



# 30x30 Conservation Agenda

Conserve 30 percent of lands and waters in the United States by 2030 through administrative actions to ensure we can meet the challenge of climate change and provide space for wildlife and communities to thrive.

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## Background

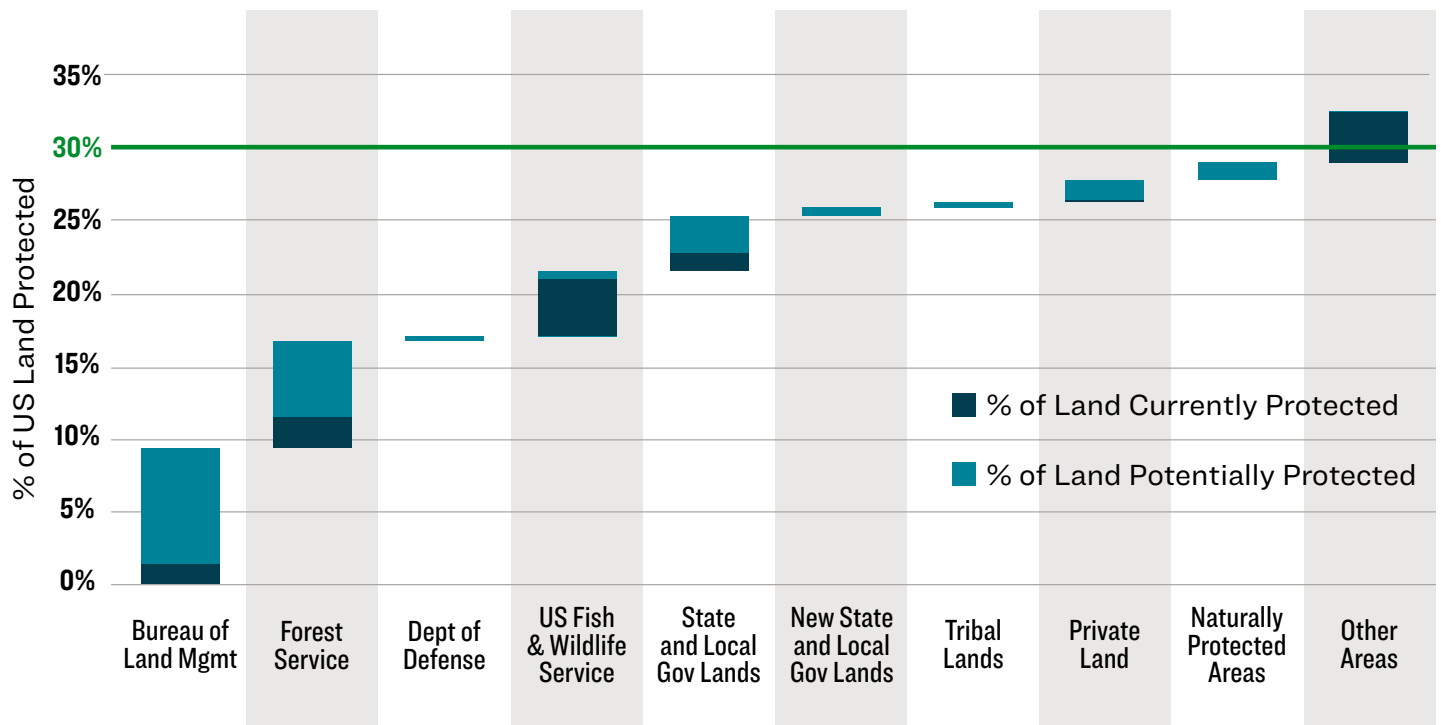
Flourishing natural areas and parks are indispensable to people's health, prosperity, cultural traditions, and enjoyment. They also play a critical role in combating the climate and extinction crises. The Sierra Club, with great success so far, has protected over 200 million acres of public lands and waters across the United States, building power every step of the way. And yet, it is clear that the climate and extinction crises we're facing mean that we need to do even more.

In the last 40 years, wildlife populations have declined by 60 percent because of habitat loss, climate change, and other environmental factors.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, in the US alone, we are losing a football field-sized patch of nature every 30 seconds to industrialization, totaling 1 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,<sup>2</sup> and this is only being exacerbated by the Trump administration's willingness to offer up millions of 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. Conserving public lands can both decrease existing carbon pollution (by sequestering carbon) and help decarbonize our economy (by keeping all fossil fuels on public lands in the ground). Working with federal agencies on smart land conservation and management practices, we could offset 21 percent of US greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>3</sup> This would also preserve much-needed habitat for increasingly imperiled wildlife.

## 30x30 Building Blocks



We can achieve 30 x 30 in multiple ways. This figure shows one pathway to reach this goal through a combination of greater conservation for federal, state, local, and private lands.

## Path to Conservation

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

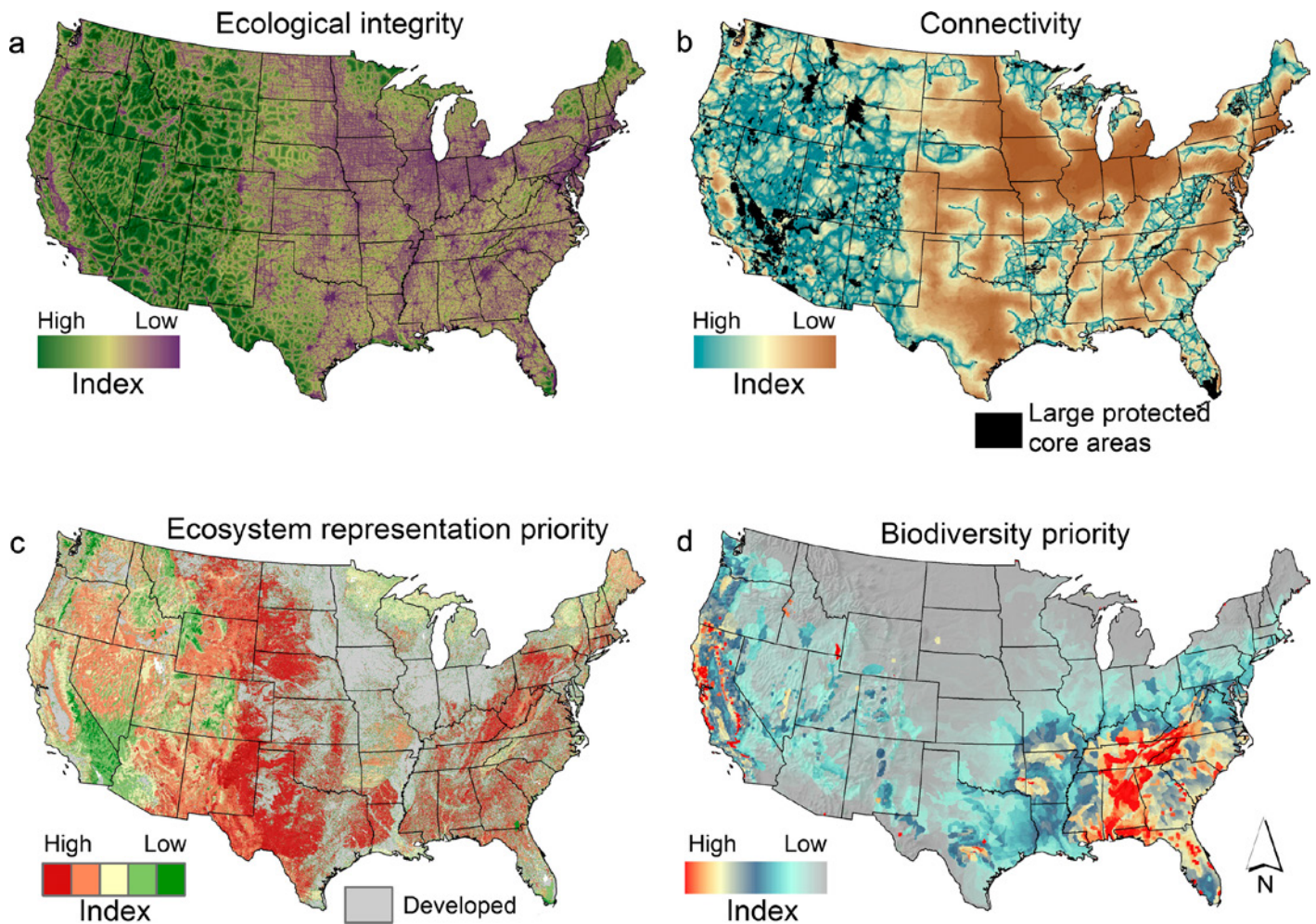
Our work to achieve the 30x30 target will energize and inspire conservation action as we build a movement that embodies the values and principles of a more expansive conservation ethic. Ultimately, we are building a movement powerful enough to change how we think about and relate to the natural world—shifting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

One way we are helping build this powerful movement is by forging transformational 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 transformational 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. With an ambitious agenda and strong leadership, we can still conserve a substantial portion of remaining wildlife and natural areas.

Conserving 30 percent of US lands and waters by 2030 will require creative advocacy strategies 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 whole 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 are protecting high-value landscapes that conserve a broad spectrum of landscape types that provide key habitat for a wide variety of species. (Ecological Applications, Volume: 27, Issue: 4, Pages: 1050-1056, First published: 06 March 2017, DOI: (10.1002/eap.1527)<sup>4</sup>

## Principles of 30x30 Conservation Campaign

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

1. Conserve 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. Conserving large connected landscapes will give our wildlife roam to roam and thrive.

Our lands and waters can help address the climate crisis in two key ways: by sequestering carbon through drawing it out of the air and by keeping fossil fuels in the ground. Sequestration and “keeping it in the ground” are the two sides of the lands-climate coin. We will prioritize work in areas at this nexus of lands 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 the remaining unprotected lands are open to 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 be achieved through conservation of roadless forest lands through the forest-planning process.



## 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 and sustainable world for future generations. Conserving 30 percent of the US by 2030 represents the kind of transformational change that is needed to safeguard nature in the United States. This is the work the Sierra Club was built for. We embrace the intersection between a healthy environment and healthy communities; therefore we engage and support residents on the frontline of social justice and environmental challenges. In our work to secure conservation of public lands and block the rampant expansion of the fossil fuel industry, we work in partnership with Native Nations. We will continue to foster these relationships and build the vibrant grassroots power needed to achieve these bold conservation victories.

To achieve this goal, we will build campaigns from the ground up. By engaging our chapters, organizers, and vast grassroots network, we will work with local communities to determine critical local conservation actions that can collectively lead to a nationwide conservation vision. Science confirms that we can and must conserve wildlands to safeguard our collective 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.

Following the Jemez Principles,<sup>5</sup> we will work with local communities to prioritize efforts that conserve areas of value to the people in the area 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.

## Endnotes

- 1 Living Planet Report 2018, [https://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1187/files/original/LPR2018\\_Full\\_Report\\_Spreads.pdf](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/>
- 4 <https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/eap.1527>
- 5 <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf>

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