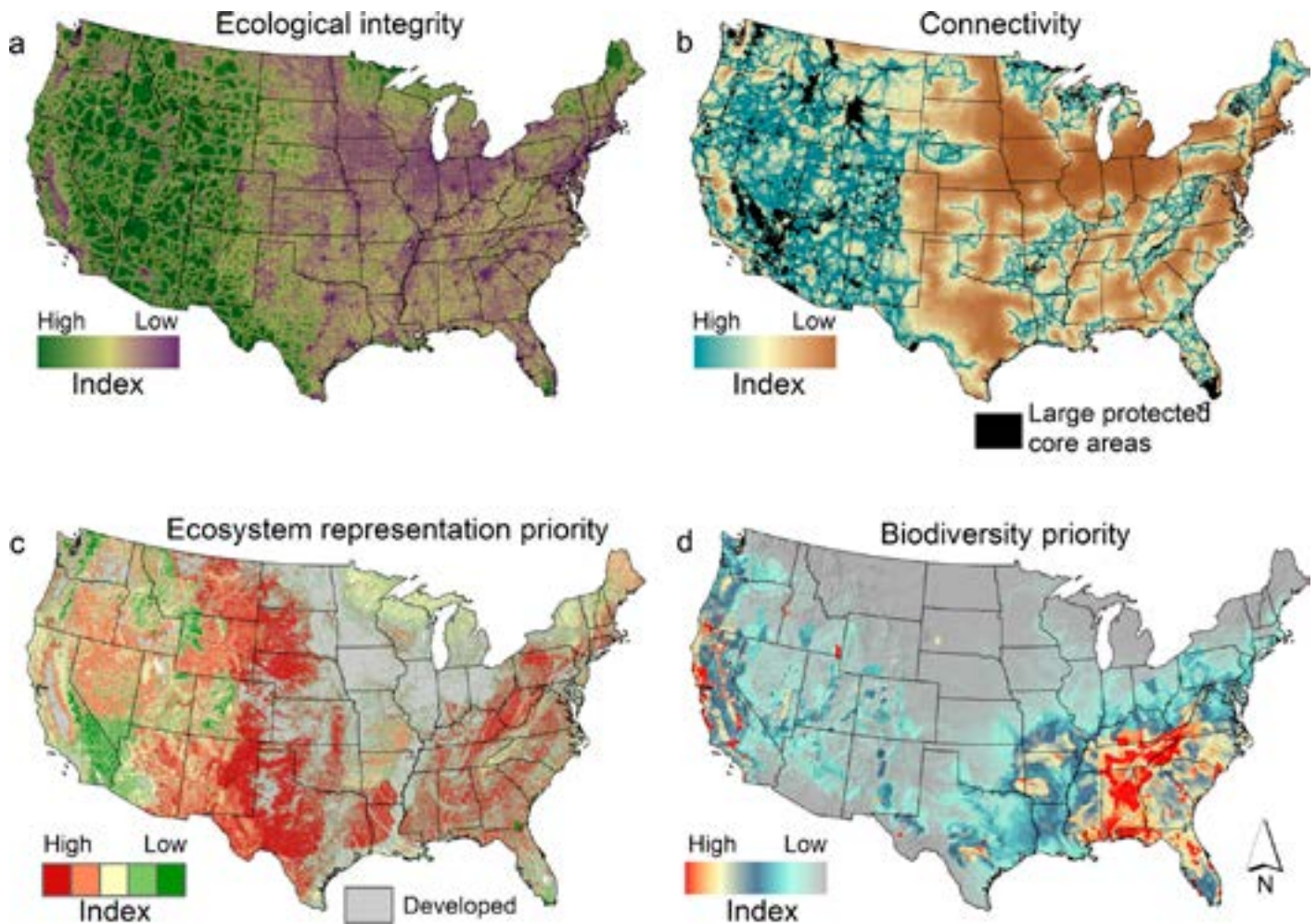
One way we are helping build this powerful movement is

by forging partnerships with Native and frontline communities—those most impacted by and dependent on public lands. These partnerships will help guide prioritization and successful execution of our 30x30 vision. Key to our ability to form transformative partnerships with Native communities is our commitment to Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, values that we uphold in the Our Wild America Campaign and all the work we do.

We Can Get There

Sixty percent of lands in the continental US are in a largely natural condition or could plausibly be restored to a natural condition. Further, the US ranks as one of the top five countries in the world for remaining wilderness-quality lands. With an ambitious agenda and strong leadership, we can still conserve a substantial portion of remaining wildlife and natural areas.

Protecting 30 percent of US lands and waters by 2030 will require immense political will, creative advocacy strategies, aggressive policy-making, and an energized grassroots movement. But the policies that need to be implemented are neither complicated nor entirely new. Federal, state, and local governments have an extraordinary range of conservation powers—from the executive reach of the president to the zoning authorities of city councils—and we'll need to utilize the full range of protections available to meet our goals.



Priority landscapes can be found across the country. We will design our conservation campaigns to ensure we protect a broad range of high-value landscapes that provide key habitat for a wide variety of species. (Ecological Applications, Volume 27, Issue 4, Pages 1050-1056, First published 6 March 2017, DOI: (10.1002/eap.1527))

Principles of 30x30 Conservation Campaign

30x30 is an achievable national goal to which all parts of the country can contribute in varying ways. As we continue our existing conservation campaigns and develop new campaigns, we will prioritize four key conservation strategies:

1. Protect and restore large, intact landscapes and wildlife corridors
2. Implement land conservation strategies that contribute to climate solutions
3. Support the conservation and stewardship vision and priorities of Tribal Nations
4. Conserve more open lands and parks near communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities

We will focus campaigns in areas with high conservation values, which include biodiversity, value as migration corridors, strong ecological integrity, and ecosystem representation. Protecting large, connected landscapes will give

our wildlife room to roam and thrive. This work will build on our existing campaigns, such as our effort to protect critical salmon habitat across the Northwest with our Wild Olympics campaign and our advocacy for America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, which would conserve landscapes across Utah.

We will also prioritize campaigns in places that are at the nexus of land conservation and climate change, such as forests with high carbon-storage values and landscapes threatened by oil and gas development. There is significant opportunity to conserve national public lands controlled by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service (USFS). Currently only 14 percent of BLM lands are protected, and 90 percent of the open lands are available for leasing by the oil and gas industry. Our goal is to institute policies that would dramatically increase the amount of conservation on these lands, such as presidential designations of national monuments and a moratorium on oil and gas leasing and development. USFS lands are in a similar state; significant conservation could



The Role of the Sierra Club

Conserving more of our public lands and managing them to sustain wildlife and natural systems is our best chance to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and ensure we leave a livable world for future generations. Protecting 30 percent of the US by 2030 represents the kind of transformative change that is needed to safeguard nature in America. This is the work the Sierra Club was built for. We embrace the intersection between a healthy environment and healthy communities, so we engage and support residents on the frontlines of social justice and environmental challenges. In our work to secure protection of public lands and block the rampant expansion of the fossil fuel industry, we work in partnership with Native Nations in each region. We will continue to foster these relationships and bring grassroots power to bear to achieve conservation victories. To achieve this goal, we will build campaigns from the ground up—engaging our chapters, organizers, and vast grassroots network. We will work with local communities to determine critical local conservation actions and build local campaigns that can collectively lead to a nationwide conservation vision. In addition, we will use our leadership in Washington, DC, and state capitals across the country to ensure that key decision-makers are pushing for a 30 percent by 2030 conservation vision. Science confirms that we can and must protect wildlands to safeguard our future. With the nation's dependence on the natural world growing, now is the time to confront and reverse the rapid decline of our natural systems.

be achieved through permanent protection of roadless forest lands and continuing work for additional wilderness protections through the forest-planning process.

Following the Jemez Principles, we will work with local communities to prioritize efforts that conserve areas of value to them and those most impacted by climate change and the industrialization of our landscapes. We will work closely with our Tribal partners and allies to support their efforts to conserve Tribal lands, sacred sites, and traditional-use lands to protect cultural connections and sovereignty. Among other efforts, we'll be continuing our work with the Gwich'in Nation in support of protections for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska and with the Inter-Tribal Coalition for the restoration of Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. The US can and should do far more to support the natural, cultural, and historic conservation goals of Tribal Nations. Implementing the conservation and stewardship policies and principles of Tribal Nations on traditional and cultural lands could also result in significant additional protections.

Endnotes

- 1 Living Planet Report 2018, https://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1187/files/original/LPR2018_Full_Report_Spreads.pdf
- 2 Federal Lands Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sequestration in the United States <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/sir20185131>
- 3 Natural Climate Solutions for the United States <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6235523/>

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