

# GETTING TO 30X30: **A Roadmap for States**



State conservation strategies for protecting  
at least 30% of our terrestrial and marine  
systems by 2030



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## Acknowledgments

Defenders of Wildlife's Center for Conservation Innovation (CCI) identifies pressing conservation challenges and harnesses the power of science, technology and policy to address them. The recommendations in this document are based on our research on how to effectively and strategically achieve conserve at least 30% of our lands and waters by 2030.

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Cover photo: A forest and stream in Lower Providence Township, Eagleville, Pennsylvania, is the type of scene familiar to many and that can be expanded and conserved through 30x30. Photo CC: BY-SA 3.0 "Mortis", Wikimedia Commons.

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## Introduction

The Earth is facing environmental crisis. A 2019 global assessment by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reported that approximately 1 million species around the world face extinction unless action is taken to reduce the drivers of biodiversity loss.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. is no exception to this. For example, in North America, nearly 3 billion birds have disappeared since 1970.<sup>2</sup> Development has degraded or destroyed significant parts of the natural landscape, threatening some of the more than \$5 trillion dollars' worth of ecosystem services provided by nature.<sup>3</sup> Since European colonization, the contiguous U.S. has lost more than 100 million acres of wetlands.<sup>4</sup> And over 1,000 American plants and animals are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Biodiversity loss compounds, and is compounded by, climate change. Climate change helps drive habitat and species loss, while at the same time the loss of biodiversity can lead to increased emissions of greenhouse gases and the loss of carbon sequestration in natural lands. Loss of biodiversity can also make human communities more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change as the natural protective effects of ecosystems like wetlands and coral reefs are reduced.

The biodiversity and climate crises must therefore be addressed together. How do we do that? A science-driven plan called the Global Deal for Nature, calls for "30x30" as a key part of the solution.

## What is 30x30?

30x30 is the goal of protecting at least 30% of Earth's terrestrial and marine systems by 2030 to help mitigate the worst of the biodiversity and climate crises. By protecting lands from development, extractive industries or other adverse uses, we can not only prevent extinction and preserve precious natural systems but also help mitigate the impacts of climate change and maintain the ecosystem services provided

by those natural systems. Scientists say that by following 30x30 we can keep the global temperature increase below a critical 1.5°C threshold and help stave off mass extinctions.

## What role can states play in 30x30?

Achieving the goal of protecting at least 30% of lands and waters for biodiversity conservation and climate protection will require the work of federal, state, tribal and local governments, as well as private landowners, conservation groups, scientists, industry and members of the public. In the U.S., the federal government owns approximately 28% of all land, state and local governments own an additional 8%, tribes own approximately 7%<sup>5</sup>, and the remainder is in private hands. To achieve 30x30 nationally and globally, state action will therefore be critical, in terms of acquiring and/or protecting state lands, leveraging state expertise and working with tribal and private landowners in the state to protect private lands through mechanisms such as conservation easements and other voluntary agreements. In turn, states and their residents will benefit from increased ecosystem services offered by protected lands.

Politicians, legislators, and conservation groups across the country have already taken important steps toward meeting 30x30. President Biden issued an executive order setting forth 30x30 as a goal and ordering federal agencies to develop a plan for the U.S. to implement it in partnership with state, local, tribal and territorial governments, as well as other key stakeholders<sup>6</sup>. 30x30 resolutions have also been introduced in the House and Senate. In California, the governor issued an executive order making 30x30 a state policy, while Hawaii has developed a 30x30 plan for marine waters under state jurisdiction.

## What is the purpose of this document?

This document is intended as a high-level roadmap of a possible approach to 30x30 implementation at the state level. Based on scientific literature, ongoing 30x30 initiative work at the federal and state level and governance strategies that have proven effective in other contexts, it offers a starting point for policymakers, agency staff and legislators interested in developing a 30x30 plan for their state.

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<sup>1</sup> IPBES. 2019. The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Summary for Policymakers. [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-02/ipbes\\_global\\_assessment\\_report\\_summary\\_for\\_policymakers\\_en.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-02/ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Rosenberg, L. V. et al. 2019. "Decline of the North American avifauna." *Science* 366 (6461): 120-124.

<sup>3</sup> IPBES. 2018. The Regional Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for the Americas: Summary for Policymakers. [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/spm\\_americas\\_2018\\_digital.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/spm_americas_2018_digital.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> EPA. Wetlands - Status and Trends. [https://archive.epa.gov/water/archive/web/html/vital\\_stats.html](https://archive.epa.gov/water/archive/web/html/vital_stats.html)

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<sup>5</sup> This includes trust lands held by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, allotted Tribal lands, and in-fee Tribal lands.

<sup>6</sup> E.O. 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad (Jan. 27, 2021).

In it we lay out a “model” for what 30x30 implementation may look like at the state level. We review a comprehensive process involving executive and legislative actions, outreach and education, and coordination with the federal government, local governments, tribes, private landowners, hunting and fishing groups, conservation groups and other states. This document is merely a starting point—implementing 30x30 at the state level requires the in-depth and local expertise of policymakers, state agencies, scientists and communities.

This document also provides information and links to additional resources on 30x30 implementation (Appendix A) and model governance documents that can be customized and incorporated into individual state 30x30 initiatives where appropriate.

### What qualifies as “protected” under 30x30?

The question as to what lands would be counted as “protected” for meeting 30x30 goals is complicated—governments, scientists and conservationists are still working out the answer. While clearly areas such as wilderness areas, with minimal to no human presence, would qualify as “protected,” areas that have a more substantial human footprint, such as park areas with significant roads and infrastructure, may not. Similarly, 30x30 protections may be consistent with some recreational uses (such as sustainable hunting and fishing) but not others (such as intensive off-road vehicle use).

When developing a 30x30 strategy, states should prioritize acquiring and protecting lands in a manner that minimizes the human footprint and maximizes ecological health and biodiversity, as well as carbon sequestration. One possible definition is:

*For the purposes of 30x30, “protect” or “conserve” means the establishment of enduring measures that support thriving biodiversity, contribute to climate resilience, and provide ecosystem services, such that the natural character, resources and functions of lands and waters are maintained or enhanced now and into the future, both individually and as part of an interconnected network of healthy lands and waters.*

This can capture a wide variety of managed lands while ensuring that such areas meet the primary goals of 30x30: to conserve biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Another possible, albeit more general definition, is simply:

## The U.S. Geological Survey’s Protected Areas Database

Existing datasets and tools allow state and local policymakers to evaluate the extent to which lands within their boundaries are already protected, as well as what areas may be candidates for protection. One currently existing protected area classification system was developed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), which created and maintains the official [Protected Areas Database of the U.S. \(PAD-US\)](#). The agency classifies each area in the database using a numerical status code:

1. An area having permanent protection from conversion of natural land cover and a mandated management plan to maintain a natural state.
2. An area having permanent protection from conversion of natural land cover and a mandated management plan to reduce or mitigate natural disturbances.
3. Permanent protections in majority of area, but some portions are subject to extractive uses such as timber production or mining.
4. No known conservation mandate; GAP 4 lands generally allow conversion to unnatural land cover throughout their area.



*The USGS's Protected Areas Database explorer offers an effective way to quickly view protected areas data.*

*For the purposes of 30x30, protected lands are clearly defined areas that are managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services, including but not limited to wildlife habitat and natural carbon sequestration.*

In some cases determining whether specific areas meet the “protected” criteria of 30x30 may be difficult. As a general rule of thumb, states should prioritize stronger protections over weaker ones, but the perfect should not be the enemy of the good—even partial biodiversity protections will have beneficial, real-world impacts.

### The Role of Private Lands in 30X30: Land Acquisition and Conservation Easements

Given the ambitious scope of 30x30, reaching its goal will require protecting privately owned land through voluntary agreements. A variety of methods exist where state and local governments can work with private landowners to ensure biodiversity and climate change protections. Perhaps the simplest situation is where the government purchases land outright from willing sellers. But conservation easements offer another path to protection.

Easements are interests in a property that can be donated or sold by a landowner while he or she still retains ownership of the land. Conservation easements are created when a landowner donates or sells the



(credit: Steve Hillebrand, USFWS)

promise of setting aside specific land to protect biodiversity or ecosystem services. For example, under the terms of a conservation easement, a farmer may be required to conserve a specific area of their own land. If they violate the terms of that easement, the easement holder can seek judicial remedies. Conservation easements can be donated, sold or conveyed through a combination of the two (or what are known as “bargain sales”). The holder of the easement can be the state or a nonprofit land trust.

Treatment of conservation easements under state law often vary from state to state. Several states have adopted the Uniform Conservation Easement Act recommended by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. State legislatures can foster greater use and effectiveness of conservation easements by ensuring:

### Criteria for Effective 30x30 Implementation

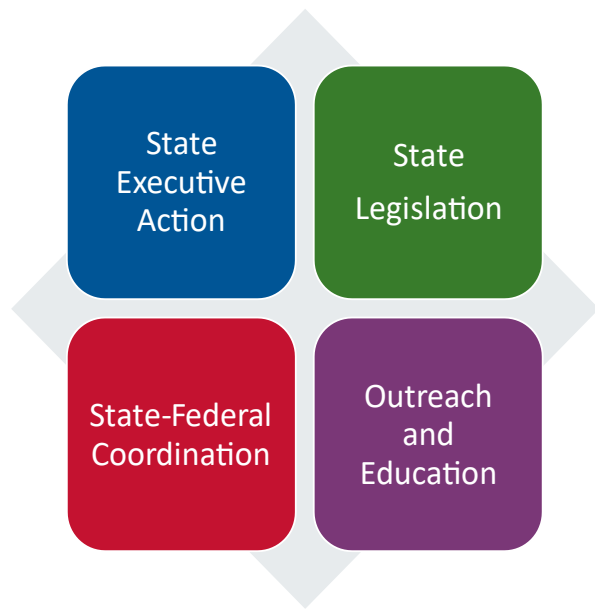
- **Develop and Use the Best Available Science:** Ensure that management decisions are scientifically sound, relying on not only available science but also generating new scientific inquiry when necessary. The state can help catalyze the science for 30x30 by adhering to all the criteria for effective implementation described here.
- **Take Into Account Probable Future Conditions:** The goal of 30x30 is to protect biodiversity and mitigate climate change into the future. When selecting, acquiring or designating lands for protection, it is important to predict future conditions to the extent possible. Protecting areas that are climate refugia, or may provide important corridors for species as climate change alters their range, is important.
- **Ensure Public Involvement:** Involve public stakeholders in all stages of 30x30 implementation, including tribes and historically underrepresented communities. Broad public engagement will help ensure the durability of the program.
- **Recognize Environmental Equity:** Make sure land and water conservation decisions are equitable, and everyone in the state has the opportunity to make their voices heard.
- **Adequately Fund 30x30:** Fund 30x30 activities sufficiently to meet state goals, from essential science to state-managed lands and water purchases to agreements with private landowners.

- Favorable state tax treatment for those who donate easements, including access to transferrable state tax credits.
- Adequate funding for relevant state agencies to purchase conservation easements from private landowners.
- Required state-level registration of conservation easements in a comprehensive, up-to-date database, including detailed spatial data, the terms of the easement, the entity with the authority to enforce the easement and logging and monitoring data of easement lands.

### Timing and Deadlines

The biodiversity and climate crises are in full effect and we have precious little time to reach a goal of protecting at least 30% of terrestrial and marine environments by 2030. While developing an effective 30x30 strategy may take time, it is important to begin implementing 30x30 even while such a strategy is being developed. State agencies should begin work immediately to expand, acquire and/or protect biodiversity on state lands. As a formal strategy becomes finalized, states can refine their actions based on that strategy, but it is critical that work start immediately.

Below we describe possible steps of what a comprehensive 30x30 state implementation might look like. We categorize actions into these four general and complementary action categories:



### A Starting Point: State Executive Actions

The primary starting point for state 30x30 implementation should be at the state executive level. A comprehensive executive order setting 30x30 as a formal state goal and directing agencies to immediately take steps to implement 30x30 can help inform later legislation. Appendix B presents a model for such an executive order that fulfills the following major requirements and can be modified to reflect specific state goals, environments and laws:

#### Creating a State Agency-led Commission on Biodiversity and Climate

By ordering agencies to begin large-scale 30x30 coordination, states can leverage expertise across multiple appropriate agency domains and ensure the development of a sound, science-based state 30x30 strategy. Under an executive order, the state commission should carry out the following actions:

- Evaluate the current state of biodiversity and carbon flux and sequestration in the state using credible science and local and indigenous knowledge.
- Analyze the current landscape of protected lands and identify gaps in state authority to implement 30x30 goals and research and funding needs.
- Direct state agencies to use existing authorities and available science and local and indigenous knowledge to begin taking actions consistent with the goal of the order.
- Develop a state strategy for 30x30 for protecting biodiversity and carbon sequestration, while accounting for economic sustainability, recreational access and environmental equity.
- Continuously measure, monitor and evaluate the status of protected lands and the species inhabiting them, and refine state actions to reflect up-to-date information gathered.
- Engage with federal land management decision-making to prioritize conservation of federal lands within the state.

Furthermore, the governor through the executive order (or other channels, if no executive order is issued) should require relevant state agencies to immediately begin taking steps to implement 30x30.



## Further Governance Strategies:

### State Legislation

State legislators play a critical role in implementing 30x30 in their states, both by creating or updating state agency authorities to enable effective 30x30 actions and by appropriating funding for these actions. Codifying elements of an executive order as described above creates long-term stability and allows democratic control of 30x30 goals.

#### Creating State 30x30 Legislation

Passing 30x30 legislation affirms the importance of biodiversity protection and builds on the executive order and any work of the state commission on biodiversity and climate. This legislation should:

- Confirm that protecting at least 30% of the state's water and land areas by 2030 is a state policy.
- Codify provisions of the executive order pertaining to the creation of a commission on biodiversity and climate and its work.
- Require via statute that state agencies advocate for federal land management decision-making that prioritizes conservation.
- Address gaps in 30x30 implementation identified by the state commission—granting state agencies needed authority to acquire and protect lands where existing authorities are not sufficient, for example.
- Where necessary and permissible under state law, create funding mechanisms and set appropriations for 30x30 implementation.

Appendix C provides model legislation for meeting these goals that is based on a structure similar to the model executive order (Appendix A). This model legislation should be modified or expanded as appropriate to meet the needs of individual states. Additional sections might address existing gaps in state agency authority to acquire and conserve lands and to improve state laws concerning conservation easements (see the section on the role of private lands on page 3 for additional information).

#### 30x30 Funding

Additionally, the legislature should fully fund 30x30 implementation going forward through the appropriate state appropriations process. Funding should take into

account the need for additional agency staff and partner resources to implement 30x30, the cost of acquiring interests in land, and enforcement activities.

### State-Federal Cooperation: Leveraging Relationships and Creating New Ones

State and federal partnerships are vital to ensuring that 30x30 implementation at different levels of government is complementary, particularly efforts to reduce habitat fragmentation and create wildlife corridors and climate refugia. As per the sections above, agencies should engage with federal decision-making processes to prioritize conservation of state and federal lands that would fit into the 30x30 framework. Agencies can:

- Submit public comments through the federal rulemaking process that seek to harmonize federal land management decisions with state 30x30 priorities.
- In coordination with the state's congressional delegation, identify federal legislative opportunities for improved conservation on federal lands.
- Collaborate on landscape conservation cooperatives with federal, state, tribal and private stakeholders.

### Involving the Public: Outreach and Education

Critical across all stages of 30x30 development is thorough involvement of all relevant stakeholders. The success and failure of creating and meeting 30x30 goals will depend heavily on public support. At every step of 30x30 planning and development, agencies should:

- Create a unified state-level 30x30 promotional campaign aimed at the general public, private landowners and other stakeholders to communicate the benefits of 30x30 and ask for their involvement.
- Develop a centralized—and continuously updated—state 30x30 website to keep the public informed of the state's 30x30 goals and progress in meeting them.
- Reach out to specific stakeholder groups with targeted communications, including but not limited to public hearings, community outreach events, and written materials that promote the benefits of 30x30 and seek engagement with 30x30 implementation from the groups and their interests:

- Conservationists and conservation-minded voters (biodiversity protection, preventing extinction).
- Landowners (property value increases, availability of funds for easements).
- Tribes (coordination and enhancement of tribal conservation priorities).
- Everyone (ecosystem services, climate change mitigation).
- Work on state wildlife action plans and effective conservation agreements with federal agencies under the Endangered Species Act.
- Prioritize Land and Water Conservation grants for acquisition of lands for 30x30.

## Conclusion

As the U.S. and the world face historically unprecedented biodiversity and climate change crises, strong action is needed. The states have a critical opportunity to become leaders in 30x30 implementation, not just for this nation but as an inspiration to countries, regions and communities around the world. Proper 30x30 implementation will

require the cooperation of federal, state and local governments, tribes, the public, environmental and conservation groups, and the private sector. Determining which lands to conserve involves complex scientific, policy, economic and value questions. Conserved areas should also be examined not just individually but also at a landscape level to ensure patterns of conservation and protection maintain ecological connections, take future conditions into account and represent the diverse habitat types of the U.S.. And the process by which land is conserved should be a participatory, democratic and inclusive one.

We hope this guidance document provides useful resources for state legislators, executive agency staff and others interested in 30x30 on how to begin and sustain this process. As noted, the appendices offer additional information and tools. Appendix A lists some other useful 30x30 resources. Appendix B contains a model executive order that can be customized for the particular environmental and political landscapes of each state. Appendix C contains similarly customizable model legislation.



(credit: Ian Beckley)



## Exhibit A: Additional Resources

Though the 30x30 movement is relatively young, governmental groups, scientists, NGOs, tribes, and other entities have already developed guidelines, recommendations, and tools relevant to possible state-level 30x30 plans. A few of those resources are presented below:

- **Getting to 30x30: Guidelines for Decision Makers** is a report developed by the Center for Conservation Innovation at Defenders of Wildlife that sets out broad priorities for 30x30 implementation and provides a snapshot of the current protected status of lands in the United States:  
<https://defenders-cci.org/publication/30x30-report/>
- 30x30 is based on work of scientists around the world; one foundational paper setting forth the call for 30x30, and the scientific justification for that goal, can be found here:  
<https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/4/eaaw2869>
- An important part of 30x30 is ensuring that different types of ecosystems and habitats receive protection. To maximize the impacts of 30x30, lands designated by protection should, to the extent possible, represent all ecosystems found within state borders. The Environmental Protection Agency has developed an ecosystem classification system for the United States that may be helpful in ensuring that representation; it can be found at:  
<https://www.epa.gov/eco-research/ecoregions>
- A critical aspect of the environmental equity mandate is collaboration and coordination with Indian tribes. Any 30x30 implementation should recognize the key role tribes should play, and respect tribal sovereignty over tribal lands and lands held in trust. Some tribal leaders have come out publicly in support of 30x30 – but caution that such an initiative must ensure early inclusion of tribes, and must be carried out in recognition of how past conservation efforts have been in many cases based on human rights efforts:  
<https://indiancountrytoday.com/opinion/tribal-leaders-support-the-30-by-30-initiative-to-protect-30-percent-of-us-lands-and-waters-O3jqs7OsJ02e2F4I2-dFqg>
- Numerous non-profit organizations maintain repositories of 30x30 information; several are listed below. Different organizations have different priorities for what 30x30 should involve; this list should not be considered an endorsement of any specific 30x30 goal:
  - Defenders of Wildlife’s 30x30 information site:  
<https://defenders-cci.org/project/30x30/>
  - Defenders of Wildlife’s app for tracking state 30x30 initiatives:  
[https://defenders-cci.org/app/states\\_30x30/](https://defenders-cci.org/app/states_30x30/)
  - The Center for Western Priorities’ Road to 30:  
<https://www.roadto30.org/>
  - The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators’ 30x30 website:  
<https://www.ncel.net/30x30/>
  - A coalition of hunting and fishing organizations’ joint 30x30 website:  
<https://www.huntfish3030.com/>

## Exhibit B: Model State Executive Order

### EXECUTIVE ORDER [NUMBER]

**WHEREAS** the well-being of [STATE'S] communities and economic sustainability are interconnected with our natural resources;

**WHEREAS** these natural resources, including but not limited to our state wildlife and plants and their habitats, are of esthetic, historical, recreational, and scientific value to [STATE] and its residents; and

**WHEREAS** these resources provide significant economic benefits in the form of ecosystem services like water filtration, carbon sequestration, pollination, and recreational opportunities; and

**WHEREAS** all areas of the country and the world – including [STATE] – face an unprecedented biodiversity crisis, with as many as one million species at risk of extinction, due to land- and sea-use change, exploitation, climate change, pollution, invasive species, and other factors; and

**WHEREAS** [State] is the home to numerous species of plants and animals that are vulnerable to extinction; and

**WHEREAS** the climate crisis is happening now, impacting [STATE] in unprecedented ways, including changing precipitation and temperature patterns, that threaten our economy, communities, public safety, and cultural and natural resources; and

**WHEREAS** as we work to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, we must also carry out actions to allow [STATE] to adapt and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, including expanding the use of natural and nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change and its impacts; and

**WHEREAS** the people of [STATE] have an important relationship with their local environment and have demanded its government preserve and protect our natural heritage; and

**WHEREAS** scientists recommend that addressing the biodiversity and climate crises will require protecting at least 30% of Earth's terrestrial and marine systems by 2030, hereafter referred to as "30X30"; and

**WHEREAS** protecting at least 30% of land and water in [STATE] will help meet this goal; and

**WHEREAS** the past designation of protected areas has resulted in systematic biases that make it harder for underrepresented and disadvantaged communities to access, enjoy, and benefit from nature; and

**WHEREAS** indigenous peoples have been systematically excluded from protected areas development and management, despite often possessing traditional ecological knowledge that can advance the protection of biodiversity and climate, and sovereignty over lands directly or in trust; and

**WHEREAS** protecting at least 30% of land and water in [STATE] will also provide additional positive benefits for its residents, including greatly expanded opportunities for observing wildlife, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational activities; and

**WHEREAS** national, local, and indigenous communities around the world are coming together to accelerate implementation of nature-based solutions to our climate and biodiversity crises, improve the way land is managed to sequester carbon pollution from the atmosphere, protecting their communities by building natural resilience to climate-driven disasters, and restoring healthy ecosystems; and

**WHEREAS** addressing the biodiversity and climate crises, and preserving natural landscapes and the ecosystem services they provide will require inclusive partnerships among and between federal agencies, state and local governments, tribes, local communities, the private sector, scientists, environmentalists, and other stakeholders,

NOW THEREFORE, for the reasons set forth above, I, [Governor's name], by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the state of [State], hereby order:

1. The State of [STATE] sets the goal of protecting at least 30 percent of lands and waters in the state by 2030 for the purposes of conserving biodiversity and mitigating the impacts of climate change, hereafter referred to as "30X30."
2. To combat the biodiversity and climate crises, and to help meet the goals of this Order, there is established a state Commission on Biodiversity and Climate to be convened and co-chaired by [PRINCIPAL NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AGENCIES]. Additional members of the Commission shall include the heads of [LIST OF RELEVANT STATE AGENCIES, E.G. TRANSPORTATION, AGRICULTURE] or their designees. This Commission is established to develop and implement an overall strategy to address the biodiversity and climate crises in [STATE] and to implement the goals of 30x30.
3. The co-chairs of the Commission shall develop internal procedures to carry out the Commission's work. To the extent permitted by law, and subject to the availability of appropriations, [APPROPRIATE NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AGENCY] shall provide the Commission with funding and administrative support.
4. The Commission shall create a science advisory committee, made up of appropriate scientific experts from federal and state agencies, tribes, academia, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations, to advise the Commission on its work.
5. The Commission shall consult with relevant stakeholders in carrying out its responsibilities, including federal agencies with land management or species conservation responsibilities, local governments, local communities, tribes, private businesses, private landowners, land trusts, hunting and fishing groups, and conservation groups.
6. The Commission, with the assistance of the science advisory committee shall carry out the following activities:
  - a. Establish a baseline assessment of [STATE's] biodiversity status and trends that builds upon existing data and information, and uses the best available science, including where appropriate, indigenous and local knowledge of biodiversity protection.
  - b. Identify research gaps in implementing 30x30 in [STATE] and develop proposals to address those gaps through the [STATE'S] university system and other appropriate institutions.
  - c. Establish a baseline assessment of carbon flux and sequestration in all lands and waters within [STATE'S] borders.
  - d. Analyze and project the impact of climate change and other current and future stressors on [STATE's] biodiversity, adaptive capacity, and ecosystem services.



- e. Establish a baseline assessment of the value of ecosystem services within [STATE'S] borders and the ecosystem service benefits derived from and provided to other states.
  - f. Develop a framework for identifying and protecting public and private lands for inclusion in a 30x30 system in a way that balances the need for biodiversity protection, carbon sequestration, environmental equity, and public access.
  - g. Inventory current biodiversity protection efforts across all sectors and land managers and identify opportunities for additional action to preserve, restore and enhance biodiversity through state actions, including through partnerships with local governments, federal agencies, private landowners, academia, and others.
  - h. Identify funding needs for full 30x30 implementation, including but not limited to funding needed for adequate land acquisition, land management including restoration, and to meet scientific research needs.
  - i. Identify current gaps in state agency authority to fully implement the goals of 30x30 and offer possible legislative and regulatory changes that could address these gaps.
  - j. Within one year of the date of this order, submit to the governor's office and the legislature a report on the information generated through the activities listed above.
7. Within two years of the date of this order, the Commission shall develop and submit to the governor's office a comprehensive strategy that sets forth the steps needed to protect biodiversity and achieve 30x30 in [STATE] in a manner that:
- a. Protects and restores biodiversity across all regions and habitat types across the state.
  - b. Safeguards [STATE'S] economic sustainability and food security.
  - c. Offers a rigorous methodology for prioritizing lands for protection, taking into account current and future biodiversity needs, carbon stocks and sequestration capacity, ecosystem services, economic sustainability, environmental equity, compatible recreational access, and the status of adjacent lands.
  - d. Enables enduring conservation measures through a broad range of landscapes, including natural areas and working lands, in partnership with land managers and natural resource user groups.
  - e. Ensures that state efforts to implement 30x30 complement other state and federal 30x30 initiatives.
  - f. Builds climate resilience and adaptation, ensures and improves carbon sequestration, reduces risk from extreme climate events and contributes to [STATE'S] efforts to combat climate change.
8. To advance efforts to conserve biodiversity, and beginning immediately, all state agencies identified in item (2) above are also directed to take the following actions within existing authority and resources:

- a. Strategically prioritize investments in cooperative, high value actions that promote biodiversity protection, habitat restoration, climate adaptation and mitigation, sustainable management, and other conservation outcomes.
  - b. Implement actions to increase the pace, scale, and effectiveness of environmental restoration and land management efforts by streamlining permitting approval processes for restoration and other conservation activities.
  - c. Communicate the importance of biodiversity protection and 30x30 in [STATE] to agency staff, the regulated community, and the public.
  - d. Collaborate with federal, state, academic research institutions and tribes to develop and/or utilize advanced monitoring technology, research, and indigenous and local knowledge to better understand the status of biodiversity in [STATE] and the threats to it.
  - e. Coordinate with appropriate state agencies in other states to optimize biodiversity protection, reduce adverse ecosystem fragmentation, and create or maintain functional wildlife corridors.
  - f. Participate as appropriate in global, national, regional, and local efforts to advance biodiversity protection and help stem extinctions across the world.
  - g. Engage with federal land management agencies, and advocate for federal decision-making that prioritizes protecting and conserving biodiversity through formal and informal partnerships, and public comment and hearing opportunities.
9. This order supersedes any other previous orders, proclamations, directives or guidance in conflict with its terms. This Executive Order shall take effect immediately and shall remain in effect until such time as it is rescinded by the Governor.

Issued this [DATE] day of [MONTH],

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Governor of [STATE]

## Exhibit C: Model State 30x30 Legislation

### BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE PROTECTION ACT

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act may be cited as the Biodiversity and Climate Protection Act.

#### SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS.

- (a) "30X30" means the goal of protecting at least 30% of the earth's terrestrial, marine, and aquatic resources by 2030 in order to protect and restore biodiversity and to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- (b) "Biodiversity" means the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part, including diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.
- (c) "Carbon sequestration" means the capture of carbon dioxide through terrestrial, geological, biological, or other natural means, which prevents the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This includes, but is not limited to, the process by which atmospheric carbon dioxide is taken up by trees, grasses, and other plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass (trunks, branches, foliage, and roots) and soils.
- (d) "Ecosystem services" means the benefits people derive from ecosystems, such as the provisioning of services or goods like food, wood and other raw materials, plants, animals, fungi, and micro-organisms that provide essential regulating services such as pollination of crops, prevention of soil erosion, and water purification.
- (e) "Environmental equity" means the distribution of environmental risks and benefits regardless of race, income, ethnicity, nationality, or other characteristics, and the inclusion of all stakeholders in environmental decision-making that impacts them, particularly historically underrepresented and marginalized groups.
- (f) "Natural and nature-based solutions" means features that are natural, restored to a natural state, or that use non-built elements to mimic natural processes in order to preserve, enhance, and/or protect biodiversity, protect human and non-human communities from hazardous events, and preserve or enhance ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration.
- (g) For the purposes of 30x30, "protect" or "conserve" means the establishment of enduring measures that support thriving biodiversity, contribute to climate resilience, and provide ecosystem services, such that the natural character, resources and functions of lands and waters are maintained or enhanced now and into the future, both individually and as part of an interconnected network of healthy lands and waters.

#### SECTION 3. FINDINGS, GOALS AND POLICIES.

1. The people of [STATE] have an important relationship with their local environment and have demanded its government preserve and protect our natural policies.
2. It is therefore the goal of [STATE] to protect at least 30 percent of lands and waters in the state by 2030 for the purposes of conserving biodiversity and mitigating the impacts of climate change, hereafter referred to as "30X30."



## SECTION 4. STATE COMMISSION ON BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE.

1. To reach 30x30 there is established a State Commission on Biodiversity and Climate to be convened and co-chaired by [PRINCIPAL NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AGENCIES]. Additional members of the Commission shall include the heads of [LIST OF RELEVANT STATE AGENCIES, E.G. TRANSPORTATION, AGRICULTURE] or their designees. This Commission is established to develop and implement an overall strategy to address the biodiversity and climate crises in [STATE] and to implement the goals of 30x30.
2. The co-chairs of the Commission shall develop internal procedures to carry out the Commission's work. [APPROPRIATE NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AGENCY] shall provide the Commission with funding and administrative support.
3. The Commission shall create a science advisory committee, made up of appropriate scientific experts from federal and state agencies, tribes, academia, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations, to advise the Commission on its work.
4. The Commission shall consult with relevant stakeholders in carrying out its responsibilities, including federal agencies with land management or species conservation responsibilities, local governments, local communities, tribes, private businesses, private landowners, land trusts, hunting and fishing groups, and conservation groups.
5. The Commission, with the assistance of the science advisory committee shall carry out the following activities:
  - a. Establish a baseline assessment of [STATE's] biodiversity status and trends that builds upon existing data and information, and uses the best available science, including where appropriate, traditional indigenous and local knowledge.
  - b. Identify research gaps in implementing 30x30 in [STATE] and develop proposals to address those gaps through the [STATE'S] university system and other appropriate institutions.
  - c. Establish a baseline assessment of carbon flux and sequestration in all lands and waters within [STATE'S] borders.
  - d. Analyze and project the impact of climate change and other current and future stressors on [STATE's] biodiversity, adaptive capacity, and ecosystem services.
  - e. Establish a baseline assessment of the value of ecosystem services within [STATE'S] borders and the ecosystem service benefits derived from and provided to other states.
  - f. Develop a framework for identifying and protecting public and private lands for inclusion in a 30x30 system in a way that balances the need for biodiversity protection, carbon sequestration, environmental equity, and public access.
  - g. Inventory current biodiversity protection efforts across all sectors and land managers and identify opportunities for additional action to preserve, restore and enhance biodiversity through state

actions, including through partnerships with local governments, federal agencies, private landowners, academia, and others.

- h. Identify funding needs for full 30x30 implementation, including but not limited to funding needed for adequate land acquisition, land management including restoration, and to meet scientific research needs.
  - i. Identify current gaps in state agency authority to fully implement the goals of 30x30 and offer possible legislative and regulatory changes that could address these gaps.
  - j. Within one year of the date of this order, submit to the legislature and the governor's office a report on the information generated through the activities listed above.
- 6. Within either two years of the date of the passage of this law or the issuance of an executive order requiring a substantially similar process, whichever is earlier, the Commission shall develop and submit to the legislature and governor's office a comprehensive strategy that sets forth the steps needed to protect biodiversity and achieve 30x30 in [STATE] in a manner that:
  - a. Protects and restores biodiversity across all regions and habitat types across the state.
  - b. Safeguards [STATE'S] economic sustainability and food security.
  - c. Offers a rigorous methodology for prioritizing lands for protection, taking into account current and future biodiversity needs, carbon stocks and sequestration capacity, ecosystem services, economic sustainability, environmental equity, compatible recreational access, and the status of adjacent lands.
  - d. Enables enduring conservation measures through a broad range of landscapes, including natural areas and working lands, in partnership with land managers and natural resource user groups.
  - e. Ensures that state efforts to implement 30x30 complement other state and federal 30x30 initiatives.
  - f. Builds climate resilience, ensures and improves carbon sequestration, reduces risk from extreme climate events and contributes to [STATE'S] efforts to combat climate change.
- 7. To advance efforts to conserve biodiversity, and beginning immediately, all state agencies identified in item (2) above are also directed to take the following actions within existing authority and resources:
  - a. Strategically prioritize investments in cooperative, high value actions that promote biodiversity protection, habitat restoration, climate adaptation and mitigation, sustainable management, and other conservation outcomes.
  - b. Implement actions to increase the pace, scale, and effectiveness of environmental restoration and land management efforts by streamlining permitting approval processes for restoration and other conservation activities.
  - c. Communicate the importance of biodiversity protection and 30x30 in [STATE] to agency staff, the regulated community, and the public.

- d. Collaborate with federal, state, academic research institutions and tribes to develop and/or utilize advanced monitoring technology, research, and traditional indigenous and local knowledge to better understand the status of biodiversity in [STATE] and the threats to it.
- e. Coordinate with appropriate state agencies in other states to optimize biodiversity protection, reduce adverse ecosystem fragmentation, and create or maintain functional wildlife corridors.
- f. Participate as appropriate in global, national, regional, and local efforts to advance biodiversity protection and help stem extinctions across the world.
- g. Engage with federal land management agencies, and advocate for federal decision-making that prioritizes protecting and conserving biodiversity through formal and informal partnerships, and public comment and hearing opportunities.