

SOLVING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Congressional Action Plan for a Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy, Resilient, and Just America

Protecting America's Lands, Waters, Ocean, and Wildlife

America's natural areas can provide some of the most cost-effective and enduring solutions to the climate crisis, as roots and soils capture and store carbon. The condition of natural areas, however, is rapidly declining as the country loses large swaths to roads, urban sprawl, energy development, and other activities. Destruction of natural space, including deforestation, wetland loss, and grassland degradation, persists, and warming temperatures and habitat loss threaten the survival of America's wildlife. At the same time, U.S. land management agencies have long maintenance and infrastructure backlogs, and federal restoration programs are chronically underfunded.



CAPTURE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

To achieve an economywide goal of net-zero emissions by midcentury and improve community and ecosystem resilience, Congress will need to expand protections for America's lands, waters, ocean, and wildlife. Strong conservation policies and initiatives and generous investments in the protection and restoration of America's landscapes and ecosystems must be a cornerstone of any comprehensive climate strategy.

CONGRESS SHOULD:

Establish a national goal of protecting at least 30% of all U.S. lands and ocean areas by 2030, prioritizing high-value protection designations and areas with high ecological, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration value, and working collaboratively with tribes, state governments, private landowners, and local communities to achieve this goal.

Protect and restore forests and grasslands by expanding protections for mature and old growth forests; directing federal land management agencies to develop a strategy to protect native grasslands; and increasing investments in forest and grassland restoration, reforestation, and afforestation on federal and nonfederal lands, including urban areas.

Protect and restore ocean and wetland ecosystems by addressing ocean and coastal acidification; incorporating climate adaptation into fisheries management; and prioritizing and funding natural infrastructure for coastal resilience.

Address the biodiversity crisis and help wildlife adapt to climate change, by establishing wildlife corridors; implementing a national landscape-level wildlife conservation strategy; supporting the efforts of private landowners to conserve habitat; and improving implementation of the Endangered Species Act in the context of climate change.

Ensure equitable access to natural spaces and opportunities for restoration work by developing and expanding environmental justice initiatives and reestablishing the Civilian Conservation Corps with a focus on recruiting and hiring individuals from environmental justice communities and other vulnerable populations.