

POLLUTION-FREE COMMUNITIES, LANDS, AND PARKS

The Problem

Fifty-three million people live within three miles of [1,836 “Superfund” sites](#) — places contaminated by toxic pollution and hazardous waste, which [pose disproportionate threats to communities of color](#). In addition, [over 5 million people in Appalachia](#) live within a mile of an abandoned coal mine with dangerous contamination. As we grapple with the COVID-19 crisis, such hazards only compound public health threats. While many of the places we live are contaminated with pollution, many of the places we love are disappearing or out of reach. Louisiana loses the equivalent of [a football field of wetlands every 100 minutes](#), exposing Gulf Coast communities to increased climate risks. Meanwhile, [protections for our public lands](#) are under [constant attack from corporate polluters](#). Such protected areas also are too often inaccessible. Fewer than half of all people in the U.S. live within walking distance of a park, as neighborhoods divided by race and class put the benefits of the outdoors out of reach for many low-income families and communities of color.

The Solution

We urgently need economic investments to protect the places we live and love. That means cleaning up toxic pollution at contaminated sites to support healthy communities. It means hiring local workers to protect and restore our wetlands and forests. And it means investing in projects to improve our parks and support equitable access to the outdoors.

The Jobs

Investments in pollution-free communities, lands, and parks would provide hundreds of thousands of good jobs for workers. Specifically, Congress should:

- ▶ **Provide nearly 100,000 jobs by cleaning up polluted communities:** Congress needs to invest \$20 billion over five years for Superfund site cleanup to protect communities from toxic pollution, with funding set aside for workforce training and renewable energy development. In addition, Congress should invest \$10 billion in the Brownfields program over five years to clean up contaminated sites in support of community-driven economic development, while protecting against community displacement.
- ▶ **Provide over 25,000 jobs by restoring our wetlands, forests, and parks:** Congress needs to invest



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\$10 billion over 10 years to fund the creation of a Stewardship Corps to hire local workers to protect and restore forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems, as outlined in the Climate Stewardship Act. In addition, Congress should fund the National Park Service’s Outdoor Recreation and Legacy Partnership program at \$1 billion over 10 years to support park improvement projects that boost economic competitiveness, job training, and equitable access to the outdoors.

- ▶ **Provide over 13,000 jobs in Appalachia by restoring abandoned coal mines:** Congress needs to pass and fully fund the RECLAIM Act and the Abandoned Mine Land Reauthorization Act to spur economic development in hard-hit mining communities by restoring land and water resources impacted by coal mining. Congress should invest \$10 billion over 10 years to clear the entire backlog of abandoned mine restoration projects.

And More ...

For a complete list of lands and outdoors investments, see [economic analysis from the Political Economy Research Institute](#) and [Sierra Club’s letter to Congress](#), which outlines specific priorities for a bold stimulus package that puts millions of people back to work to build a healthier, more equitable clean energy economy.