

## Environmental Organizations, Federal and State Leaders Call for a National Biodiversity Strategy to Combat the Escalating Extinction Crisis

WASHINGTON, D.C., Feb. 8 – With one million species threatened with extinction, leading conservation organizations, including Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice, World Wildlife Fund, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Wildlife Conservation Society and Natural Resources Defense Council, announced a new campaign to advocate for a national biodiversity strategy in the United States. Such a strategy is needed to ensure the U.S. government is taking an effective, whole-of-government approach to prevent the extinction of species, the collapse of ecosystems, and the increasing threats these pose to our health, security and well-being.

The U.S. lacks a comprehensive and coordinated approach to tackling the five main drivers of the biodiversity crisis: habitat loss, direct exploitation of species, climate change, pollution, and invasive species. Worldwide, 193 other countries have developed forms of a national biodiversity strategy.

The movement to urge the Biden administration to establish a national biodiversity strategy continues to grow, with 120 environmental organizations, leading scientists and university students across the country backing its creation. The movement is also gaining significant [support](#) in Congress, led by Rep. Joe Neguse (D-CO), and in several state legislatures, including in New Mexico, where a resolution calling for a national strategy sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart is advancing.

“We are at a pivotal moment in history. As human activity continues to threaten the health and well-being of our planet’s wildlife and biodiversity it is with the utmost urgency that the United States must take this opportunity to be a world leader in conservation and climate action,” said **Rep. Neguse, Chair of the U.S. Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**. “Establishing a whole-of-government approach will help to preserve our environment not only for ourselves, but for all generations to come.”

“New Mexico has the fourth highest native species richness of any state. We are proud to lead the way to support a national biodiversity strategy,” said **New Mexico Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart**. “We must do everything we can to protect our vital biodiversity now and for future generations.”

Building on the momentum of Rep. Neguse’s proposal for a national biodiversity strategy detailed in [H.R. 69](#), which currently has 39 cosponsors, Rep. Neguse and 49 cosigners brought the issue directly to the White House today, with a [letter](#) highlighting the urgent need to combat the extinction crisis.

“Biodiversity is the foundation our planet is built on. We all depend on nature and the richness of species within it,” said **Jamie Rappaport Clark, president and CEO of Defenders of Wildlife**. “If the extinction crisis continues unabated, our nation will lose our unique landscapes, wildlife and biodiversity forever. It is imperative for President Biden to establish a national biodiversity strategy before it’s too late.”

“Simply put, biodiversity functions as a critical life support system across the entirety of our shared planet,” said **Azzedine Downes, CEO of the International Fund for Animal Welfare**. “It is as fundamental and foundational to all natural systems that support human health and livelihoods. Addressing the biodiversity crisis is essential to protecting against future pandemics as well as to meeting our urgent goals related to climate change. A robust future where both humans, wildlife and the natural environment thrive can only be achieved by elevating biodiversity protection to the highest priority.”

“States alone cannot solve this crisis. While states are working hard to protect their plants and wildlife, they know biodiversity doesn’t recognize state boundaries,” said **Jeff Mauk, Executive Director of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators**. “That’s why we’re seeing an increase in state resolutions supporting a national biodiversity strategy. States are relying on the federal government for a strong baseline and coordinated action.”

A national biodiversity strategy would address the extinction crisis by requiring more effective and coordinated use of laws and policies to protect biodiversity and reverse its decline, while reasserting the United States' international leadership in advance of the next meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It would help protect and retain highly intact ecosystems, secure and restore ecosystems and their services, promote environmental justice and coordinate local, state, tribal, federal, and private landholder efforts to tackle the biodiversity crisis while also complementing the Biden administration's other habitat loss and climate change initiatives. With burgeoning threats in some of our most intact and biodiverse landscapes, the urgency for action is paramount.

"In 2020, WWF's Living Planet report showed that the overall abundance of wildlife populations globally has declined by more than two-thirds in just 50 years," **said Ginette Hemley, Senior Vice President for Wildlife Conservation, World Wildlife Fund.** "This shocking number reinforces the alarms many scientists have sounded about the dangerous decline of our planet's biodiversity and the urgent need to reverse this trend. This matters to all of us, because the health of nature underpins our own health and prosperity, as well as our long-term security. The United States has long been a leader in efforts to protect nature globally, but it also needs to lead by example. This is why we believe the Administration should put in place a strategic, whole-of-government approach to conserving America's rich biodiversity while also taking stronger steps to ensure nature-positive growth and economic development, both at home and abroad."

"Biodiversity loss is inextricably linked to the other great crises threatening our planet: climate change and zoonotic pandemics," **said John Calvelli, Executive Vice President of Public Affairs for the Wildlife Conservation Society.** "Protecting biodiversity is the foundation we must build on to help safeguard our planet's life support systems now and into the future. We urge the Biden Administration to establish a national biodiversity strategy because life on earth depends on a vibrant, healthy, and biodiverse planet."

###

#### **About Defenders of Wildlife**

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With nearly 2.2 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come. For more information, visit [defenders.org/newsroom](https://defenders.org/newsroom) and follow us on Twitter [@Defenders](https://twitter.com/Defenders).

#### **About the International Fund for Animal Welfare**

The International Fund for Animal Welfare is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. We are experts and everyday people, working across seas, oceans and in more than 40 countries around the world. We rescue, rehabilitate and release animals, and we restore and protect their natural habitats. The problems we're up against are urgent and complicated. To solve them, we match fresh thinking with bold action. We partner with local communities, governments, non-governmental organizations and businesses. Together, we pioneer new and innovative ways to help all species flourish. See how at [ifaw.org](https://ifaw.org)

#### **About the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators**

Created by and for state legislators, the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that organizes over 1,200 environmentally-committed state legislators from all 50 states and both parties. NCEL provides venues and opportunities for lawmakers to share ideas and collaborate on environmental issues

#### **About Wildlife Conservation Society**

WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. To achieve our mission, WCS, based at the Bronx Zoo, harnesses the power of its Global Conservation Program in nearly 60 nations and in all the world's oceans and its five wildlife parks in New York City, visited by 4 million people annually. WCS combines its expertise in the field, zoos, and aquarium to achieve its conservation mission.

Visit: [newsroom.wcs.org](https://newsroom.wcs.org). Follow: [@WCSNewsroom](https://twitter.com/WCSNewsroom).

#### **About Natural Resources Defense Council**

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 2 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, MT, and Beijing. Visit us at [www.nrdc.org](https://www.nrdc.org) and follow us on Twitter [@NRDC](https://twitter.com/NRDC).

#### **About Earthjustice**

Earthjustice is the premier nonprofit environmental law organization. We wield the power of law and the strength of partnership to protect people's health, to preserve magnificent places and wildlife, to advance clean energy, and to combat climate change. We are here because the earth needs a good lawyer.

#### **About World Wildlife Fund**

WWF is one of the world's leading conservation organizations, working for 60 years in nearly 100 countries to help people and nature thrive. With the support of more than 5 million supporters worldwide, WWF is dedicated to delivering science-based solutions to preserve the diversity and abundance of life on Earth, halt the degradation of the environment, and combat the climate crisis. Visit [worldwildlife.org](http://worldwildlife.org) to learn more; follow [@WWFNews](https://twitter.com/WWFNews) on Twitter to keep up with the latest conservation news; and sign up for our newsletter and news alerts [here](#).