

A 30X30 TABLE OF TABLES THAT PULLS UP MORE CHAIRS

# AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL FOR ALL COALITION 2023 POLICY AGENDA

JANUARY 27, 2023

## About the America the Beautiful for All Coalition:

Launched in Spring 2022, The America the Beautiful for All Coalition is helping to connect, restore, and conserve 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 (30x30) by uniting land, freshwater, ocean, wildlife, community, recreation, and equity advocates across the nation to drive urgent action by the Biden Administration and other decision-makers in support of our shared goals while building long-term political power.

Our twin goals:

- Conserve at least 30% of land, water, and ocean by 2030 to avoid massive species loss, secure just and equitable access to nature's benefits, and prevent and repair the impacts of the climate crisis for all communities.
- Implement a Justice40 metric for the America the Beautiful Initiative to ensure at least 40% of investments are made in communities of color and frontline communities that have historically seen little to no investment in conservation and equitable access to nature.

Bringing together the collective power of nearly 150 workgroup and steering committee members organizations and hundreds of frontline organizations, Indigenous and communities of color, legacy conservation groups, hunters and anglers, public health nonprofits, businesses, land trusts, and others in our broader community, this is the largest and most representative coalition working to catalyze forward movement on 30x30.

The long-term political power necessary to accomplish these twin goals rests entirely on our ability to shift power, grow, and cultivate a united environmental community that truly represents America.

Through 2030, we will continue to elevate and amplify the priorities, voices, and perspectives of communities from Hawai'i to Florida, Alaska to Maine, and beyond to blaze a path to the largest conservation goal of the century.



## America the Beautiful for All's 2023 Policy Platform:

Developed by the coalition's workgroups and steering committee, representing nearly 150 organizations, this first annual policy agenda lays out the coalition's priorities that, if enacted, will make major progress to advance the twin goals of the Coalition. The policy actions included are not an exhaustive list of all opportunities to advance the coalition's twin goals but rather a reflection of the policy actions where workgroups and steering committee dialogue achieved consensus.

We celebrate the local community leaders - many of which are represented in this large coalition community - who have long led the work to drive progress on the policy agenda items included in this 2023 Coalition Platform. We are centering, elevating, and amplifying their voices in partnership and we will continue to follow their leadership while lending our collective power to their cause.

Endorsed by the Steering Committee member organizations of the coalition, we hope that your organization joins us in advocating for progress towards our shared goals.



## The 16 steering committee members of this coalition and inaugural endorsers of the Policy Agenda include:

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Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments  
Azul  
Children's Environmental Health Network (co-chair)  
Continental Divide Trail Coalition  
Earthjustice  
GreenLatinos (co-chair)  
International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Justice Outside  
Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo  
Native American Rights Fund  
NDN Collective  
Outdoor Afro  
River Network  
Sierra Club  
The Wilderness Society  
Yale University Center for Environmental Justice



Photo credit: Top, Huihua Loko I'a (fishpond), O'ahu Workday 2015. Photo by Mark Lee courtesy of KUA.  
Bottom: U.S. Department of Interior

Note: Endorsement by the steering committee organizations or any others does not indicate that each endorsing organization has expertise in or is considered an authority on each policy agenda priority.

The coalition will work with experts inside and outside of the coalition with lived and learned experience to ensure that the most knowledgeable experts guide our collective advocacy on the issues outlined below.

Endorsement by the steering committee indicates that the leaders of this coalition have received guidance and built confidence in the notion that the following agenda items will advance the coalition's twin goals and must be acted upon in 2023.

# America the Beautiful for All Coalition

## 2023 Policy Agenda Core Principles:

The steering committee has agreed to the following core principles as part of their shared vision for conserving 30x30 with a justice lens:

- At least 40% of all America the Beautiful Initiative investments should benefit and be directed by communities of color and frontline communities (**Justice40**).
- **Tribal sovereignty** is at the core of the nation's capacity to achieve 30x30 and steward healthy ecosystems.
- **Co-management and co-stewardship** of public lands, waters, and the species by Tribes, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, and Territories offer immense opportunities for advancing 30x30 with an emphasis on justice.
- **Public health** depends on access to nearby open space, safe drinking water, and clean air which are all dependent on intact ecosystems. Public health data should help guide the Biden Administration's America the Beautiful Initiative investments.
- **Access to safe open space** nearby and within one's community should not be a privilege for the few. The America the Beautiful Initiative must serve as a conduit for increased accessibility to nature and open space.
- The federal agencies that manage and are responsible for public land, water, and wildlife conservation should **represent communities with the greatest connection to those places and ecosystems** through local and representative staffing and hiring.
- Agencies working to implement the America the Beautiful Initiative should proactively **seek input from Indigenous people, communities of color, and frontline communities most vulnerable to pollution, climate change, and nature loss**. Barriers to community input should be eliminated through reforms shaped by public input.
- **Agencies will require ample and flexible funding** as well as increased staffing to work with communities to achieve 30x30.
- **Private landowners, farmers, and ranchers should be supported** in their voluntary pursuits to conserve land, freshwater, ocean, and wildlife habitat and corridors.
- The America the Beautiful Initiative should prioritize **connecting intact ecosystems by linking existing conserved areas** to support interconnected watersheds, wildlife corridors, habitat, and seascapes, and by investing in existing mechanisms to connect such conserved areas.



# Core Principles Cont'd:

- Public lands and waters as well as other climate and habitat sustaining ecosystems should be **protected from incompatible development and destructive land use conversion** in order to prevent backsliding on the goal to conserve 30x30.
- We can and must shift rapidly to a clean energy economy, but that shift must **center benefits for communities** and nature through robust consultation and input and wise planning.
- Federally managed rural development programs should recognize and prioritize the **economic value of natural areas**, particularly for their role in supporting outdoor recreation economies, and incentivize community-based conservation.
- **Other effective area-based conservation measures** (OECMs) provide an opportunity to: recognize, support, and incentivize efforts to conserve nature, while respecting Indigenous rights to current land and water uses; accepting a diversity of governance approaches; understanding political realities; and recognizing that biodiversity conservation may be an ancillary benefit of other land-management objectives.
- Too many barriers prevent or inhibit under-resourced communities, Tribes, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, Territories, nonprofits and community organizations with deep ties to people, culture, and place from **accessing existing federal funding**. To advance the America the Beautiful Initiative's goals, those barriers must be analyzed and solved in partnership with local communities.



Photo Credit: Bob Wick

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# 2023 POLICY PRIORITIES

## 1. Maximize the impact of existing federal funding to implement the goals of the America the Beautiful Initiative

The passage of the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, alongside annual appropriations and other mandatory funding streams, provides the Biden Administration with historic levels of funding that can be leveraged to benefit conservation, climate and communities.

We encourage the Administration to maximize the benefits for underserved and marginalized communities, address the climate crisis and to conserve nature. As part of that effort, we applaud the Administration's commitment to applying a Justice40 lens to funding awards and criteria and we encourage transparency on reporting across programs to make sure conservation programs are benefitting and guided by underserved and marginalized communities. The federal government should also fully meet their treaty and trust responsibility to Tribes.

We also encourage the Administration to maximize nature benefits by aligning criteria for both traditional conservation and nontraditional programs to prioritize nature-based investments that benefit public health, clean water, clean air, and wildlife habitat.

This can include:

- Incorporating access to nature and greenspace as a priority criteria and/or eligible use for programs that fund transportation and transit, community development, and schools and child care facilities
- Prioritizing green and nature-based investments in clean water programs like the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water State Revolving Fund and FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program.
- Successfully deploying historic levels of land and water conservation funding available in Great American Outdoors Act, Inflation Reduction Act and any increased funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in annual appropriations. This should include prioritizing projects which achieve the Administration's climate goals, increase habitat connectivity, support Tribal partnerships including opportunities for co-management, and meet the goals of the Justice40 Initiative in historically underserved communities all across the country.
- Consider directing drought funding under the Inflation Reduction Act to additional stressed basins/watersheds, beyond the Colorado River, where underserved and historically marginalized communities will be impacted by drought impacts, including the Rio Grande. Decisions on spending should include engagement of Tribes and marginalized communities.



### Address Barriers to Accessing Funding

Maximizing the impact of funding for communities, particularly underserved and historically marginalized communities, will mean proactively addressing the barriers that exist to accessing funding.

Hurdles most frequently identified include:

- financial barriers (match requirements and the use of loans vs. grants),
- access to grant writers and technical assistance,
- awareness of application deadlines and funding award criteria, and
- lack of alignment of deadlines and criteria across Departments and programs.



## Cont'd: Address Barriers to Accessing Funding

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Addressing these problems at scale will be critical for the Administration to effectively deploy funds to the communities that need it most.

We encourage the Administration to →

1. Tackle these barriers through increased technical assistance resources, coordinating grant applications and criteria across agencies and programs, and utilizing flexibility for match waivers and allocation of grants instead of loans for underserved communities;
2. Work to address these barriers at scale by building upon models that tackle many of these barriers at once.

Some promising models that could be scalable with additional investment bring together funding sources across several agencies. This includes the EPA Urban Waters Federal Partnership and the America the Beautiful Challenge funds in combination with technical assistance and coordination amongst funding streams.



Photo credits Top - Stephen Materas  
Bottom- Turkel, GreenLatinos

For Tribes, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians, a major barrier to seeking federal funding to support land acquisition and easements is lack of direct eligibility for many programs, and lack of sufficient funding or set-asides in programs where Tribes are eligible to apply directly. We encourage the Administration and Congress to increase funding for conservation programs which serve Tribes like the Community Forest Program and the newly proposed Forest Conservation Easement Program. We also support efforts that would make Tribes eligible for funding under existing programs like the Outdoors for All Act which would make Tribes directly eligible for the LWCF-funded Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program.



## 2. Support increased opportunities for co-management & co-stewardship of public lands & waters with Tribes, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, and Territories

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When Tribes manage public land and waters, they bring a longstanding and deep commitment to stewardship. They also have strong human capital to bring to bear, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge that has developed over centuries.

Each year, Native American Tribal Nations enter hundreds of federal contracts worth billions of dollars to run federal Indian programs. “Self-determination contracts” have been very successful in improving the effective delivery of federal programs on Indian reservations, while also maintaining the government’s goal of encouraging tribal participation in economic development.

We need to emphasize that Tribal Governments, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, and Territories want to utilize their resources and expertise more. At present, there is a premium for equitable and practical partnership as to climate change, land back and the protections of cultural and sacred sites. Tribal co-management allows effective and pragmatic tools, with new and traditional expertise, to address the federal conservation agenda. Summarily, we can begin the expansion of tribal co-management by using the dynamics and features already congressionally authorized.

In a recent letter to President Biden, Ranking Member Grijalva (then chair) and other lawmakers highlight specific recommended executive actions to advance tribal co-management. Their recommendations are largely based on expert witness testimony by Kevin Washburn, Dean at University of Iowa College of Law, shared at a Natural Resources Committee hearing on March 8, 2022.

### The lawmakers’ suggested actions include:

- Utilize existing authorities to expand Tribal co-management of federal lands and waters.
- Promote the use of co-management agreements and/or provisions in land management plans consistent with Department of Interior’s (DOI) and U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) obligations under existing law; and use substantive and enforceable plan provisions to protect tribal treaty rights, cultural resources, and subsistence uses on federal public lands.
- Ensure thorough execution of all relevant guidance and directives, including those formulated during the Tribal Nations Summit.
- Incentivize agencies to expand co-management opportunities and to engage in co-management with Tribal Governments.
- Provide funding for Tribal co-management and simplify the process for entering into these agreements.
- Examine barriers to expanded Tribal co-management and propose solutions.
- Support the dissemination of Tribal co-management best practices and convene a forum to discuss these issues.
- Identify necessary funding and authorities for expanded co-management relationships and relay those needs to Congress.

## Cont'd: Support increased opportunities for co-management & co-stewardship of public lands & waters with Tribes, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, and Territories

Below are specific actions the Administration and Congress can take to realize these opportunities:

### Interior Agencies Should Expand the List of Federal Programs, Services and Activities That Are Subject to Potential Contracting:

The Department of the Interior is required by law to publish each year a list identifying existing contracts and detailing the list of programs that are eligible for contracting. Since 1994, Tribal Governments have become increasingly successful in running federal programs and Tribal governmental capacity and expertise has expanded. That said, Interior's annual list of eligible programs, services and activities has changed very little in more than 20 years.

The Department should consult with Tribes with a view toward expanding the lists of functions for which Tribes can contract.

### Interior Agencies Should Expand the List of Federal Facilities, Lands, and Units That Are Subject to Potential Contracting:

Interior also publishes the names of the lands or units that lie in proximity to an eligible Tribal government exercising self-governance in the federal register.

Similar to the eligible program and services lists, these lists have also remained relatively static during the past 20 years.

*Agencies should schedule Tribal consultations, on a regional basis, on the scope of the list of public land units, and actively seek out tribal interest in engagement with particular units. Such a review would result in the addition of more parks, monuments, and refuges to the list.*

### Congress Should Authorize Funding for Tribal Planning Grants and Contract Support Costs to Assist Tribes with Successful Proposals for Land Management Contracts:

Two structural impediments exist to successful tribal contracts for public land management, at least in comparison to the original program for contracts for "Indian services."

- Contracting is mandatory for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) or Indian Health Service (IHS) when requested by a Tribe, while it is only discretionary for the land management agencies. Tribes have long sought to make contracting mandatory even outside the BIA and IHS. The Department of Interior should embrace many more contracting opportunities.
- When a Tribe enters a contract with either the BIA or the IHS, the Indian Self Determination Act (ISDA) requires the agency to provide the contracting Tribe with "contract support costs" which entitles Tribes to an additional percentage of program funds, which varies by Tribe and location, to account for other costs that the federal government would otherwise have borne in providing the same services. These funds are akin to "indirect costs." After decades of litigation, the Supreme Court ultimately held in *Salazar v. Ramah Navajo Chapter*, 567 U.S. 182 (2012), that the law requires the federal government to pay such costs even if Congress has not appropriated adequate funding.

While Tribes can now count on this funding in Indian services contracts, contracts with other DOI agencies or the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) do not address contract support costs. For a Tribe contracting with a non-BIA or IHS federal agency, the Tribe must meet those expenses in other ways which makes contracts with land management agencies more costly and more burdensome to Tribes to undertake.

## Cont'd: Support increased opportunities for co-management & co-stewardship of public lands & waters with Tribes, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, and Territories

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*Congress should authorize contract support costs for contracts between Tribes and land management agencies, in at least in some limited fashion.*

### Interior Should Encourage Federal Managers to Negotiate with Tribes by Rewarding Superintendents and Regional Directors Who Enter Negotiations for Contracts with Tribes and Recognizing Those Who Successfully Enter Contracts

Encouraging contracts can create an opportunity to build trust and develop a shared understanding of missions and goals.

For a variety of reasons, federal officials may be unwilling to engage in serious discussions about such contracts. Because Tribes have significant experience managing lands and resources, however, Tribes have a lot to offer.

By way of a specific example, "interpretive services." Nearly every national park unit has employees who are charged with explaining the significance of the park unit. Tribal employees may have unique value in helping members of the public understand the cultural, historical, and scientific significance of particular lands.

It should be noted, all partnership involves compromise and the willingness to give up some level of control. Federal officials who have the vision to begin such conversations and successfully develop new ways of approaching the management of public lands should be rewarded.

### Congress Should Align the Criteria for Tribal Contracts for USFS Land Management Agreements with the Criteria for Interior Agreements:

For the programs in the Department of the Interior, Title 25, Section 5363(c) of the U.S. Code allows a Tribe to contract for federal activities or programs that have a "special geographic, historical or cultural significance" to the Tribe. Since virtually all public lands in the United States were once occupied by one or more Tribal nations, the limitation in this language is NOT particularly significant. In contrast, the authorization for Tribal contracting with USFS is more limited.

Under the Tribal Forest Protection Act, which grants USFS the authority to enter into ISDA agreements with Tribes, Tribes are restricted to contracting only for projects on federal lands "bordering or adjacent to the Indian forest or rangeland." This language is unduly narrow and restricts Tribal nations with significant connections to the land, including some tribal nations that are located near public lands, though not formally adjacent.

Congress should expand the TFWA authorization to match the broader language in section 5363(c). Contracting would remain at the agency's discretion even under the broader language.

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### Encourage Longer Term Contracts Between Tribes, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, and Territories and Agencies

Some agencies have begun to execute two-year or more agreements, and this extension is a positive development. Two-year agreements make much more sense because they reflect the limit of federal budget authority (for many agencies, money appropriated in one year generally can be used that year and carried over to the following fiscal year). For established relationships between Tribes and agencies, agencies should be encouraged to enter long-term arrangements, such as five-year contracts, which have automatic adjustments if fiscal conditions change.

### Expedite Contracts between Tribes and the Federal Government using existing authorities, including for Tribes with adjacent lands





### **3. Pass a 2023 Farm Bill that invests deeply in the conservation of wetlands, grasslands, forests, soil, clean water and habitat in partnership with the nation’s farmers, ranchers, forest owners, community organizations, and other conservation allies**

The Farm Bill will be one of the most important Congressional opportunities in 2023 to conserve lands and waters that support producers in implementing natural resource conservation efforts on crop lands and pasture lands. On-farm conservation programs in the Farm Bill help build soil resilience, provide clean drinking water, limit the impacts of extreme weather issues such as drought and flooding, provide healthy habitats for wildlife, mitigate agriculture’s greenhouse gas emissions, and support sustainable and productive food and farming systems.

The America the Beautiful for All Coalition will work in coordination with partners leading this effort such as the Native Farm Bill Coalition, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, the Rural Coalition, the Clean Water for All Coalition and others. In collaboration, we will advocate for a Farm Bill that invests deeply in strengthening the resilience of our local and regional food systems, advancing climate resilience and land stewardship, and investing in data-driven climate and conservation solutions rooted in science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Specifically, the 2023 Farm Bill should focus on increasing conservation and research funding levels, and prioritize programs designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and that help address historic wrongs and ongoing inequities. Additionally, maintaining wetlands and reducing soil erosion, two of the most harmful results of agriculture production, should be addressed through conservation compliance and its links to crop insurance subsidies.

Together with our allies, we will push to build on the substantial investments of the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in Farm Bill conservation programs to ensure that local conservation partners, historically disadvantaged producers, beginning farmers and ranchers, and other private landowners, including non-industrial forest landowners have the resources needed to help meet this historic moment for confronting the climate and extinction crises.



Photo Top - Children's Environmental Health Network  
Bottom - JusticeOutside

## 4. Prioritize representation in staffing and interpretation within federal agencies to ensure inclusion of local and culturally-relevant perspectives.

Agencies should work to build and repair trust with underserved and underrepresented communities. This can be accomplished through improved and culturally relevant interpretation, removing barriers to accessing federal funding, and prioritizing cultural parks, monuments and cultural sites. Agencies implementing the America the Beautiful Initiative should promote equitable access to the outdoors, enhance and expand opportunities for public participation at each step of the decision-making process, and hire and train a diverse workforce that is representative of local and most culturally relevant populations.

Specifically, federal agencies implementing the America the Beautiful Initiative must focus on three primary issues:

- Opportunities for all people to experience public lands and waters: Address current barriers to accessing nature and its benefits by building a more inclusive public lands and waters system. Barriers include: lack of physical proximity to parks and public open space, insufficient or ineffective outreach, limited multilingual and culturally appropriate public information materials and signage, lack of funding for underserved communities, limited staff resources to develop inclusive programming, and insufficient or absent representation of communities of color in new and existing designations and storytelling on public lands.
- Transparent and inclusive public participation in decision-making processes: Commit to innovative, transparent and inclusive collaboration at every step of decision-making processes. Build lasting relationships with nearby and culturally relevant communities that recognize the value of local expertise and knowledge in land and water management decisions and in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementation process.
- Representation and retention in a diverse workforce: Implement and rebuild diversity, equity, and inclusion policies for hiring, training and promotion of agency employees with a commitment to continued diversification of the workforce at all levels. Support a diverse workforce across the labor hierarchy to create a more welcoming and inclusive culture.
- Conduct a full audit of interpretive signage and practices aimed at telling a full, accurate and unflinching history of our country. Modernize the evaluation criteria and related historic preservation processes to enhance interpretive updates.



Without meaningful action to advance the above priorities, our nation risks losing future generations' connections with, care for, and support for protecting public lands and waters.

## 5. Pass valuable conservation and equity legislation languishing in Congress

While Congress has made historic progress in passing climate and conservation funding legislation through the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a plethora of valuable conservation and equity legislation has languished despite broad support. We encourage Congress to redouble efforts to pass legislation in line with the goals of the America the Beautiful Initiative.

Photo Credit: Peter Mather

This includes but is not limited to:

- Environmental Justice for All Act
- Wild and Scenic River Bills
- Twenty-First Century Dams Act
- Water Data and Security Act
- Extend and improve Highlands Conservation Act land conservation grant program
- Recovering America's Wildlife Act, and
- Numerous public lands conservation bills including many that passed the House in the 117th Congress

If these important bills continue to languish in the 118th Congress, we will call upon the Biden/Harris Administration to work within their existing authority to advance these critical conservation policies and programs.



## 7. Reject projects that would exacerbate the climate crisis, harm communities, or critical ecosystems as well as any changes to the permitting process that would greenlight such projects

The Administration should deny projects that would undermine the Biden Administration's America the Beautiful Initiative goals by reducing acres of pristine or otherwise protected lands. It should also oppose projects that will harm communities and contribute to the climate crisis. Such projects betray the goals of America the Beautiful and endanger frontline communities by disturbing sacred sites, cultural resources, health ecosystems and wildlife habitat, and exacerbating the climate crisis.

Examples of projects which would undermine these goals include the Ambler Road and Willow projects in Alaska as well as the Red Hill Fuel Storage Project in Hawai'i among many others.

If the nation is to meet the goals of the America the Beautiful Initiative and fulfill this administration's commitments on environmental justice, projects must be considered through meaningful community input and environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Reviews under NEPA help ensure federal government decisions are not only guided by the principles of conservation and equity, but are also aimed at fulfilling the national policies outlined in NEPA to secure and preserve a healthful environment for future generations.

In addition, Congress and the Administration should oppose legislation that, under the guise of "permitting reform," would undermine environmental review safeguards or minimize community input in the permitting process. Instead, any legislative efforts to truly improve the permitting process should be in line with the Environmental Justice for All Act, which strengthens community input, reduces conflict with early and continuous consultation, and begins to address the historically disproportionate cumulative health and environmental impacts on marginalized communities.

## 6. Use the Antiquities Act & other authorities to protect ecologically and culturally important areas

President Biden and the Biden Administration should utilize Executive and Administrative authorities, including national monument proclamations under the Antiquities Act, to act on behalf of community-led efforts to protect significant lands and waters. There are a number of opportunities for protections that would advance climate, conservation, and equitable access to nature goals including those that are led by communities of color, Indigenous communities and other underserved communities. Examples of these opportunities include:

- Avi Kwa Ame National Monument
- Castner Range National Monument
- Springfield Race Riot
- Expansion of Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument to include Molok Luyuk;
- Expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument
- An Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument with sites including the Tallahatchie County Courthouse in the Mississippi Delta and Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ in Chicago.

There are also a number of legislative conservation proposals which we'd encourage the Administration to consider protecting via executive action if sought, including:

- Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act
- Great Bend of the Gila Conservation Act
- César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park Act



## 8. Reform the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) to better serve frontline & disadvantaged communities

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The CWSRF was created to support communities with clean water infrastructure that provides safe sanitation, healthy waterways, and protection from flooding by providing billions of dollars in federal funding for local wastewater and stormwater systems. Yet, systems serving communities of color and frontline populations face disproportionate hurdles when trying to obtain funds from the state agencies that administer the CWSRF program, Federal and state opportunities to better serve frontline and disadvantage communities include:

- Reduce barriers to frontline communities accessing important green infrastructure funding. Reforming measures with a justice orientation can help reduce barriers to participation and access to funds by providing grants instead of loans.
- States should prioritize CWSRF-funded projects in underserved communities, ensure that those projects qualify for the most favorable award terms, and distribute more funding in the form of grants or forgivable loans. States should also consider a wide range of criteria when establishing their affordability criteria that guides funding for disadvantaged communities.
- Reduce barriers to investment in green infrastructure on private property. Invest in green/stormwater infrastructure where the footprint of public property may limit the potential for municipalities to address runoff while the opportunity for commercial and industrial retrofits on private properties, for example child care centers, is possible.
- Congress should continue to increase investment in the CWSRF to ensure that adequate funding is available for communities in need.
- EPA and state-level program administrators must be more proactive in promoting the availability of these critical funds, coordinating with other sources of infrastructure funding and providing hands-on technical assistance to help communities apply.
- EPA should provide oversight and review of state funding decisions to ensure that historically disinvested communities who comment on fund distribution and apply for funds are recognized.
- Federal and state agencies involved in administration of the CWSRF must provide transparency and reporting on where funds go, which communities benefit, and the resulting green infrastructure projects.



## 9. Support increased funding, program reforms, and expansion of FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities Program (BRIC)

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) supports states, local communities (particularly those frontline communities most impacted by climate-related disasters), Tribes, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives and territories as they undertake hazard mitigation projects, reducing the risks they face from disasters and natural hazards.

This program supports flood resilience projects, including nature-based solutions such as wetlands protection/restoration. In addition to increased funding for this important program, it can better serve communities and leverage nature-based solutions through program reforms including:



- Support program reforms to increase incentives for nature-based and health-protective resilience projects, such as a dedicated set-asides, revised project scoring criteria, and reduced cost-benefit hurdles for nature-based projects. Target schools and child-care based entities for these incentives.
- Expand FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program Endangered Species Act 7(a)(1) Conservation Action Program
- Revise floodplain management regulations for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to better conserve species and their habitats (including freshwater species)
- Revise the NFIP Community Rating System to offer stronger incentives to counties and municipalities to manage floodplain development for improved species and habitat protections.



## 10. Support marine protected areas design, designation, and effectiveness

Networks of marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are critical to achieve the America the Beautiful Initiative's goals on the ocean and support the U.S. Ocean Climate Action Plan. Protected areas help ecosystems – and the communities they support – better withstand and adapt to the stresses of climate change.

These areas need to be representative across ecoregions and geographies, and levels of protection, and go beyond designation and include active management with adequate funding and staffing. Their designation and management must be locally led by the communities who call these places home, and consistent with the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). The following actions will deliver on this priority:

- National Ocean & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) should build up its National Marine Sanctuaries program by working with and following the lead of each respective nominating community to begin or complete designation of all proposed national marine sanctuaries in the Inventory of Successful Nominations: Lake Ontario, Chumash Heritage, Hudson Canyon, Mariana Trench, Alaḡum Kanuuḡ, Lake Erie and Papahānaumokuākea.
- President Biden should use his authority under the Antiquities Act to expand the borders of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.
- NOAA should be more responsive to frontline communities by updating protections in National Marine Sanctuaries Act program regulations to ensure the ability to manage threats that jeopardize sanctuary health. Actions include updating national marine sanctuary regulations to require that management plans meaningfully address the threats highlighted in sanctuary condition reports, giving sanctuary managers authority to manage activities within sanctuaries that impact sanctuary health, and encouraging NOAA to institute a whole-of-government approach to sanctuary management so that all parts of NOAA, as well as other agencies that may impact sanctuaries, support, protect, and restore these vital marine areas.

## 11. Ensure marine protected area management and implementation

Protected areas that lack staffing, funding, and management plans have been shown to do a poor job of protecting nature. The Biden Administration must adequately fund and implement national marine sanctuaries and marine monuments so that they can accomplish the goals laid out in their respective decrees, legislation, and management plans. Where management plans are incomplete, they must be completed. The Biden Administration should:

- Complete and publish management plans for the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument, Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument.
- Adequately fund the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) to ensure critical programmatic and scientific needs, such as timely completion of condition reports and management plans, are met. Relative to other natural resource management agencies and to the ONMS mission, the agency is extremely underfunded and needs more fiscal support to effectively manage our marine resources and ecosystems. Funding the ONMS appropriately can increase the outreach impact of ONMS to raise awareness about the opportunities to establish sanctuaries, increase scientific research and monitoring, and allow sanctuaries to be climate change-ready. Increased funding can also allow ONMS to start new public-private partnerships aimed at supporting STEM career workforce development programs for historically marginalized communities in STEM.



## 12. Phase out new federal onshore and offshore drilling and support the just transition to renewable energy

During his election campaign, President Biden committed to ending new onshore and offshore oil and gas leasing in the U.S. While provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) complicate the picture, the law still leaves the administration with ample authority to implement it in ways that limit on-shore and offshore drilling consistent with US climate goals.

Both onshore and offshore drilling have significant impacts on the communities where production occurs and the surrounding environment – even threatening protected areas with oil spills and other pollution – and undermining nature’s ability to adapt in a changing climate. We must invest in a just transition away from fossil fuels for our communities and for our planet. To achieve this goal, the administration should:

- Act boldly to transition the federal onshore and offshore energy program away from fossil fuels to clean energy. The oil and gas industry is already sitting on over 8 million acres of unused offshore leases and roughly half of the 25 million acres of onshore leases go unused. The administration can act consistently with the IRA and still take durable action in new regulations to dramatically limit the land available for new leasing and the number of new leases issued, along with limiting drilling on existing leases to match climate goals and also tightening the requirements for leasing – ensuring lease prices reflect the societal costs of resulting emissions and making leases subject to stringent protections for communities, wildlife, and climate. In the near term, the Administration should put forward a new Five-Year Program that proposes no new lease sales. With offshore lease sales already mandated by the IRA over the next year, and more than 36 gigawatts of wind production already in the works, the administration can maximize wind leasing without continuously sacrificing millions of additional acres in the Gulf of Mexico to the oil and gas industry. Onshore, the administration should pursue a significant withdrawal of public lands with important wildlife, climate resilience, and other values threatened by potential oil and gas activity, and ensure land use and planning are commensurate with climate goals.
- Provide economic opportunities to those communities that have depended on oil and gas production as our nation transitions away from fossil fuel production to clean energy sources and other just economic transition opportunities. Prioritize Gulf investments and communities in the whole-of-government effort being led by the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities to support the nation’s transition away from fossil fuels, support tax incentives for clean, renewable energy projects located in fossil fuel-dependent communities and labor standards for clean energy tax credits, that require recipients pay the prevailing wage and institute apprenticeship requirements.
- Address historic environmental injustice. For far too long, coastal communities in the Gulf and elsewhere have endured the burdens of the fossil fuel industry—from oil spills to health impacts from refineries and other associated industries. As the Administration considers our nation’s future energy needs, the views of local communities and the long history of environmental injustice must be top priorities in those considerations.



## 13. Enact a rulemaking to conserve old and mature forests

The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management should adopt a rule through a transparent public process that facilitates ecological integrity and climate resiliency across all forest-types on our federal public lands by conserving old and mature forests from logging, wildfire and climate change, informed by the best available science and Indigenous knowledge.



## 15. Expand the Urban Wildlife Refuge system and other federally protected areas within, or in close proximity to, frontline communities, communities of color, and Tribal nations

The Administration should direct the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and other relevant agencies to expand the Urban Wildlife Refuge system and other federally protected areas within, or in close proximity to, frontline communities, communities of color, and Tribal nations.

Agencies can prioritize acquisition of and collaborative conservation with neighboring land managers of unprotected lands adjacent to or surrounded by communities. This is particularly important for statistically nature-deprived and underserved communities including Environmental Justice communities and frontline communities. The Administration should engage in consultation with Tribes where National Wildlife Refuges abut Tribal lands. Across the refuge system, the USFWS should work closely with Indigenous communities to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the management prescriptions. USFWS can also facilitate greater flexibility for native restoration projects - for example, wetland Taro cultivation and restoration in Hawai'i or similar efforts elsewhere.

Photo credit: Ian Shive, Valle del Oro NWR, NM

## 14. Enact a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rulemaking to modernize 245 million acres of public lands management

As the nation's largest single land manager responsible for managing over 245 million acres, the Bureau of Land Management has tremendous opportunity to advance the conservation, climate and equity goals of the Biden Administration. The BLM should undertake a rulemaking to update public lands management and planning processes to better conserve and manage cultural and natural resources, wildlife habitat, waterways, recreation and climate resiliency values on BLM lands.

As part of a rulemaking, the BLM should strengthen and update processes for prioritizing, designating, and managing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, wildlife habitat connectivity, Backcountry Conservation Areas, Wilderness Study Areas and other management tools available including prioritizing Tribal co-management agreements to better conserve the values of these lands to benefit communities, the climate and nature. Management should be science-based, incorporating and prioritizing Traditional Ecological Knowledge, to sustain and restore ecosystem health particularly in the face of climate change.

## 16. Reform outdated mining laws and regulations

We applaud the Biden Administration's commitment to rapidly shift our nation towards a clean energy economy to address the climate crisis and we recognize that shift will require minerals necessary to support a clean energy infrastructure. However, prior mining has all too often left a legacy of pollution that has disproportionately impacted Tribes, indigenous communities, communities of color and other frontline communities. With estimates that the vast majority of cobalt, nickel, lithium and copper are located within 35 miles of Native American reservations, it is critically important that Congress and the Biden Administration significantly reform mining laws and regulations, and reduce the demand for new minerals by fostering a circular economy and other means, to avoid repeating the mistakes of our past.

We are glad to see the Biden Administration take initial steps to address these concerns, including the establishment of the Interagency Working Group on Mining Reform as well as implementation steps including enhanced Tribal consultation regarding mining projects. We encourage the Administration to build on this with additional reforms that better protect lands and waters of cultural, historic, and ecological significance, and give communities and Tribes a greater voice in decision-making. This includes the agency and executive actions we recommend throughout this platform.

While administrative reforms are welcome and necessary, ultimately we cannot build a 21st century clean energy economy that centers communities, supports Tribal co-management, respects Tribal sovereignty, and safeguards nature and public health around a legal framework that is more than 150 years old. We urge Congress to move forward legislation that reforms the General Mining Act of 1872 in a way that protects public health, the environment and our communities.



## 17. Utilize integrated pest management and accelerate the transition from pesticides that are harmful to wildlife, ecosystems, and human health

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The Administration should direct federal agencies to utilize integrated pest management to sustainably address invasive species and other management needs and to accelerate the transition away from pesticides that are harmful to wildlife, ecosystems and human health.

## 18. Expand access to existing open space through community use agreements

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The Administration, specifically the U.S. Department of Education, should encourage shared use and cooperative agreements to expand public access to functional open spaces like school yards, community gardens, etc. These spaces often serve as critical natural areas, providing viable solutions to communities by addressing public health, food insecurity, mitigating climate change, and endorsing climate resilience and literacy. Accessible open spaces are also critical to community and children's health by providing safe and affordable spaces for exercise and play.

Shared use agreements should open outdoor schoolyards for public use during non-school hours or formalize joint-use of district and city recreation facilities. The administration should support joint task force collaboration to review plans for the building and infrastructure inputs required for healthy and sustainable child care facilities, schools, public housing, parks and open spaces.



Every community in the U.S. depends on intact and healthy natural ecosystems for public health, prosperity, a resilient economy, and to preserve cultural connection to place. Yet, seventy-four percent of communities of color in the contiguous United States live in nature-deprived areas, compared with just 23 percent of white communities, and seventy percent of low-income communities across the country live in nature-deprived areas. This figure is 20 percent higher than the figure for those with moderate or high incomes.

- Report: The Nature Gap  
Center for American Progress

## 19. Improve accessibility of open space through increased investments and planning for public transit and active transport infrastructure

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Federal agencies should work directly with local and regional transportation planning entities to enhance existing access to functional green spaces, open space, public lands, and prioritize filling access gaps. This should be done while also reviewing existing parking and fee policies and other transportation system gaps that may create barriers for some communities and potential users.

Include this criteria in forthcoming Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act programs, especially ReConnecting Communities, Transportation Alternatives, and RAISE. Work with states to use Surface Transportation Block Grant funding and apply a Justice40 metric to assess funding.

Congress should increase public transit funding, applying a Justice40 metric for funding authorization and awards. Congress and the Administration should prioritize increased community engagement in transit funding and allocations and increase public access to

## 20. Coordinate landscape-scale planning across federal agencies

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Managing lands and waters for the benefit of wildlife habitat connectivity, climate resilience and community benefits necessitates planning at a landscape-scale. We encourage the Biden Administration to coordinate planning across federal agencies to the maximum extent possible.

Opportunities include:

- A shared database and associated mapping for identifying, conserving, and connecting habitat and migration corridors, sustaining natural areas essential to climate resilience, and community impacts across federal agencies
- Ecosystem-scale planning including outlining opportunities in federal/cross-jurisdictional land and water management for a full range of ecosystem services in plans and actions for sustainable development. This should include scoping opportunities for pilot projects in focal ecosystems/biomes.
- Aligning multiple federal land management agency plans via coordinated revisions within an ecosystem and larger landscape.
- Coordinating funding investments for restoration and conservation on the ground identified by communities and partners within a focal landscape.



Launched in Spring 2022, the America the Beautiful for All Coalition is comprised of more than 150 workgroup member organizations and steering committee members. We are part of a broader community of hundreds of organizations working to advance conservation and community solutions to achieve the national 30x30 goal - the largest conservation goal of the century - with an eye toward justice.



## Contact Us

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