



**SIERRA
CLUB**

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January 6, 2022

Raymond Suazo, State Director
Arizona State Office
Bureau of Land Management
One North Central Ave., Suite 800
Phoenix AZ 85004

Dear Director Suazo:

As you know, President Biden has made the 30x30 initiative the centerpiece of his conservation agenda. The 30x30 initiative refers to goal of protecting 30 percent of America's lands and waters by the year 2030 to address the twin crises threatening our future: climate change and the extinction crisis. This initiative presents a great opportunity to protect additional lands and waters in Arizona and make our state more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Arizona is on the front lines of climate change, facing extreme drought, aridification, record high temperatures, and larger wildfires, all significantly impacting our public lands. The extinction crisis is real and significant – humans are causing a large loss of species described as Earth's 6th mass extinction. These twin crises undermine the ecological supports humans rely on to thrive and survive.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has made progress by creating the National Conservation Lands System that in Arizona includes five National Monuments, three National Conservation Areas, 47 Wilderness Areas, and three National Scenic and Historic Trails. We were pleased by the recent addition of the Aravapai area, an action that is consistent with the 30x30 initiative.

Significant opportunities remain for land conservation in our state. As the largest land management entity in the United States and one of the largest land managers in Arizona the BLM's role is crucial. There are two steps the BLM can implement that will significantly advance the 30x30 objectives.

The first is to resume the designation of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), a readily available tool. Of the tools at the disposal of the Department of Interior to protect the wildest places, irreplaceable cultural resources, and native species under its management, none has the sweeping potential and durability as designating new Federal Land Management Policy Act §202 Wilderness Study Areas. All WSAs are part of the BLM's National Conservation Lands and have established, off-the-shelf management practices already in place. We ask that you move now to resume and revitalize the use of this crucial tool. Sentinel Plain, Painted Rock, and Face Mountain are just a few of the areas to consider in this process.

The second step is to ban all new fossil fuel development – oil and gas drilling, oil shale development, and coal mining – on BLM lands. Right now, America’s public lands provide fossil fuels that constitute 26 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions. Our public lands need to be part of the solution to the climate crisis, not the problem. Banning new fossil fuel development would also protect species, habitats and lands we need to get to 30 percent by 2030. We hope the pending report on oil and gas drilling will include such a permanent drilling ban.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with the Biden administration and the BLM to protect 30 percent of the United States and significant lands here in Arizona by the year 2030. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss this important initiative.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandy Bahr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sandy Bahr
Chapter Director
Sierra Club – Grand Canyon Chapter