



Sierra Club California/Nevada Wilderness Committee

December 16, 2021

Dear California Bureau of Land Management State Director Karen Mouritsen:

President Biden has made the 30 by 30 initiative the centerpiece of his conservation agenda. It is a wise, actually essential, move.

“30 by 30” refers to the goal of protecting 30 percent of America’s lands and waters by the year 2030. It is essential because it enables us to connect and address together the twin nature crises threatening our future: the climate crisis and the collapse of nature.

The climate crisis—caused by greenhouse gases from land degradation and burning of fossil fuels—will, if not halted, eventually make our planet catastrophically uninhabitable for humans. The collapse of nature, most known by the extinction crisis, is such a large loss of species and biodiversity that it undermines the support system of nature that we humans rely on. To address these two crises, in addition to ending the burning of carbon fuels, [scientists tell us we need to attain the 30 by 30 goal](#) – as an achievable stepping stone toward eventual setting aside “Half Earth” for nature.

To succeed we need to go big. As the largest land management entity in the United States, the Bureau of Land Management’s role is crucial. There are two steps we hope you will implement that will significantly advance the 30 by 30 objectives.

Resuming the designation of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) is a readily available tool. Of the many tools at the Interior Department’s disposal to protect the Bureau of Land Management’s wildest places, irreplaceable cultural resources, and native species, none has the sweeping potential and durability as designating new “FLPMA § 202 Wilderness Study Areas.” All Wilderness Study Areas are part of the Bureau’s National Conservation Lands and have established, off-the-shelf management practices already in place. Sierra Club asks that you move now to resume the use of this crucial tool.

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, the burning of fossil fuels extracted from public lands is responsible for almost 26 percent of America’s 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.

In California we have an extra incentive to achieve 30 by 30, since Governor Newsom made our state the first to adopt “30 by 30” as official state policy. The California Natural Resource Agency’s new draft “Pathways to 30 by 30” document points out that we need to work for durable conservation of at least an additional 6 million acres of land, and that presently about 84 percent of our state’s conserved lands are federal lands. Thus, establishment of new WSAs has a special urgency here in California. In

addition, we hope our federal land managers will increasingly collaborate with state land managers to assure good connectivity between varied conservation units. The Pathways document contains a section on: "Strengthen Coordination Among Governments..." which emphasizes the importance of "partnerships between the State and Federal governments."

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 by the year 2030.

Sincerely,

s/

*Anne Henny*, Chair, Sierra Club California/Nevada Wilderness Committee

*Vicky Hoover*, Senior Wilderness volunteer and Wilderness Committee agency liaison