America's Wilderness

The Wilderness Society

MEMBER NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2022 • VOL. XIV, NO. 2 • WILDERNESS.ORG

Michigan Wetland Management District, Michigan
USFWS / Jim Hudgins

Protect Public Lands to Slow Species Loss

If you're like most people, the word "extinction" evokes images of dinosaurs meeting their mysterious end some 65 million years ago. You may also think of it as a one-of-a-kind event. But it's not.

We are in the midst of what scientists agree is the sixth mass extinction. Species are disappearing much faster than nature would normally dictate; thereby weakening ecosystems worldwide and affecting us all.

And it is our fault. Humankind's behavior is the direct cause of the key factors driving the extinction crisis: climate change, industrial-scale agriculture, sprawling development, pollution, deforestation and overharvesting nature's bounty.

Declining populations of pollinators like bees and butterflies pose a growing threat to global crop production and food supply (above).

Species of all kinds are being forced to migrate to survive the destruction of their habitats by human activity and changing climate conditions. But most have nowhere to go, because we have already significantly altered 75 percent of the world's land, leaving only disconnected fragments of wildlands to sustain the natural world—and ourselves.

Just as people are causing mass extinction, it is incumbent on us to stop it. And in the U.S., protecting our shared, public lands is one of the best ways to slow the extinction crisis.

Public Lands Are the Key to Sustainability

The scientific community is urging humankind to protect 30 percent of the Earth's lands and waters by 2030 (30x30) and 50 percent by 2050. Protecting and

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Dear Conservation Champion,

People and nature are at a turning point.

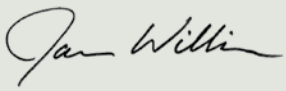
Mass extinction of species and climate change—both caused by human activity—threaten to irreparably tear the fabric of the natural world. Meanwhile, there are deep inequities in who can access nature, and who faces the most harm from its industrial exploitation. And the time we have to respond—to secure a more sustainable and equitable future for all—is running out.

Thankfully, there is real hope. For our nation's public lands offer powerful solutions to the extinction, climate and inequity crises, but only if we protect them and manage them for conservation instead of resource extraction.

America's 640 million acres of public lands are meant to benefit all of us. But **400 million acres of these shared lands are currently not protected** from industrial development.

Your continued commitment to protecting public lands—and to doing so in a way that equitably benefits everyone—is critical. Thank you for all you have already done and all that you will do!

Jamie



Jamie Williams
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The Wilderness Society recognizes Native Americans and Indigenous peoples as the longest serving stewards of the land.

To learn more visit: wilderness.org/landacknowledgment

Since 1935, The Wilderness Society has led the effort to permanently protect nearly 112 million acres of wilderness in 44 states. We have been at the forefront of nearly every major public lands victory.

Our Mission:
Uniting people to protect America's wild places.

The Wilderness Society meets all standards as set forth by the Better Business Bureau/Wise Giving Alliance.
bbb.org/charity

America's Wilderness is published four times a year by The Wilderness Society.

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Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska
Edward Bennett / Bennett Images LLC

PROTECT PUBLIC LANDS TO SLOW SPECIES LOSS continued from page 1

restoring wild nature is the only way to safeguard the supply of clean air and water and help communities and species adapt to a natural world undergoing radical, rapid change.

Roughly 14 percent of the lands and waters in the U.S. are currently protected, so we still have a long way to go to reach the 30x30 goal, and that's where public lands come in. You see, most of the large areas of relatively unspoiled lands in the U.S. are on public lands. Wilderness Society members like you have led the way to protecting 240 million acres of these shared lands, but **400 million acres have no protection** from industrial-scale oil and gas, coal, mineral and timber extraction.

And it is not just a numbers game—the location, health and biological diversity of the lands is also crucial—as is connecting protected areas via corridors of wildlands.

A Resilient Continental Network of Landscapes

Thanks to you, our world-class science team has completed the enormous task of identifying the most biologically rich large landscapes in the U.S. By protecting these landscapes, and establishing corridors of wildlands connecting them, we can create the **resilient continental network** that people and nature need.

Taken as a whole, these 76 landscapes—and the linkages among them—provide enough space and habitat to protect 95 percent of the remaining species in the U.S. In addition, the network we envision establishes pathways for the increasing number of northward migrating species struggling to adapt to a warming world.

We will bring the resilient continental network to life by:

Investing in landscapes where we can build upon a strong track record and partner with Tribes, recreationists, ranchers and others to protect landscapes and connect more people to nature through community led efforts;

Enlisting other conservation organizations to contribute to and join in this vision and to focus on landscapes where they are best positioned to accelerate community led conservation; and

Advancing new national policies and programs that will help protect lands across the entire network.

Together, and with scores of partners, we can, we must and we will rapidly conserve vast stretches of public lands to form the basis of a natural life-support system that will stand as a bulwark against extinction here and across the globe.

Tearing the Web of Life

A species dying off also affects whatever species ate it, whatever predator ate that species and so on—rippling outward along an intricate web of inter-species relationships that is the product of millions of years of evolution. That includes humans who rely on the affected plants or animals for food and shelter, to filter air and water, or to keep topsoil and hillsides in place.

Renewable Energy Development in the California Desert
Tom Brewster

We Can't Drill Our Way to Energy Independence

The U.S. oil and gas industry is capitalizing on the horrific Russian invasion of Ukraine to argue that the Biden administration must dramatically increase leasing, permitting and drilling on public lands and waters.

It is a cynical and self-serving argument. And a false one. There is no oil or gas supply problem in the U.S. But oil and gas companies opportunistically seized on this conflict to raise prices even before President Biden halted imports of oil from Russia. It was a largely symbolic move by the president, as Russia supplies less than two percent of the oil and gas consumed in the U.S.

All that the public would gain from more drilling on public lands is more of the greenhouse gas emissions that are fueling climate change and its increasingly severe damage to communities and to all of nature.

What the ripple effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine do make clear, however, is that our continued dependence on fossil fuels makes our economy vulnerable to factors that are totally out of our control.

The only path to a safe and stable future—in terms of slowing climate change, meeting our energy needs from domestic sources, and insulating our economy and consumers from aggressive foreign actors—is a full transition to a renewable energy economy.

Critically, this transition must be done in a fair and equitable way by working with communities reliant on fossil fuel extraction to ensure they can build successful and sustainable futures.

Renewable energy sources like wind, sunlight and geothermal will never run out. They do not contribute to climate change. With current technology, it's already possible to take a huge bite out of our fossil fuel dependence using responsible renewable energy production on public lands.

We need to be even stronger in making sure our friends and neighbors see through the deceptive talking points of the oil and gas industry. And we must press these companies and our elected officials to ramp up investments in renewable energy today for a more secure and sustainable tomorrow.

Equitable Access

A Guide to Changing Racist and Offensive Place Names

Public lands are supposed to be for everyone. However, thousands of mountains, rivers, lakes and other geographic features on public lands in the United States bear racist and offensive names. In an effort to help make public lands more welcoming and inclusive, the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and The Wilderness Society have co-sponsored "A Guide to Changing Racist and Offensive Place Names in the United States."

The free guide aims to make it easier for anyone—including conservationists like you—to change offensive and derogatory place names on public lands. The guide summarizes the scope of the problem, outlines which place names can be changed and provides a step-by-step manual on the renaming process.

Why is this important? As explained in the guide:

"The names we give to natural places and geographic features like parks, mountains and lakes matter. Recently, there has been a growing acknowledgement that many place names across the U.S. are derogatory and hurtful, and some are worth challenging and replacing.

Indigenous Peoples stewarded the area we call North America for thousands of years before white European settlers forcibly removed them. Africans and Black Americans were enslaved and exploited on American soil for centuries as well. The same places where these atrocities took place became our national parks, forests, wilderness areas and other cherished public lands and waters.

We can't allow the names of these natural treasures to offend the same communities still owed such a deep debt for that violent and troubled history. Yet across the United States are thousands of places and geographic features with names that honor Confederate leaders, perpetrators of atrocities against Indigenous people, and historical figures with repugnant racial views. Sometimes place names include racial or sexual slurs or are otherwise offensive. Aside from enshrining hurtful ideas and memories, these names perpetuate prejudice and racism and create an unwelcoming environment for many people on America's public lands."

This guide offers an avenue of meaningful action people can take to make public lands more welcoming to everyone; itself an important step in fulfilling our mission: *Uniting people to protect America's wild places.*

Download the free Guide to Changing Racist and Offensive Place Names in the United States at wilderness.org/placenames.

Boundary Waters Mining Leases Canceled!

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Minnesota
Jim Brandenburg / Minden Pictures

On January 26, 2022, the Department of the Interior announced it canceled leases for toxic mining in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northeastern Minnesota.

The leases had expired in 2016; but were illegally renewed by the previous administration in 2019. Their cancellation blocks the immediate threat of a mining process that would cause deforestation and leak sulfuric acid and toxic heavy metals into the sensitive watershed.

This news came just days after the close of a public comment period during which nearly 250,000 people—including thousands of Wilderness Society members like you—affirmed their support for a 20-year mining moratorium in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters announced by the Biden administration in October 2021.

While cancellation of the leases is great news, until Congress passes legislation to permanently protect the lands surrounding the Boundary Waters, the downstream Wilderness remains at risk. Earlier this year, Representative Betty McCollum (D-Minnesota) reintroduced The Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act (H.R. 2794), which would permanently withdraw more than 234,000 acres of the neighboring Superior National Forest from new sulfide-ore copper mining leases.

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is the nation's most visited wilderness area. It is also part of the ancestral home of the Ojibwe people, formally known today as the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, who retain treaty rights to gather, hunt and fish on these abundant lands and waters. It is also a sustainable economic engine for northeastern Minnesota, helping to drive more than $900 million in annual economic activity and support more than 17,000 jobs.

The Boundary Waters is also a perfect example of the kind of place we need to defend from reckless development if we're going to meet the national conservation goal of protecting 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.

Experts say protecting an interconnected network of wildlands and waters will give us the best chance at addressing and adapting to the climate and extinction crises. The Boundary Waters' carbon-rich boreal forest and water-rich ecosystem will serve as an essential refuge for imperiled species and as a restorative oasis for human visitors in the face of climate change and rapid nature loss.

Tribute to Margo Earley, 1931 – 2021

"A Wilderness Person"

A lifelong member, volunteer and generous donor to The Wilderness Society, Margo Earley made an indelible impact on the conservation community. Though she passed away in 2021, her legacy continues to inspire us today.

As a child, Margo often attended Governing Council meetings with her father, Ernest S. Griffith, Treasurer of The Wilderness Society for 30 years. Hiking with some of the giants of the early conservation movement, her passion for wilderness was born. Though busy earning a degree in zoology and music, enjoying a career in the performing arts and raising four children, this passion never waned.

Margo was an avid backpacker, completing the 211-mile John Muir Trail at age 50. Over the years, she led her family and friends on excursions throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and New Zealand. She not only developed

an encyclopaedic knowledge of trails hiked and mountain ranges visited, but a commitment to the communities that rely on these lands. On a trek to Mount Everest 20 years ago, Margo was inspired by the health needs of her porters to fund health care at a Nepalese village, where today there is a year-round medical clinic serving a community of thousands of people.

Even when she wasn't on a trail, Margo was a fierce public lands advocate, particularly after she and her husband, George, moved to Oregon in 1989. With Mount Hood National Forest at their doorstep, they hosted Wilderness First Aid training courses and offered guests the opportunity to sled with their beloved malamutes. In her later years, Margo served as an advisor to The Wilderness Society, supporting the organization's voice from the grassroots level to congressional offices in Washington, D.C.

In her commitment to wild places, Margo was an exceptional role model. Like the Seventh Generation philosophy of Indigenous nations, Margo considered her daily impact on the world to make sure that she left the future better than the present. If Margo were here today, her family insists that she would be urging us on with a spirited call to action: "Continue to fight tooth and nail for nature, because it is your future!"

Robert Marshall Council

Red Canyon, Utah
Mason Cummings

Bob Marshall created a legacy of conservation when he co-founded The Wilderness Society. Many people like you are shaping the future of wilderness with a gift in their estate plan. What will your legacy be?

To learn about smart and easy ways you can make a meaningful difference for wilderness, contact us at:

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Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Colorado
Mason Cummings

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Horse Pens 40, Alabama
Janelle Paciencia