

THIRTY BY THIRTY RESOLUTION TO SAVE NATURE

Congresswoman Deb Haaland (NM-01)

The problem. The continental United States loses a football field's worth of natural areas every 30 seconds due to human activity. This loss of nature—accelerated by climate change—is a threat to the nation's health and prosperity, affecting communities' clean air, water, and defenses against severe weather, floods, and wildfires. To curb wildlife extinctions, fight climate change, reduce toxic pollution, and safeguard healthy natural systems, the United States must confront the conservation and climate crises head-on.

The solution. The Thirty by Thirty Resolution to Save Nature establishes a national goal of conserving at least 30 percent of the land and 30 percent of the ocean within the territory of the United States by 2030, creating a roadmap for reversing the conservation, climate, and wildlife crises.

Background

Global wildlife populations are dramatically declining, with up to one million species currently on the path to extinction, and the lands, waters, and wetlands they depend on are disappearing. Climate change is reducing the ability of ecosystems to provide clean water, limiting the ability of nature to buffer communities against disasters that disproportionately impacts communities of color and indigenous populations, altering the habitats and migratory patterns of marine and terrestrial wildlife, and shifting the timing of important biological events.

Conserving and restoring nature is one of the most efficient and cost-effective strategies for protecting wildlife, safeguarding food sources and clean water, and stabilizing climate. A growing number of scientists recommend that we increase the amount of land and ocean protected around the world to at least 30 percent of the planet by 2030. In the United States, only 12 percent of lands and 26 percent of oceans are considered permanently protected, with the vast majority of ocean protections found thousands of miles from the continental U.S. coastlines. This is about twice as much land and four times as much ocean as is currently protected, globally. They note that new protections should focus on the most biologically important and representative areas and that enough financial resources must be committed to ensure these protections are effectively managed and enforced.

The Thirty by Thirty Resolution to Save Nature will accomplish this national conservation goal by:

- Working with federal agencies, local communities, Indian Tribes, States, and private landowners to conserve natural places and resources under their control;
- Including public incentives for private landowners to voluntarily conserve and protect areas of demonstrated conservation value and with a high capacity to sequester carbon and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Improving access to nature for all people in the United States, including for communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities;
- Using land and ocean of the United States to sequester and store carbon;
- Focusing work at a large-landscape scale that is biologically and ecologically meaningful;
- Preventing extinction by recovering and restoring animal and plant species;
- Stabilizing ecosystems and the services of ecosystems, restoring degraded ecosystems, and maintaining ecological functions; and
- Increasing economic opportunities for farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and foresters.

The path to achieving this goal should make science the foundation of conservation decisions, respect Tribal sovereignty and the right to Tribal self-determination, protect private property rights and traditional land uses, and address environmental justice and the need for a more equitable distribution of the benefits of nature to all people, including communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities.