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Over 120 Western Local Officials Call for More Protections for Bureau of Land Management of Lands

Officials Urge the Biden Administration to Take Administrative Action as Part of the America the Beautiful Initiative

Today, The Mountain Pact, an organization that works with local elected officials across the West, [released a letter signed by 123 local elected officials from western states](#) that calls on the Biden administration to protect more Bureau of Land Management lands as part of the administration's America the Beautiful initiative. The initiative is an effort to protect, conserve, connect, and restore 30 percent of the nation's lands and waters by 2030 in response to the warning by [scientists](#) that globally [we must conserve and restore at least 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030](#) if we hope to preserve biodiversity and ecosystems and mitigate the impacts of climate change. [Worldwide biodiversity is deteriorating at a faster rate than at any time in human history](#) with [one million species at risk of extinction](#) due to habitat loss, climate change, [loss of connectivity](#), and other factors.

The letter, signed by county commissioners, mayors, and council members from U.S. Western states, urges the Department of Interior and Bureau of Land Management to do all that it can through administrative processes to better restore, conserve, and protect our nation's important public lands and waters in tandem with locally-led efforts.

It goes on to ask the administration to:

"Use your authority to advance conservation across the West, by using all of the conservation tools at your disposal. Some conservation designations we recommend utilizing include: Backcountry Conservation Areas; Wilderness Study Areas; Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; and working with The White House to designate national monuments through the use of the Antiquities Act."

Some of the lands the letter highlights that need protection in the West include Vermillion Basin in Colorado, Granite Range in Nevada, the Bodie Hills in California, Hatch Canyon in Utah, Otero Mesa in New Mexico, and the Owyhee Canyonlands in Oregon.

Chaffee County, Colorado County Commissioner Keith Baker said, "When used wisely, the Bureau of Land Management conservation mechanisms will support our local economies, tourism, and outdoor recreation as well as provide certainty for our rural and gateway communities so we can make long-term investments."

Town of Truckee, California Mayor Courtney Henderson said, "Our nation's protected public lands are tremendous assets to our Western communities. They play a critical role in our way of life and support our outdoor recreation and tourism economies, health, and well-being. They help make the communities where we live what they are while contributing to a healthier and better tomorrow for future generations. We must protect and restore more of these Bureau of Land Management lands."

Nevada State Assemblyman Howard Watts said, "Many of our communities are located near Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, which include traditional homelands of Indigenous populations, vital watersheds for downstream communities, and outstanding fish and wildlife habitat. They also provide outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation, including camping, hiking, paddling, hunting and fishing, and picnicking. I was happy to join with 100 of my colleagues in encouraging the BLM and the administration to do more to protect these important places."

City of Santa Fe, New Mexico Mayor Alan Webber said, “Many of our Western communities are being devastated by the impacts of the climate crisis—wildfires, floods, mudslides, drought, and smoke. We hope that as the largest land manager in the nation, the Bureau of Land Management will play a leading role in protecting our public lands for the future.”

Anna Peterson, Executive Director of the Mountain Pact said, “Many BLM lands are at risk. For example, here in Colorado, BLM lands make up one-third of the federal public lands in our state, but only 8% of these lands are protected, significantly less than the amount of public lands managed by other agencies. Nationally, only 14% of BLM lands are permanently protected. As a result, many of the areas important to Westerners and visitors are at risk of being unnecessarily degraded or lost. It’s time for action - the administration should do more to protect more of these lands and waters, and in turn, our communities.”

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Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) mobilizes local elected officials in nearly 100 Western mountain communities with outdoor recreation based economies to speak with a collective voice on federal climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation policy.

MORE INFORMATION:

[80 percent of voters in the Rocky Mountain West](#) support setting a national goal of conserving 30 percent of land and waters in the United States by 2030 and [61 percent](#) of voters are concerned about the future of land, water, air, and wildlife.