



30x30 Activist Toolkit: Protecting Lands to Fight Climate Crisis

C4: Legislative Asks

An Advocacy Toolkit to Help Protect Nature & Tackle Climate Change

30 x 30: SAVING NATURE TO FIGHT THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Scientists tell us that to halt mass extinction and solve the climate crisis we need to not only preserve existing wild spaces, but increase the conservation of lands across the country—from large wild areas to neighborhood parks and local rivers and streams. In the United States, **we must protect about 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030.**

With only 12 percent of our country's lands currently protected,¹ reaching that goal means more neighborhood green space, more wilderness, and everything in between.

Protecting wild places will prevent drilling and logging from dumping new pollution into the air, absorb existing climate pollution, provide protection from extreme weather, shield wildlife habitats, and create opportunities

for people to enjoy the outdoors together. But we need to act quickly before our remaining wild places are lost.

To fight the climate crisis, we need to protect 30 percent of lands and waters in the United States by 2030.

ORGANIZE! A PATH TO PROTECTION: ACHIEVING 30% OF PROTECTIONS BY 2030

CONGRESS

- The goal of protecting 30 percent of US lands and waters by 2030 has been adopted by US Senators and Representatives, with 30x30 resolutions having been introduced in both houses of Congress. **Elected officials can co-sponsor these bills to champion the 30x30 effort.**

- Congress can pass wilderness bills and other public lands legislation, designating important natural spaces as permanently protected.
- There are several public lands protections bills introduced in the House and Senate like the [Protecting America's Wilderness Act](#) and Chaco and Grand Canyon Centennial Act that passed the House, and [the PUBLIC Act](#) introduced in the Senate. **Additional co-sponsors for these bills will encourage votes on the important legislation.**
- Congress **must fight back on efforts to roll back important land and habitat protections**—like the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Protection Act and other effective safeguards.

STATE LEGISLATURES

- **State legislators can play a strong role in public lands protections**—and should block efforts to downgrade or swap lands out of federal protection so they maintain important resources to keep them protected.
- State legislatures can introduce legislation to designate state parks, forests, and green spaces.
- State legislatures can pass 30x30 resolutions — a number of state legislatures have already introduced legislation to encourage the identification and protection of state and local lands to meet the 30x30 challenge. South Carolina and California introduced bills in 2019.

BRAINSTORM: *How your community can lend support*

1. What has your community accomplished in the past that contributes to efforts to protect 30% of land by 2030? What did you learn from the experience?
2. What locations in this state could help contribute to climate resilience and efforts to protect 30% of our land and waters by 2030?
3. What are the ways to achieve those protections (roadless areas, wilderness designations, community partnership protections from fossil fuel development?)
4. What stakeholders should have a seat at the table in these decisions (Tribal Nations, business owners, community groups, etc.)?

SPREAD THE WORD!

Messages:

- Right now, public lands and forests in the United States are contributing to the climate crisis— despite their immense value to work as carbon sinks that can reduce climate pollution significantly.
- Development— drilling and extraction—on public lands currently contributes to around 20% of our country's greenhouse gas emissions.²
- We are losing a football-sized plot of nature every 30 seconds to industrialization, totalling 1 million acres each year.
- To combat this, we must keep fossil fuels in the ground on public lands, and use lands instead to store carbon.
- Protecting public lands can both reduce existing carbon pollution and help decarbonize our economy.
- Studies have shown that smart land conservation and management practices could offset around a fifth of US greenhouse gas emissions.
- Public lands present tremendous preservation opportunities. Sixty percent of lands in the continental U.S. are in, or could be restored to, a largely natural condition.
- It is our responsibility to step in and contribute to the climate solution, and ensure the survival of our lands, threatened species, and communities.
- Protecting 30% of our lands and waters by 2030 is a critical step in the effort to act on climate.

30x30 Frequently Asked Questions

Additional messaging:

[30x30 and Public Lands Fact Sheet](#)

[30X30 and Endangered Species Fact Sheet](#)

[30x30 Conservation Blueprint](#)

SAMPLE LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR

LTE 1: **Save Our Lands and Water to Fight Climate Change**

With the climate crisis already upon us, we need to prioritize the preservation of public waters and lands as a key solution. When preserved, millions of acres of national forests can absorb a huge part of our country's emissions. Beyond their critical ability to work as carbon sinks, public lands are crucial to all communities' health, prosperity, and cultural traditions. But as it stands right now, dirty fuel development on our public lands is also contributing to a fifth of greenhouse gas emissions. The survival of places like [\[Insert national monument/park/forest here\]](#) and our climate depends on our activism.

Scientists say we must fight to conserve 30% of our land and waters by 2030. Doing so can make strides to reduce climate pollution and prevent the crisis from tipping the scales. This goal will require some serious political will, but there are already mechanisms in place to achieve it. Congress can provide funding to create and expand public parks, designate wildlife corridors, and return conservation and stewardship power to Tribal Nations. The Senate and House have already introduced 30x30 resolutions, and we must urge them to move those bills forward. Currently, the U.S. is one of the world leaders for remaining wilderness-quality lands – we must keep it that way. [\[Insert local legislator\]](#) must prioritize environmental justice and climate action by conserving public lands for everyone’s use – and ensuring we meet our ambitious goal of 30% protected by 2030 to fight the climate crisis.

LTE 2: Climate Crisis Needs Innovative, Ambitious Solutions

Conserving public lands is more crucial than ever as our world collectively faces an intertwined climate and extinction crisis. The well being of our communities as well as the survival of countless plant and animal species depends on the preservation of healthy, natural areas. We have to take steps now to protect public lands, restore wildlife corridors, support environmental conservation and stewardship by Tribal Nations, and ensure that we achieve 30 percent land and water conservation by 2030.

Scientists say protecting 30% of natural areas in the United States by 2030 is an absolute must if we are to prevent the mass extinction looming at our doorstep. It’s undoubtedly a serious undertaking; but it’s also an indisputable necessity. I encourage everyone reading this to consider the benefits natural spaces have on our communities and the wildlife around us, to imagine the implications of their loss, and to take the resulting frustration and motivation from this exercise straight to your legislators’ desks—both local and national. Make calls, join organizations, write letters, and share your public lands stories to urge decisionmakers to protect healthy



communities and our environment. I urge you to join me in calling [\[Insert Rep/Senator here\]](#) at [\[Office number\]](#) to champion 30x30 efforts.

Sample social media posts:

- I’m joining activists across the country in an ambitious effort to protect 30% of public lands, waters and forests in the United States to fight the climate crisis. Are you in?→ [sc.org/30x30](https://www.sierraclub.org/30x30) #30x30
- Scientists tell us public lands are KEY to fighting the climate crisis, and we need to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030. Join us→ [sc.org/30x30](https://www.sierraclub.org/30x30) #30x30
- Protecting forests WILL help us fight the climate crisis. Forests are effective carbon sinks, and a part of the mission to protect 30% of the country’s wild space by 2030. [sc.org/30x30](https://www.sierraclub.org/30x30) #30x30 #ActOnClimate
- To protect wildlife and the places they thrive, we need to protect 30% of our lands by 2030. Learn more about the initiative to fight the climate crisis and preserve our natural environment→ [sc.org/30x30](https://www.sierraclub.org/30x30) #30X30

MATERIALS:

[Stickers and Signs](#)

[Social Graphics](#)

[Rally Posters](#)

Endnotes

1 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/reports/2019/08/06/473242/much-nature-america-keep>

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6235523/>

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