

June 1, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We are deeply grateful for the unprecedented steps you have taken in your first 100 days in office to address the compounding environmental crises we face, setting our country on a course to tackle climate change, address racial inequities, meet our obligations to tribal governments, review the harmful actions of the past administration, make once-in-a-generation investments to modernize our infrastructure, and conserve thirty percent of our lands and waters by 2030, all while restoring America's role as a global leader.

As part of these ongoing efforts, we are writing to encourage you to also establish a National Biodiversity Strategy in order to ensure we are doing everything possible to address the global biodiversity crisis, which is both intertwined with the climate crisis and an existential challenge in its own right. Such a strategy would leverage and build on the bold initiatives you have already launched, including the *America the Beautiful* report, to guide U.S. government efforts to protect and restore nature and prevent the loss of species and critical ecosystems, both at home and abroad. It would also be consistent with your own long-standing leadership on these issues, including the resolution you championed while Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee calling for the United States to lead the world in global efforts to conserve natural resources and prevent the extinction of species.

The global scientific consensus is that as many as one million species are at risk of extinction,¹ and studies show that over the past 50 years wildlife populations have seen dramatic declines, with populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians falling by nearly 70 percent on average.² Much like the climate crisis, the loss of biodiversity presents a direct threat to our security, health, and well-being. Biodiversity is critical to the healthy ecosystems upon which we all rely for clean water, fertile soil, the foods we eat, and the very air we breathe. As we lose species, ecosystems can degrade and may even collapse. The loss of nature and biodiversity also disproportionately impacts communities of color, low-income communities, tribal communities, and others that have historically faced environmental injustice.

The increasing loss of wildlife, habitats and ecosystem services also has clear economic impacts, as detailed in a groundbreaking study commissioned by the UK government and released earlier this year.³ In 2020, a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that the annual value of terrestrial ecosystem services, including terrestrial

¹ Diaz, S., J. Settele, E. S. Brondizio, et al. 2019. "Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services." Available at: <https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>.

² WWF (2020) Living Planet Report 2020 - Bending the curve of biodiversity loss. Almond, R.E.A., Grooten M. and Petersen, T. (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland. Available at: <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-us/>.

³ Dasgupta, P. (2021), *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review*. (London: HM Treasury)

biodiversity, are roughly equivalent to annual global gross domestic product,⁴ while the World Economic Forum's 2020 *Global Risks Report* identified biodiversity loss as one of the top five threats to the global economy in terms of both its likelihood and its impact.⁵ The loss and over-exploitation of nature is also at the root of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic and other zoonotic diseases, which result from the spillover of zoonotic pathogens from wildlife to humans, including SARS, Ebola, and HIV. Such spillover events are increasing in frequency, driven by deforestation and land degradation, and legal and illegal wildlife trade.⁶

The initiatives you have put in motion can make significant progress to address this crisis. In particular, the 30x30 goal at the center of the *America the Beautiful* initiative highlights the extinction crisis and directly addresses two of the key drivers of biodiversity loss: habitat destruction and climate change. Habitat destruction is a primary driver of global biodiversity loss, with humans having severely altered 75% of the world's lands and 66% of its marine environments,⁷ but more than half of the current crisis is due to three other drivers: over-exploitation of wildlife, pollution, and invasive species.⁸ Building on the momentum you have created and the *America the Beautiful* initiative, a National Biodiversity Strategy would provide the strategic, comprehensive, and whole-of-government approach that we urgently need to halt and reverse nature loss and secure our planet's rich biodiversity and the essential benefits that it provides, for our own immediate well-being and that of future generations.

Such a strategy, as embodied in Representative Joe Neguse's H.Res.69, should address the five drivers of biodiversity loss, secure and restore critical ecosystem services, promote social equity and environmental justice, and coordinate a strong national response to tackling the biodiversity crisis both at home and abroad. The Strategy should also direct a whole-of-government approach in which federal agencies work collaboratively and innovatively to pursue actions within existing laws and policies and identify where new ones may need to be developed to protect biodiversity. The collaborative and inclusive approach outlined in H. Res. 69, involving extensive public input from various stakeholders, directly reflects the approach taken in *America the Beautiful*.

Such a Strategy would also help elevate America's role in advancing biodiversity conservation globally at a critical moment, through enhanced U.S. leadership, diplomatic engagement, and investment. This year is a critical one for global efforts to reverse nature loss, as countries come together to set 2030 goals under the Convention for Biological Diversity. To effectively halt biodiversity loss, the global investment needed is estimated at \$700 billion a year, yet only \$145 billion is spent annually.⁹

⁴ Arneth, Almut, Denton, Fatima, et al. 2020. "Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems. Chapter 1: Framing and context." Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-1/>.

⁵ World Economic Forum. The Global Risks Report 2020. Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risk_Report_2020.pdf.

⁶ Walzer, C. "COVID-19 and the Curse of Piecemeal Perspectives." (Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 23 September 2020). Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2020.582983/full>.

⁷ Diaz, S. et al. 2019.

⁸ Diaz, S. et al. 2019.

⁹ Deutz, A., Heal, G. M., Niu, R., Swanson, E., Townshend, T., Zhu, L., Delmar, A., Meghji, A., Sethi, S. A., and Tobinde la Puente, J. 2020. Financing Nature: Closing the global biodiversity financing gap. The

The strong connection between biodiversity loss and the climate crisis was highlighted by a number of world leaders at your recent Climate Summit, and it will be a strong theme of several more international summits this year. The U.S. has a chance to step back firmly into a position of global leadership on biodiversity conservation. This month at the G7 summit, tackling climate change and preserving the planet's biodiversity will both be key agenda items. The G7, along with other critical moments in the next six months such as the G20, the UN General Assembly, the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, and the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties in China, presents an opportunity to elevate and advance your administration's work to halt the global loss of nature and biodiversity. We ask that you leverage these moments to join world leaders, including other G7 Heads of State, in signing on to the Leaders Pledge for Nature and to follow this up with the creation of a National Biodiversity Strategy for the United States. Only through a strategic and comprehensive approach can the U.S. government help to meet the scope and scale of the biodiversity crisis and help lead the world in protecting and beginning to restore nature over the coming decade.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League
American Bird Conservancy
Animal Defenders International
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute
Animals Asia Foundation
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Azul
Born Free USA
CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society (CEWS)
Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition
Christian Council of Delmarva
Colorado Native Plant Society
Conservation Council For Hawaii
Conservation Northwest
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice

Paulson Institute, The Nature Conservancy, and the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability. Available at: https://www.paulsoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/FINANCING-NATURE_Full-Report_Final-Version_091520.pdf.

Earthworks
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Center of San Diego
Friends of the Bitterroot
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Heirs To Our Oceans
Humane Society International (HSI)
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Information Network for Responsible Mining
Inland Ocean Coalition
International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Klamath Forest Alliance
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Maine Audubon
National Aquarium
National Ocean Protection Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
Native Plant Society of the United States
Natural Resources Council of Maine
Natural Resources Defense Council
NY4WHALES
Oceanic Preservation Society
Oregon Wild
Panthera
Pelican Island Audubon Society
Rocky Mountain Wild
San Juan Citizens Alliance
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Save the Manatee Club
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Alaska
Sierra Forest Legacy

Southern Environmental Law Center
Southwest Environmental Center
TFMPL
The Humane Society of the United States
The Wilderness Society
Turner Endangered Species Fund
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Western Environmental Law Center
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western Watersheds Project
Wildlands Network
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wolf Conservation Center
Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN)
World Wildlife Fund
Yaak Valley Forest Council