

# Ecocentrism in the Global Biodiversity Framework

Rights of Nature/Mother Earth,  
Mother Earth Centric Actions,  
and the Intrinsic Value of Nature  
in the Global Biodiversity Framework  
and NBSAPs

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# Executive Summary

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This paper highlights the ecocentric outcomes of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and encourages states to incorporate its principles and protocols into their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and other national frameworks. In particular, this paper explains how states can implement and fund rights-based initiatives and Mother Earth centric actions to better meet the goals of the GBF, with guidance on how to receive necessary funding to achieve transformative change that restores biodiversity.



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# Introduction

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This advisory white paper aims to explain how parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) can implement its ecocentric outcomes.

**Section I** introduces the diverse ways Nature can be valued beyond its economic potential, as outlined in Section C, Point 7(b) of the GBF, and encourages countries to recognize and protect Nature's intrinsic value, such as through the recognition of the Rights of Nature. This also involves to the “non-commodification of Nature” as required under Target 19(f).

**Section II** elaborates on the importance of recognizing Nature's intrinsic value within legal systems, and how parties to the GBF can fulfill their requirement under Target 19(f) of taking an “ecocentric and rights-based” approach to the protection of biodiversity by making Nature a subject with rights. It examines successful examples from around the world wherein legal rights have been granted to Nature in constitutions, national laws, and local laws.

**Section III** focuses on the idea of “Mother Earth centric actions” as outlined in Target 19(f) of the GBF, detailing various methods by which parties can uphold their duty to implement Mother Earth centrism in law, policy, and governance structures.

Finally, **Section IV** provides guidance on how parties can access the \$200 billion per year in funding commitments (by 2030) to support the successful implementation of Target 19.

# I. The Intrinsic Value of Nature and Other Diverse Value Systems

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**Intrinsic value is the belief that biodiversity is worth protecting regardless of its benefit to or use by humans.**[1] The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) explicitly outlines the diversity of value systems regarding Nature, including its intrinsic value, as follows:

**“Nature embodies different concepts for different people, including biodiversity, ecosystems, Mother Earth, and systems of life.**

.. The Framework recognizes and considers these **diverse value systems** and concepts, including, for those countries that recognize them, rights of Nature and rights of Mother Earth, as being an integral part of its successful implementation.”

—**Section C, Point 7(b)), GBF.**[2]

Recognition of the diverse and inherent values of Nature is a critical first step in a holistic approach to environmental stewardship. Intrinsic value relies on the understanding that humans are profoundly connected to nonhuman elements of Nature and that we are all part of interdependent ecosystems. This idea has its roots in Indigenous epistemologies, as well as non-Indigenous local community traditions.

There are a growing number of legal, cultural, and economic movements based on the intrinsic and diverse values

of Nature. For example, the Rights of Nature movement is based in the understanding that Nature is not mere human property that we should protect based on its utility to humans, but instead has intrinsic value and rights of its own.

As this section explores, there are many ways that governments can begin to promote the intrinsic value of Nature and other diverse value systems in law and governance. Understanding that global economic systems are primarily rooted in the commodification of Nature, this section also introduces mechanisms to “blend” these value systems into predominant economic structures.

No matter what approach is taken, acknowledging that there are many ways to value Nature beyond human utility is essential to move toward the CBD’s 2050 goal of living in Harmony with Nature.

**“The Framework recognizes and considers these diverse value systems and concepts, including, for those countries that recognize them, rights of Nature and rights of Mother Earth, as being an integral part of its successful implementation.”**

## A. The Diverse Values of Nature and the IPBES Assessment

There is a global hyperfocus on valuing biodiversity as a means of economic growth, and a lack of acknowledgment of the myriad alternative understandings of Nature.[3] How we value Nature informs laws and policies on how to protect it.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) identified over 50 ways of valuing Nature.[4] Frameworks include:

- **Living from Nature:** Viewing Nature as a resource for human use. For example, a river is valued for fish that support economies and food security. This is largely the status quo of capitalism.
- **Living with Nature:** Recognizing human interdependence with

ecosystems. A river is valued not only for resources but also for maintaining ecological balance, with other species having intrinsic rights to thrive.

- **Living in Nature:** Valuing natural landscapes as integral to human identity, culture, and daily life. Rivers are part of a cultural fabric, contributing to a sense of place and heritage.
- **Living as Nature:** Being part of Nature, inseparable from it, spiritually and physically. A river is a mere resource but a sacred entity or family member, reflecting the interconnectedness of all life.[5]

Accordingly, to overcome biodiversity loss, the IPBES emphasizes considering diverse values such as responsibility, reciprocity, and respect for Nature.



## B. Recognizing the Intrinsic Value of Nature in NBSAPs

Recognition of Nature's intrinsic value includes, but is not limited to, a commitment to the following:

1. Supporting and amplifying diverse cosmologies to help restore our relationship with Mother Earth to one of balance, reciprocity, and holism; and
2. Requiring humanity to recognize and honor our interconnection and interdependence with biodiversity by guiding development, economics, governance, and laws toward a harmonious human-Nature relationship.

The shifting view of Nature as part of the sociorelational world is also being integrated into countries' National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)[6] for COP16. Simply put, NBSAPs indicate how each party to the CBD plans to meet its commitments in the GBF. The NBSAPs of the following countries mention the intrinsic value of Nature.

### (1) Spain:

"Biodiversity has intrinsic value and therefore its conservation is an ethical responsibility of society as a whole." [7]

### (2) Australia:

"Apart from the intrinsic value nature offers in its own right, it plays a critical role in maintaining the natural function of ecological systems." [8]

### (3) Fiji:

"'Vanua' means intrinsic and cultural value (i.e. biodiversity supports our identity, tradition, social cohesion, recreation and spirituality)." [9]

### (4) Aotearoa New Zealand:

Nine mentions of intrinsic value, including: "Species and ecosystems are valuable in their own right and have their own right to exist and be healthy and thriving now and in the future, regardless of human use and appreciation." [10]

### (5) Slovenia:

"The protection of the environment is thus losing its anthropocentric, human oriented nature and being replaced with an eco-centric orientation, i.e. that which focuses on nature of which people are a part. Such an approach protects the intrinsic values of nature and adapts human actions so as to maintain the natural systems and thus natural balance." [11]

As seen, some of these NBSAPs also include support for the Rights of Nature (Aoteroa New Zealand), eco-centrism (Slovenia), and other "ecocentric biodiversity law" concepts expressed in the GBF and otherwise. If indeed Nature is intrinsically valuable and therefore has moral value, the acknowledgment of the Rights of Nature can be a logical next step.

## II. Rights of Mother Earth / Rights of Nature

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Target 19 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) stipulates that GBF funds will be available for enhancing “Mother Earth centric actions,” defined in part as “ecocentric” and “rights-based” actions.[12] The global movement to recognize the Rights of Mother Earth, or the Rights of Nature, fits squarely within this definition.

The Rights of Mother Earth, or the Rights of Nature, refers to **the movement to acknowledge and protect Nature’s inherent value by recognizing its rights in local, state, and national laws.** While Latin America is often considered the heart of the Rights of Nature movement, other key regions include South Asia (India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines), Oceania (Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia), Africa (Uganda, Nigeria, and Benin), Europe (Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, France, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Iceland, Switzerland, and others), and North America (Canada, USA, and Mexico), and still others.

Within North America, as with elsewhere, many sovereign Indigenous Nations (including First Nations and Tribal Nations) are amongst the movement’s leaders.

While there are commonalities amongst the many Rights of Nature jurisdictions, its recognition takes on the character of the cultures, belief systems, politics, and laws of the various locations where it manifests. No two places are the same.

### A. The Legal Movement to Recognize Nature’s Rights

Rights of Nature laws are a **paradigm shift to represent Nature’s status as a subject with rights, rather than an object of human ownership.** It is a new framework giving all species and ecosystems a voice.

The Rights of Nature is a contemporary movement, building on Thomas Berry’s concept of “Earth jurisprudence”—an Earth-centered philosophy of law—developed in response to the limitations of Eurocentric legal systems, while largely remaining embedded in a rights-based legal framework.

It is also, however, inspired by, and sometimes rooted in, Indigenous cosmologies, wisdom, and ways of life. As over 80% of the Earth’s remaining biodiversity is protected by Indigenous peoples, their leadership and support is particularly significant for the implementation of the GBF.[13]

#### In the most general sense, Rights of Nature initiatives:

- (1) Empower Nature** to defend and enforce its own rights;
- (2) Enable humans** to give voice to and uphold the Rights of Nature; and
- (3) Require governments** to implement and enforce the Rights of Nature.



## B. What Are Nature's Rights?

The specific rights recognized in Rights of Nature frameworks generally include some variation of the **rights to exist, regenerate, thrive, and evolve, among others**. Another pertinent right of Nature is the right to “health,” especially since this right can be implemented based on scientific principles of ecosystem health.

A rule of thumb to determine the rights of Nature in a particular case is to ask, “**What does the ecosystem require to remain intact and regenerate its vital cycles?**”

In addition to Nature's rights at large, specific ecosystems and species also have unique rights. A rule of thumb for determining these rights is, “**What does this entity need to do or to have to fulfill its unique role in the Earth Community?**” Rivers have a right to flow, forests have a right to stand, bees have a right to pollinate, and so forth.

Recognizing the rights of a river to flow or a tree to grow doesn't mean that dams will never be built or trees will never be cut. Instead, it ensures that the rights of Nature are weighed alongside human interests, with courts balancing competing rights as they have long done when human rights are in conflict. In a Rights of Nature framework, Nature may not always prevail, but its voice will always be heard. There are already dozens of court cases in Ecuador to demonstrate how this works.

Rights of Nature can give Nature a voice in courts and other human decision-making forums. This can be done by bringing Rights of Nature claims in litigation (e.g., Ecuador) or creating guardianship bodies for Nature (e.g., Colombia), amongst other approaches.

## C. Global Momentum Toward Rights of Nature

Rights of Nature initiatives exist in all regions of the world and vary according to legal structure, jurisdiction, administrative authority, scope, and governance.[14] Here are a few precedent-setting examples:

- In 2002, the Navajo Nation codified its *Diné Natural Law* understanding that “all creation, from Mother Earth and Father Sky to the animals, those who live in water, those who fly, and plant life have their own laws and have rights and freedoms to exist.” [15]
- The first municipal law recognizing Nature's rights was passed in the United States in 2006. [16]
- In 2008, Ecuador became the first country to recognize the Rights of Nature in its national constitution.

“Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes.”

—Art. 71, Constitution of Ecuador

As of 2024, over 400 Rights of Nature initiatives have been introduced to governments around the world. Over 35 countries have recognized Rights of Nature, at least three of which have done so at the national level.[17] The movement has grown exponentially: In a mere 15 years, Rights of Nature has gone from a quixotic notion to a material legal framework and, in the words of a 2023 report, a “viable solution to the extinction of humanity, and a necessary reframing at a systemic level of our human relationship with Nature.”[18]

## D. Implementing and Enforcing Nature's Rights

In the broadest sense, recognizing Nature's rights has two direct implications:

1. It proactively changes the way humans interact with and impact the natural world, from one of superiority and as a "property owner" to one of equality and reciprocity as a fellow rights-holder; and
2. It changes the way people can defend and restore Nature through a suite of new law, policy, and governance tools.

The recognition of Nature's rights may be critical for the welfare of the Earth, but it is also critical for the welfare of humans—especially those most immediately dependent on the natural world and most vulnerable to climate change.

Rights of Nature initiatives utilize and provide support for a variety of existing legal structures and frameworks.[19]

- **Rights-based legal structures** explicitly define Nature, or a distinct feature of Nature, as a rights-bearing entity. These structures include recognition of rights, recognizing legal personhood,[20] securing legal standing,[21] habeas corpus petitions for more-than-humans,[22] and/or localized grassroots initiatives. The majority of rights-based initiatives exist in the Americas,[23] but other Rights of Nature frameworks—which may more accurately reflect cultural systems aligned with Nature's rights—are more prevalent in other world regions.[24] Some cultures and legal systems might be incompatible with Nature's rights in practice but can adopt many of the same elements through another lens.

- **Indigenous/ecological knowledge models**, more prevalent in Africa and Oceania, seek to empower local communities to protect and govern ecosystems as sacred sites.[25]
- **Responsibility-based and Indigenous Inherent Relationships-based initiatives** can be rights-based or can fall into the broader category of Mother Earth centric actions discussed in Section III.



Rights of Nature laws further exist under a variety of issuing authorities and jurisdictions. These include:

- **National Constitutions:** To date, the only country to recognize Rights of Nature in its national constitution is Ecuador, though Chile, Switzerland, Finland, Ireland, and Aruba have all proposed amendments to their national constitutions.[26] At least 16 subnational state constitutional initiatives are ongoing, primarily in the United States and Latin America.[27] Ireland has expressed a commitment to consider a Rights of Nature constitutional amendment in its COP16 NBSAP (see Objective One, Action No. 1C2).[28]

- **Tribal & First Nations Laws and Constitutions:** Many Indigenous Nations in North America (or Turtle Island) [29, 30] have recognized Rights of Nature in their constitutions or governing law. These initiatives often codify traditional knowledge and customary laws that distinguish natural rights from rights granted by humans or Eurocentric laws.[31] In countries that do not recognize their full sovereignty, many Indigenous Peoples have issued declarations to assert their authority to recognize Rights of Nature. [32]
- **Indigenous Law:** Indigenous law refers to legal initiatives emerging from an Indigenous legal tradition. These initiatives may be part of pre-colonial Indigenous legal orders or result from post-colonial Indigenous legal structures.[33] Many Indigenous laws are based on inherent relationships to lands, waters, and sky, rather than rights-based frameworks.
- **National Statutory Law:** As of July 2024, there have been over 70 national statutory Rights of Nature laws initiated worldwide.[34] However, only four countries have passed national laws: Bolivia, Panama,[35] Uganda (with limitations),[36] and Spain (specific to Mar Menor).[37]
- **Local Laws and Ordinances:** As of July 2024, there have been over 130 local Rights of Nature laws, provisions, or regulations initiated worldwide,[38] including in Alto Paraguai (Brazil)[39] and Santa Monica (USA).[40] Sometimes, these efforts run into enforcement challenges when they are incompatible with higher levels of law, particularly national laws that are hostile to Nature’s rights.

**“Nature has the right to exist, persist, regenerate, and conserve its biodiversity.”**

**—Law 287, Panama**

- **Case Law:** Courts are powerful forces for recognizing and enforcing Rights of Nature by interpreting existing law to justify rulings that recognize Rights of Nature, even in the absence of a national law.[41] For example, the Supreme Court of India recognized Rights of Nature in a 2024 ruling,[42] the Supreme Court of Bangladesh held that rivers have the status of “legal persons” in 2019,[43] and the High Court of Pakistan held that animals have legal rights in a 2015 ruling. [44]
- **Soft Law:** Soft law refers to instruments, guidelines, and norms meant to guide the development of legal initiatives. These documents can be international, such as the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers (2017),[45] the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Wetlands (drafted in 2020),[46] the Universal Declaration of Ocean Rights (2020 and beyond), and the Declaration of the Rights of the Antarctic (drafted in 2023),[47] or domestic, such as the Declaration of the Rights of the River Deben (England, 2022).[48]
- **Policies (governmental, civil society, institutional):** These refer to Rights of Nature initiatives within regulatory authorities rather than legislatures or courts.[49] Once rights are established, ideally through constitutional amendments or else national laws, the government has a burden to enforce and implement such rights, which may require comprehensive reform. This has been a shortcoming of the Rights of Nature movement, although there is progress.

**Adopting and encouraging Rights of Nature initiatives is critical for meeting the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** For over a decade, UN Harmony with Nature has explored how ecocentric laws, including Rights of Nature, advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals and other global mandates to protect and restore the environment and live in harmony with Nature. Including Rights of Nature in the GBF is, in many ways, a manifestation of that vision. Incorporating Rights of Nature into NBSAPs is a critical step to actualizing it.

Once recognized, Nature’s rights can be protected and enforced in a variety of ways. Forms of governance may include, amongst others:

### **Guardianship**

The appointment of a legal guardian, custodian, or caretaker to represent the needs of the rights-holder in human decision-making forums. Examples include Finland’s Constitutional Proposal on Animal Rights (2023),[50] Peru’s recognition of the rights of the Marañon River (2024),[51] and the superior court of Medellin’s (Colombia) ruling on the Cauca River Case (2019).[52]

### **Criminal Penalties or Civil Fines**

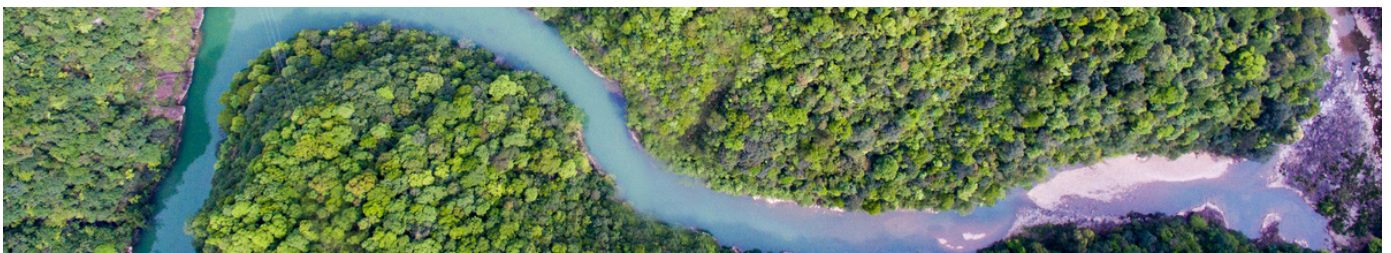
Laws providing criminal or civil penalties or sanctions for violating Nature’s rights. Many interpret the proposed international crime of ecocide to be a crime against Nature itself (see “Mother Earth centric actions” in section III).

### **Redress**

Laws or initiatives providing redress for harm done to Nature or Indigenous cultures, including cultural redress, commercial redress, or financial redress. Several national initiatives in Aotearoa New Zealand and many Indigenous models include redress as a key Rights of Nature element.[53]

### **Right to Petition**

Laws granting natural entities (or their guardians) the right to petition governments to address their concerns through policy or legislation. In countries lacking a national-level Rights of Nature law, these initiatives can also include laws preserving the rights of local communities to exercise self-governance and pass their own Rights of Nature ordinances.[54]



# III. Mother Earth Centric Actions

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**Target 19** of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) stipulates that GBF funds will be available for enhancing **“Mother Earth centric actions,”** defined in part as **“ecocentric”** and **“rights-based”** actions. The global movement to recognize the Rights of Mother Earth, or the Rights of Nature, fits squarely within that definition.

**The GBF defines “Mother Earth centric actions” as an:**

**“Ecocentric and rights-based approach** enabling the implementation of actions towards **harmonic and complementary relationships between peoples and nature,** promoting the continuity of all living beings and their communities and ensuring the **non-commodification** of environmental functions of Mother Earth.”[55]

Moreover, the definition emphasizes a non-market-based approach to preserving the environment by developing policy instruments to “protect, manage and restore Nature without commercializing its environmental functions.”[56] Nature is to be protected based on its intrinsic value.

To this end, Mother Earth centric actions embody an alternative way of structuring law, policy, and governance. It means representing Nature within the core of a legal system. It means aligning human laws with the laws of Nature. This can take different meanings across different cultures, geographies, and legal systems.

Mother Earth Centricism includes recognizing Nature’s intrinsic value and rights. It also includes a broad suite of other movements, some of which are defined, and many of which will emerge in the years to come.

This section explores many of these movements and provides a basic understanding of how different countries can prioritize, define, and fund Mother Earth centric actions in an appropriate manner.



## A. Earth Law

Mother Earth centric actions can be supported by the field of Earth law, which is the practical application of Thomas Berry's framework of Earth jurisprudence (defined above). In short, Earth law is the emerging body of ecocentric law that seeks to align human laws with the laws of Nature. Fields like wild law, ecocentric law, and inter-species justice share similar meanings. Several legal fields make up Earth law; some are explored here.

## B. Rights-Based Earth Law

### i. Rights of Nature

The Rights of Nature movement implements an "ecocentric and rights-based approach" and clearly falls within Mother Earth centric actions.[57] It has been covered extensively in **Section II**.

### ii. Right to a Healthy Environment

Mother Earth centric actions can also be realized through implementing human environmental rights, the rights of future generations, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, amongst others. **Although these are anthropocentric, their effect can be ecocentric:** they engender transformative environmental stewardship, while also ensuring vital protections for Nature's most diligent stewards. Additionally, because humans are part of Nature, their own rights can be interpreted in relation to the rights of all species, recognizing their environmental rights. These movements should be promoted in conjunction with ecocentric law efforts.

**Substantive rights** that fall under the right to a healthy environment include the right to clean air; a safe and stable climate; access to safe water and adequate sanitation; healthy and sustainably

produced food; non-toxic environments in which to live, work, study, and play; and healthy biodiversity and ecosystems.[58]

**Procedural rights** that fall under the right to a healthy environment include access to information, justice, and effective remedies, and public participation.[59]

The recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by the U.N. General Assembly in 2022 marked a significant milestone in this rights-based movement[60].

In the future, it is possible that the right to a healthy environment could be expanded to encompass Nature, ecosystems, and species, embodying an inter-species justice perspective in this movement.[61]

A growing number of strategic litigation cases have also brought about the recognition of human environmental rights. The *Urgenda* case, brought to the Dutch Supreme Court in 2019,[62] and the *Swiss KlimaSeniorinnen* case, brought to the ECHR in 2024,[63] broke ground as the courts recognized the right to a healthy environment, even in the absence of specific legislation. In the future, such litigation can be coupled with Rights of Nature and other ecocentric law claims.

### A human rights perspective on biodiversity is important because it:

1. "Helps clarify that the **loss of biodiversity also undermines the full enjoyment of human rights;**
2. Heightens the urgent need to **protect biodiversity;** and
3. Helps promote **policy coherence and legitimacy** in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity." [64]

### iii. Rights of Future Generations

Recognizing the rights of future generations imposes obligations on present generations to consider the long-term impact of their actions. **These rights can be both anthropocentric and ecocentric:** anthropocentric when focused on humans, and ecocentric when focused on future generations of all living beings.

Under GBF Section C(n), **parties are asked to consider intergenerational equity in NBSAPs.**[65] Section G, Goal B also supports “the achievement of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations by 2050.”[66]

Parties to the GBF could consider the precedent set by countries such as Wales and Hungary. The Welsh “Well-Being of Future Generations Act” requires public bodies in the country to “consider the long-term impact of their decisions, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.”[67] In Hungary, the elected Office of Ombudsman for Future Generations represents the environmental interests of future generations of citizens.[68]

As with the right to a healthy environment, the rights of future generations can include procedural rights, cultural rights, and/or recognition of the right to a healthy environment. As with the Rights of Nature, the rights of future generations can be represented by legal guardians, ombudspersons, or other proxies.

### iv. Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples is a proactive way states can protect biodiversity. Indigenous rights are protected under international law by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.[69] Indigenous

Peoples already have some protections around the world (although in practice, their rights are regularly violated). Examples include the Benin Sacred Forest Law [70] and the Kigali Declaration at the 1st Africa Protected Areas Congress (APAC).[71] These types of initiatives are also prevalent in Asia and Oceania, such as the He Whakaputanga Moana Treaty (Declaration for the Ocean)[72] and Australia’s Fitzroy River Declaration.[73]

The GBF “reaffirms its expectation that Parties and other Governments will ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities are respected and given effect in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.”[74]

“The Framework’s implementation must ensure that **the rights, knowledge, including traditional knowledge** associated with biodiversity, innovations, worldviews, values and practices **of indigenous peoples and local communities are respected, and documented and preserved with their free, prior and informed consent**, including through their full and effective **participation in decision-making**, in accordance with relevant national legislation, international instruments, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and human rights law.”[75]

To provide protections for Indigenous Peoples in line with the GBF, states must recognize their unique role in biodiversity conservation and environmental stewardship [76] and take steps to include legal recognition of Indigenous lands and territories,[77] support for traditional ecological knowledge,[78] and the implementation of Indigenous-led conservation areas and/or co-management agreements for ecosystems (if not full sovereignty) into NBSAPs.

These protections can be Mother Earth centric actions, as many Indigenous practices are inherently in harmony with Nature, rooted in the reality that humans are part of Nature and that Nature is a living entity or even a relative. Valuing and upholding Indigenous legal systems elevates this interconnected worldview, supporting those who are the traditional guardians of Nature.

### C. Legal Guardianship of Nature

Legal guardianship of Nature is core to Mother Earth centrism.

Legal guardianship bodies for Nature have been created in situations where a river or ecosystem is granted legal “personhood” or rights and **one or more persons are appointed to provide legal representation, serving as their “human face” in a legal sense.**

Just as children and other wards have legal guardians to speak on their behalf, so too can Nature. Legal guardianship of Nature was introduced in **Section II(C)**, with this section adding the following case studies.

***Atrato River, Colombia:*** Colombia’s constitutional court recognized legal personhood to the Atrato River in 2016, appointing a council of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous representatives to act as its legal guardians, alongside government.

The selected guardians had a deep, biocultural connection to the river, with their very identities and way of life being inseparable from its existence.[79]

### **Whanganui River, Aoteroa New Zealand:**

In 2017, a treaty settlement between the Whanganui Iwi (Māori) and the Crown Government of New Zealand granted legal personhood to the Whanganui River, appointing two guardians—one nominated by the Māori Iwi, and the other by the government. The guardianship body has all the rights, duties, and liabilities of a legal person.[80]

***Mar Menor, Spain:*** In 2022, Spain’s parliament granted legal personhood to Mar Menor, a coastal lagoon, following severe environmental degradation from agricultural runoff and urbanization. Mar Menor became Europe’s first ecosystem to be legally recognized as a subject of rights, with a guardianship body formed to oversee its protection and recovery. This body includes a diverse group of stakeholders, such as local citizens, scientists, environmental groups, and legal experts, all of whom are responsible for upholding the lagoon’s rights.[81]

There are countless other ways to “give a voice to Nature” that can be explored in a culturally appropriate manner. We recommend consulting an expert in Earth law or related fields to explore what might work best in a particular jurisdiction.





## D. Nature as Kin and Family Member

Mother Earth centric actions also include expanding the category of who or what qualifies as “family” or “kin.” In many ontologies, humans view themselves as part of a larger ecological collective in which Nature, or its constituent parts, is considered part of one’s family.

For instance, the Inga People of Colombia teach that “the rivers, forests, mountains, and everything that exists is part of our family.”[82] The Lummi Nation considers orcas “our relatives under the water.”[83] Many Mongolian nomadic herders believe that the land does not belong to humans, but rather humans belong to the land, a sentiment that is embodied in the Mongolian proverb: “Humans, land and the natural world are connected through an umbilical cord.”[84]

In recent years **several countries, often led by Indigenous cosmologies, have expanded the category of “family” to include non-human beings.** Building on the non-objectification of the natural world, these Mother Earth centric actions enshrine the idea of a harmonious and interconnected relationship between humans and Nature.

### i. Earth Law Adoption and Custody

India enacted “Earth Family Law” through adoption and custody instruments. In 2017, Sikkim State introduced the Sikkim Forest Tree (Amity & Reverence) Rules, which allow citizens to form three types of bonds with trees: **tree as a sibling, parent, or registered in remembrance of a departed relative.**[85] By adopting a tree, a resident of Sikkim State does not own it but rather assumes the duty to protect it from harm. Any damage to a relative tree is treated as a forest offense.

In 2022, the Madras High Court in Tamil Nadu not only ruled that “Mother Nature” has the same legal status as a human being but also invoked a **“parens patriae jurisdiction,” or the public policy power of the state to act as a guardian and protect those who cannot care for themselves.**[86] Justice S. Srimathy assigned the state and central governments as responsible for “protecting ‘Mother Nature’ and taking appropriate steps to protect Mother Nature in all possible ways.”[87]

### ii. Best Interests of the Child Doctrine (as applied to Nature)

Similarly, the “best interest of the child” doctrine, which protects the child in custody disputes and other family matters, can be extended to help settle disputes over Nature in the courtroom. In May 2016, the Connecticut Legislature passed Public Law 16-30, which **allows courts to appoint supervised law students or volunteer lawyers to advocate ad litem for the interests of justice in animal cruelty cases.**[88] The instruction of Nature guardians to act ad litem for Nature brings Nature’s voice into litigation concerning the natural world. A country could easily adapt legislation intended to represent children in the courts to include Nature, as well, with just a few word changes.

#### Example Standards: River Guardians ad Litem

**Duties:** The guardian must, within the scope of their mandate, look after the best interests of the River under guardianship

**Consultation:** A guardian must, as far as possible, consult with the persons who are recognized stewards of the impacted river, before important decisions are made.

**Competence:** If consideration of the River’s best interests dictates, the court may deprive a person responsibility of the guardianship.

## E. Harmony with Nature Legal Frameworks

### i. Nature as Subject or Living Entity

Mother Earth centrism also entails **classifying Nature as a living being, rather than an inert resource or object.**

Classifying Nature as a “living entity” symbolizes a consciousness shift away from anthropocentric evaluation of non-humans as objects and property. For example, the 2017 law establishing the legal personality of the Whanganui River in Aotearoa New Zealand states, “Te Awa Tupua is an indivisible and living whole, comprising the Whanganui River from the mountains to the sea, incorporating all its physical and metaphysical elements.”[89]

In 2019, El Salvador passed a national proclamation declaring forests to be “living entities” and requiring humans to care for, preserve, respect, and expand forests within the country.[90] The pronouncement also obliges each person to commit to caring for, preserving, and respecting forests, and to promote concrete actions that expand forests in El Salvador.

### ii. Nature Governance

As a framework and practice, **Mother Earth centrism cultivates the voice, the vote, and the ways of Nature into corporate and organizational governance.** Nature governance seeks to onboard Nature as a stakeholder and partner in business.

In 2022, natural products company Faith in Nature, working with Earth Law Center and Lawyers for Nature, amongst others, created the first “board seat for Nature.”[91] One or more human proxies began speak and vote as Nature in the boardroom.[92]

In 2023, luxury home goods brand House of Hackney appointed Mother Nature and Future Generations to its board of directors to “ensure that we fully consider the future of a liveable, thriving planet for all life on earth.”[93]

In addition to the “**Nature as Director**” model—including Nature as executive (operational) or non-executive (strategic) director—other approaches include:

- “**Nature as Shareholder**,” whereby Nature can be represented through a nonprofit entity that owns shares of a for-profit corporation;
- “**Nature as Advisor**,” a policy or legal commitment to make Nature a consultative stakeholder through an advisory board or seat; and
- “**Nature as Inspiration**,” which can be a policy-based declaration of intent/values, or a legal mandate enshrining Nature in an organization’s constitution.[94]

The report “Onboarding Nature” helps companies navigate the various means by which they can include nature in decision making.[95] As another example, Cause Corporation works to establish companies that are owned by a variety of causes, such as climate change, ecological restoration, and ocean protection.[96]

In addition to giving Nature a voice within institutions, there are movements to create entire ecological institutions. **Ecological institutions** are frameworks designed to empower non-human entities (such as individual organisms, populations, and ecosystems) with agency and/or rights, allowing them to interact with human-made systems including legal, economic, information technology, and governance infrastructures.[97]

### iii. Bioregional Governance

Mother Earth centric actions should promote “**economic growth along with wealth redistribution mechanisms, avoiding economic accumulation and inequities among individuals,**” as well as “sustainable patterns of consumption and production, being aware of the limits of Mother Earth.”[98]

To this end, bioregional governance offers a Mother Earth centric alternative to traditional market systems by addressing the inequitable distribution of Nature’s bounty and the disproportionate strain that current economic models place on Nature and local communities.[99] It aims to empower residents to actively and democratically participate in the protection of their shared lands.[100]

In sum, bioregional governance poses the question: what would it look like for our governance, economic systems, and ways of life to be designed in alignment with the ecological and cultural characteristics of the specific bioregions in which we live?

Bioregionalism emphasizes that communities can be more self-sufficient, such as through locally sourced goods and services. It is enacted through sustainable land management practices, worker and consumer cooperatives, community development finance, and ecovillages. Bioregional governance is beginning to develop across the world, with emerging examples like the Salmon Nation, a bioregion inspired by the historic range of wild Pacific salmon. Other local examples of bioregional governance include self-sufficient transition towns [101] such as Totnes in the UK [102] and Adelaide Hills in Australia,[103] which focus on meeting localized production and energy needs. [104]

Bioregional Finance Facilities (BFFs) are also being pioneered with the aim of financing regenerative organizations that serve their bioregions.[105] The goal of BFFs is to build new financial institutions that put finance in service of life.[106]

### F. Ecocide

Mother Earth centric actions also include **the criminalization of environmental destruction through a crime of “ecocide.”** Criminalizing ecocide holds individuals accountable for acts substantially likely to cause severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment, while also serving as a deterrent for future offenses.[107] Several countries—including Vietnam, Ecuador, and many former Soviet Republics—have already criminalized ecocide-level acts in their national laws. [108]

A growing movement led by Stop Ecocide International seeks to criminalize ecocide on the international level, addressing the worst environmental harms at the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC currently recognizes crimes against humanity, genocide, the crime of aggression, and war crimes (the latter including environmental damage during conflict).

In 2024, several states and the EU have made moves to recognize ecocide as an international crime. Belgium’s federal parliament adopted a new penal code carrying penalties of up to 20 years’ imprisonment and substantial fines. The EU incorporated a new, dedicated offense into its environmental crimes directive, targeting “cases comparable to ecocide.” Also in 2024, Vanuatu, Samoa, and Fiji formally proposed adding ecocide to the Rome Statute of the ICC.[109]

## G. Additional Approaches

We've explored a variety of what Mother Earth centric actions can look like in practice—ranging from the overarching framework of Earth law to rights-based approaches like the rights of Nature and ecocentric interpretations of rights held by humans. We have also touched on guardianship of Nature, recognizing Nature as kin and family, Nature governance, bioregional governance, and criminalizing ecocide.

While these movements are varied, they are only the tip of the iceberg. The powerful and essential task of aligning a nation's laws with the laws of Nature—of truly living in harmony with the natural world through Mother Earth centric actions—will be a unique journey for governments across the globe. There are ways to give Nature agency and consider its intrinsic needs and value in any legal and cultural system. It just takes careful analysis, innovation, and the courage to champion new paradigms.

Our imagination is the only limit. Here are just a few possibilities of additional Mother Earth centric actions:

- Developing ecocentric laws to advance health & health equity—i.e., based on the understanding that humans are part of the ecosystems in which we live.
- Establishing branches of government dedicated to representing Nature.

- Defining “ecosystem health” from an ecocentric perspective and making it a cornerstone of environmental policy.
- Developing mechanisms whereby Nature can own itself.
- Allocating seats for Nature within the United Nations, national legislatures, and beyond.
- Granting Nature citizenship or voting rights.
- Mandating ecocentric law and policy education in law schools, or requiring degrees focused on harmony with Nature in undergraduate programs.
- Reforming education to foster cultural shifts, training humans to act as Nature's legal guardians.
- Building reciprocity into land use laws, requiring us to give back to Nature as much as or more than we take.



**Conclusion:** As this section demonstrates, Mother Earth centric actions and ecocentric developments are vast, holistic, and transformative. The GBF encourages countries to prioritize these actions to implement Target 19 and provides financial support to nations that make them a priority in their NBSAPs. Governments are encouraged to consult with a qualified entity to help develop Mother Earth centric actions in a manner that is both appropriate and enforceable for their legal systems.

# IV. Financing

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## A. Overview

To meet the GBF’s goals of “transforming our societies’ relationship with biodiversity” by 2030 and fulfilling the shared vision of living “in harmony with Nature” by 2050, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has established the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBF Fund or GBFF), which is “dedicated exclusively to supporting the implementation of the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).”<sup>[110]</sup>

The GBF Fund is a tool for national governments, subnational and local authorities, and private sector actors to fund Rights of Nature initiatives and other Mother Earth centric actions. This presents a unique opportunity to finance a transformative change toward living in harmony with Nature through the nation-specific implementation of Mother Earth centric actions.

We encourage countries to use this moment to dream big for Nature.

## B. What Sources of Funding are Available?

As the financial mechanism of the CBD, the GEF is responsible for supporting the implementation of the Convention, Protocols, and the GBF. In line with the GEF Instrument, the GBF Fund will fund programs “which are country-driven and based on national priorities.”<sup>[111]</sup>

**Recognition of the Rights of Nature and national implementation of Mother Earth centric actions are critical for meeting the 2030 and 2050 goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.** By developing action plans that incorporate Rights of Nature and Mother Earth centric actions, governments, subnational and local authorities, corporations, and financial institutions can ensure that resources from the GBFF are available to fund these initiatives.

## C. Actions or Initiatives Covered by the GBF Fund

### i. Target 19

Target 19 of the GBF aims to secure the financial resources to fully implement the GBF by aligning financial flows with the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.<sup>[112]</sup> **Target 19 seeks to mobilize at least \$200 billion per year by 2030—from domestic, international, public, and private resources—to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans.** <sup>[113]</sup> Target 19(f) explicitly stipulates GBF funds will be available for enhancing “Mother Earth centric actions.”<sup>[114]</sup>

### ii. Target 22

The GBF Fund provides additional resources to support stewardship and governance initiatives led by Indigenous peoples, as well as those led by local communities.

Target 22 of the GBF aims to ensure **“access to justice and information related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities, respecting their cultures and their rights over lands, territories, resources, and traditional knowledge.”**[115] The GBF Fund is available for the support of Indigenous Peoples, as well as local communities, in relation to the successful implementation of Targets 1, 2, 3, and 22 by:

**“1) Strengthening organizational and individual capacity** to sustainably manage areas and territories under indigenous peoples and community stewardship and governance;

**“2) Supporting site-based conservation** along with the development of sustainable financing strategies to increase access and availability of resources for IPLCs;

**“3) Strengthening governance** and organizational capacity of IPLCs at local and regional levels;

**“4) Enhancing** effective indigenous governance systems to manage lands, territories and waters; and

**“5) Supporting** the development and implementation of national actions and policies to scale up conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management activities in indigenous territories. GBF Fund projects would also ensure to support and meaningfully engage indigenous women and girls, who are often the traditional guardians of Nature within their communities and who have vital knowledge, experience, and leadership to contribute to environmental decision-making.”[116]

Projects to support Indigenous Peoples-led initiatives, as well as those by local communities, for the conservation, restoration, sustainable use, and management of biodiversity are encouraged on a country-driven basis, with a view to collectively achieve an aspirational share of 20% at the portfolio level by 2030 from the total amount of resources allocated under the GBF Fund.

In less than one year, the GBF Fund has already approved \$110 million in funding for 22 projects implementing GBF Targets in 24 countries.[117] All approved projects aim to enhance biodiversity, notably by supporting terrestrial and marine protected areas.[118] Approximately 35 percent of the approved grants are intended to support Indigenous Peoples, as well as local communities, putting the GBF Fund ahead of its long-term goal to allocate at least 20 percent of total funding to such initiatives.[119] A significant portion of projects are also set to be executed in “Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.”[120]

This is an unprecedented opportunity for governments to plan their future living in harmony with Nature and seek funding to put it into action.

**Examples of approved Project Preparation Grants that highlight ecocentrism and Mother Earth centric actions include those in the following chart.[121]**

Project Title	Country	Funding Request
Biodiversity Conservation in Indigenous Lands	Brazil	\$9,880,000
Empowering Indigenous Peoples for Sustainable Development: Inclusive Biodiversity Management through a Social and Solidarity Economy Approach	Suriname	\$1,160,000
Strengthening transboundary conserved area management of the Sangha Tri-National (TNS)	Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Regional	\$7,259,526
Community-based conservation for biodiversity and livelihoods in the context of climate change in DRC	Congo DR	\$6,560,000
Strengthening Globally Significant Biodiversity Corridors in the Philippines through Local Community Empowerment	Philippines	\$3,000,000

If countries begin to seek funding for Mother Earth centric actions, it will rapidly increase the speed by which societies truly begin to live in harmony with the Natural world. It is an unprecedented opportunity.

# Conclusion

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To effectively implement the provisions of the GBF, it is crucial that countries adopt Mother Earth centric actions and integrate a rights-based approach to Nature into their NBSAPs. The Earth Law Center and its partners strongly advocate for these measures, as they represent a transformative shift toward recognizing the intrinsic value of Nature at the highest levels. This approach not only enhances biodiversity conservation but also ensures a sustainable and healthy environment for all. By embedding these principles into national law and policy, countries can lead the way in fostering a more harmonious and resilient relationship between humanity and the natural world.

As a member of the GBF Accelerator Partnership, Earth Law Center is able to advise national and subnational governments or authorities on the implementation of ecocentric or rights-based initiatives. For a jurisdiction-specific landscape analysis or assistance with legal drafting, or other services to fund and implement Mother Earth centric actions (including the Rights of Nature and the intrinsic value of Nature), please contact Earth Law Center's CBD team: **[cbd@earthlaw.org](mailto:cbd@earthlaw.org)**.



# Endnotes

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- [1] Intergovernmental Sci.-Pol'y Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services [IPBES], [Req'l Assessment Rep. on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for the Americas](#), at 21, ISBN No: 978-3-947851-06-5 (2018).
- [2] See COB, [Kunming-Montreal Glob. Biodiversity Framework](#), at 5, U.N. Doc. CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022). Emphasis added.
- [3] Intergovernmental Sci.-Pol'y Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services [IPBES], [Assessment Rep. on Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature: Summary for Policy Makers](#) (2022).
- [4] *Id.*
- [5] *Id.* at Point A4.
- [6] Read the full and updated list of NBSAPs at <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap>.
- [7] See [Strategic Plan on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity to 2030 \[Plan estratégico estatal del patrimonio natural y de la biodiversidad a 2030\]](#) (Jan. 30, 2023).
- [8] See [Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030](#), Commw. of Austl. (2019).
- [9] See [National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan for Fiji 2020-2025](#) (English Version), Dep't of Env't, Gov't of Fiji (2020).
- [10] See [Te Mana o Te Taiao - Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020](#) (English Version), Dep't of Conservation, Gov't of N.Z. (2020).
- [11] See [Resol. on the Nat'l Env'l Action Programme 2020-2030](#) (English Version), Republic of Slovn. (2020).
- [12] See COB, [Kunming-Montreal Glob. Biodiversity Framework](#), at 12, fn 13, U.N. Doc. CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022).
- [13] See Osprey Orielle Lake et. al., [Rights of Nature: Redefining Global Climate Solutions and Env't Prot. for Systemic Change](#) 2 (Nov. 2023).
- [14] For a complete timeline of Rights of Nature laws around the world, see Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN) [Rights of Nature Timeline](#) (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [15] See [Eco Jurisprudence: Navajo Nation Code Recognizing the Rights of Nature](#), Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited Aug 8, 2024).
- [16] See [Ordinance No. 612](#), Tamaqua Borough (Penn. 2006).
- [17] See Craig M. Kauffman, Global Patterns and Trends in Rights of Nature Legal Provisions: Insights from the Eco Jurisprudence Monitor, prepared for the workshop More-Than-Human Rights: A Glob. Interdisc. Dialogue To Advance Rights Of Nature (Sep. 22-23, 2023) at 3 (finding that as of September 4, 2022, over 67 Rights of Nature laws had been passed in the U.S., with 17 new laws drafted or submitted).
- [18] See Lake *supra* n.13, at 4.
- [19] See Alex Putzer et. al., [Putting the Rights of Nature on the Map: A Quantitative Analysis of Rights of Nature Initiatives Across the World](#), 18 J. of Maps 89 (2022).
- [20] As of July 2024, the eco jurisprudence monitor identifies [81 personhood initiatives](#). For examples, see the [Resolution of the Tohono O'odham Legislative Council No. 21-137 \(Recognition and Protection of the Sacred Ha:sa:n\)](#) and the Municipality of Linhares [Law on the Rights of the Waves](#) (Brazil, 2024).
- [21] Ensuring the natural entity has standing and the suit is not subject to preemption is difficult at a subnational level and important for the implementation of RoN laws. For example, see the [Madras High Court ruling](#) (India, 2022) declaring Mother Nature a "legal person" with rights.
- [22] Some RoN initiatives utilize the writ of habeas corpus to recognize Nature's rights. For examples, see the [Ecuadorian Constitutional Court ruling rights of Estrelitta the primate](#) (2022) (affirming that individual animals are subjects of rights under the rights of nature).

See also the Pakistan court case [Islamabad Wildlife Mgmt Board v. Metro. Corp. Islamabad](#) (2020) (holding that animals have legal rights in a case involving the cruel treatment of zoo animals).

- [23] For a complete list, see [Eco Jurisprudence: Rights of Nature](#), Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited July 19, 2024).
- [24] See Kauffman *supra* n.17, at 2.
- [25] *Id.*
- [26] Chile's constitutional amendment was brought to the Constitutional Convention in 2022 but did not pass. Switzerland, Aruba, Ireland, and Finland's constitutional amendments are all pending approval.
- [27] See Kauffman *supra* n. 17, at 5.
- [28] See [Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030](#) (English Version), Gov't of Ireland (2024).
- [29] Including the Ho-Chunk Nation, the Menominee Tribe, the Navajo Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Ponca Nation, the Tohono O'odham Nation, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, and the Yurok Tribe.
- [30] Including the Esdilahg First Nation and the Innus of Ekuanitshit.
- [31] See Kauffman *supra* n.17, at 8.
- [32] See Fitzroy River Decl. (2016). See also Decl. for the Prot. of the Amazon Sacred Headwaters (2019).
- [33] As of July 2024 the Eco Jurisprudence Monitor identifies over 93 Indigenous eco jurisprudence models worldwide, reflecting a wide variety of cultural beliefs and practices.
- [34] As of July 2024, the Eco Jurisprudence Monitor identifies over seventy Rights of Nature statutory law initiatives worldwide. For a complete list, see [Legal Provision: Statutory Laws](#), Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [35] See Panama's Rights of Nature Law, [Que Reconoce Los Derechos de la Naturaleza y las Obligaciones del Estado Relacionadas con Estos Derechos](#) (2022).
- [36] See [The Nat'l Env't Act](#), Rep. of Uganda (2019).
- [37] See [Spain Law on the Rights and Legal Personality of the Mar Menor Lagoon](#), Eco Juris. tracker (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [38] For a complete list, see [Legal Provision: Local Laws](#), Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [39] See [Mun. of Alto Paraguai \(Brazil\) Mun. Organic Law Amend. Recognizing the Rights of Nature and Harmony with Nature](#), Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [40] See [Santa Monica US Sustainable Groundwater Ordinance](#), Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [41] As of July 2024, the Eco Jurisprudence Monitor identifies over 134 Rights of Nature court cases or rulings worldwide. For a complete list, see Legal Provision: Case, Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited July 15, 2024). For a complete list, see [Legal Provision: Case](#), Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [42] See [State of Telangana v. Mohd. Abdul Qasim](#), Sup. Ct. of India (2024).
- [43] See [Human Rights and Peace for Bangl. v. Gov't of Bangl. and Others](#), Writ Petition No. 13989/2016, Sup. Ct. of Bangl. (2019).
- [44] See [Islamabad Wildlife Mgmt. Board v. Metro. Corp. Islamabad](#), W.P. No.1155/2019, Judgment, Islamabad High Ct. (2020).
- [45] See [Universal Decl. of the Rights of Rivers](#) (2017).
- [46] See [Universal Decl. of the Rights of Wetlands](#) (2020).
- [47] See [Antarctica Decl.](#) [Draft as of Nov. 30, 2023].
- [48] See [Woodbridge Eng. Citizen Decl. of the Rights of the River Deben](#), Eco juris. Tracker (last accessed July 15, 2024).

- [49] See Lewis Eng. Motion on the Rights of the River Lewes, Eco juris. Tracker (last accessed July 19, 2024).
- [50] See The Constitution of Fin. (731/1999), on the Fundamental Rights of Animals §1 (2023), stating that “[a]nimals have legal standing. Animals' right to be heard shall be exercised by their legal representative.”
- [51] See [Peru Court Case on the Rights of the Marañon River](#), Eco Juris. Tracker (last visited Aug 8, 2024).
- [52] See [Colombia Cauca River Case](#), Eco Juris. tracker (last accessed July 15, 2024) (recognizing the Rights of the Cauca river and appointing a government representative and a group of community members as guardians).
- [53] See New Zealand [Pare Hauraki Collective Redress Deed \(2018\)](#), Eco Juris. Monitor (last accessed July 15, 2024) (providing cultural and commercial redress to protect and enhance the relationship between the Iwi of Hauraki and Maunga, and establishes authority for the co-governance, oversight, and direction for the Mangatangi River, Mangatawhiri Stream, and Whangamarino Wetland Catchments).
- [54] See [Concurrent Resolution Proposing Constitutional Amendment](#), State of N.H., Comm. for Munic. and County Gov't, 2019 Sess. (2019) (seeking to recognize the rights of local communities to self-govern and preserve their right to recognize the Rights of Nature).
- [55] See COB, [Kunming-Montreal Glob. Biodiversity Framework](#), at 12, fn 13, U.N. Doc. CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022). Emphasis added.
- [56] *Id.*
- [57] *Supra* n. 55.
- [58] U.N. GA., Human Rights Council, Rep. of the Spec. Rapporteur on the Issue of Human Rights Obligations Relating to the Enjoyment of a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/43/53 (Dec. 30, 2019).
- [59] *Id.*
- [60] “The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right that is important for the enjoyment of human rights.” Human Rights Council Res. 76/300, U.N. Doc. A/RES/76/300 (July 28, 2022).
- [61] See Grace Auer and Earth Law Center, [“The Rights of Future Generations and the Summit for the Future,”](#) (May 23, 2024).
- [62] See [Landmark Decision by Dutch Supreme Court](#), Urgenda (last accessed July 23, 2024).
- [63] Cordelia Christine Bähr et. al., [KlimaSeniorinnen: Lessons from the Swiss Senior Women's Case for Future Climate Litigation](#), 9 J. of Human Rights and the Env't, 194, 221 (2018).
- [64] U.N. GA., Human Rights Council, Rep. of the Special Rapporteur on the Issue of Human Rights Obligations Relating to the Enjoyment of a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Env't, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/RES/34/49 (Jan. 19, 2017).
- [65] COB, [Kunming-Montreal Glob. Biodiversity Framework](#), at 7, U.N. Doc. CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022).
- [66] COB, [Kunming-Montreal Glob. Biodiversity Framework](#), at 8, U.N. Doc. CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022).
- [67] [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [68] See Ombudsman For Future Generations, Off. Of The Comm'r Of Fundamental Rights Hung., [App. I, Introduction of the Hungarian Ombudsman for Future Generations](#) (Dec. 13, 2022).
- [69] See [Diné Bi Beehaz'áanii](#), 1 N.N.C. §§ 201-206 (2002) (viewing the land, water, air, and all living beings as interconnected and emphasizing the responsibility of the Navajo people to protect these elements). See also Elisabeth Parker and Heather Tanana, [Indigenizing the Right to a Healthy Environment](#), 41 Pace Env'tl. L. Rev. 221 (2024).
- [70] [Benin Sacred Forest Law 2012](#), Eco juris. Tracker (last accessed July 23, 2024).
- [71] [Africa Protected Areas Congress \(APAC\) 2022 Kigali Declaration](#): “We Are Nature”, Eco juris. Tracker (last accessed July 23, 2024).

- [72] [He Whakaputanga Moana Treaty \(Declaration of the Ocean\)](#), Eco juris. Tracker (last accessed July 23, 2024).
- [73] [Fitzroy River Declaration Recognizing Martuwarra-Fitzroy River as a Living Ancestral Being](#), Eco juris. Tracker (last accessed July 23, 2024).
- [74] See COB, [Kunming-Montreal Glob. Biodiversity Framework](#), at 2, U.N. Doc. CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022).
- [75] See COB, [Kunming-Montreal Glob. Biodiversity Framework](#), at 5, U.N. Doc. CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022). Emphasis added.
- [76] Tanya C. Tran et. al. [A Rev. of Successes, Challenges, and Lessons from Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas](#), 240 Biological Conservation (2019).
- [77] Kelsey Leonard et al., [Water Back: A Rev. Centering Rematriation and Indigenous Water Research Sovereignty](#), 16 Ann. Water Alternatives Rev. 374, 428 (2023).
- [78] Off. of Sci. and Tech. Pol'y, Exec. Off. of the President, Memorandum for the Heads of Depts and Agencies: [Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Fed. Decision Making](#) (Nov. 15, 2021).
- [79] Anthony R. Zelle et. al., *Earth Law: Emerging Ecocentric Law—A Guide for Practitioners* 169-171 (Aspen Publishing, 2021).
- [80] *Id.* at 169-171.
- [81] See [Spain Law on the Rights and Legal Personality of the Mar Menor Lagoon](#), Eco Juris. Monitor (last accessed Sept. 20, 2024).
- [82] See Zelle *supra* n. 79, at 611-612.
- [83] "Qwe lhol mechen". [Caroline Chamberlain Gomez, Our Relatives Under the Water](#), NPR Network (Apr. 12, 2019).
- [84] "Khün, gazar, baigal' delkhii khüin kholbootoi". Ulemj Dovchin & Sender Dovchin, *The Discourse of the Anthropocene and Posthumanism: Mining-Induced Loss of Traditional Land and the Mongolian Nomadic Herders*, Ethnicities 1, 24 (2023).
- [85] See e.g. Katie Surma, [Indian Court Rules That Nature Has Legal Status on Par With Humans—and That Humans Are Required to Protect It](#), InsideClimate News (May 4, 2022).
- [86] See Gautam Badlani, *Natural Environment is a Part of Right to Life: Madras HC: A. Periyakaruppan v. The Principal Secretary to Government and Another*, Lawyers club india (May 4, 2022).
- [87] *Id.*
- [88] H.R. 5344, [Public Act No. 16-30](#). (Conn. 2016).
- [89] See <https://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2017/0007/latest/DLM6831458.html>.
- [90] See [Pronouncement in El Salvador Deems Forest to be Living Entities](#), Earth Law Center (June 6, 2019).
- [91] See [Faith in Nature Legally Appoints Nature to its Board of Directors](#), Eco Juris. Monitor (last accessed July 15, 2024).
- [92] Based on this work, ELC has developed the [Nature Governance Agency](#), which empowers decision-makers to make wise decisions for Nature, with Nature, as Nature. There are other emerging organizations and campaigns worldwide to incorporate Nature into governance.
- [93] See [House of Hackney Legally Appoints Mother Nature and Future Generations to its Board of Directors](#), Eco Juris. Monitor (last accessed July 15, 2024).
- [94] In 2022, the company Patagonia made Nature their only shareholder by transferring all the voting stock of the company to Patagonia Purpose Trust. See [Patagonia's Next Chapter: Earth is Now Our Only Shareholder](#), Patagonia Works (Sep. 14, 2022).
- [95] See [Onboarding Nature](#) (last accessed August 14th, 2024)
- [96] See [What if a Company Could be Owned by Social Justice?](#) Cause Corp. (last accessed July 15, 2024).

- [97] For more information and examples, see: Austin Wade Smith, Regen Foundation (with support from Earth Law Center), [Ecological Institutions → Protocols to Grow Autonomous and Convivial Ecological Actors](#) (last accessed September 10, 2024)
- [98] See [Plurinational State of Bolivia Position on Nature-Based Solutions \(English Version\)](#), UNEP Intergovernmental Consultation on Nature-Based Solutions (May 15, 2023). Emphasis added.
- [99] Tristian Bove, [Bioregionalism: A Model for a Self-Sufficient and Democratic Economy](#), Earth.org (Mar. 16, 2021).
- [100] Rhydian Fôn James & Molly Scott Cato, [A Green Post-capitalist Alternative to a System of Accumulation: a Bioregional Economy](#), 28 *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 24, 42 (Nov. 28, 2017).
- [101] Communities which have made the collective decision to independently wean themselves off fossil fuels and protect themselves from climate change impacts by actively working towards achieving self-sufficiency.
- [102] See [Resilience Forum to Tackle Climate Change](#), Transition Towns TOTNES (last accessed Jul. 23, 2024).
- [103] See [Adelaide Hills](#), Transition Network (2020).
- [104] See [Transition Towns: The Quiet, Networked Revolution](#), Rapid Transition Alliance (Oct. 9, 2019) (reporting that between 2,000 and 3,000 transition towns are believed to exist worldwide and over 1,000 burgeoning transition initiatives currently exist worldwide).
- [105] See [About](#), The BioFi Project (last accessed September 10, 2024)
- [106] See [Bioregional Financing Facilities \(BFFs\)](#), Ma Earth (last accessed September 10, 2024)
- [107] See [Making Ecocide a Crime](#), Stop Ecocide Int'l (last visited July 15, 2024).
- [108] *Id.*
- [109] *Id.*
- [110] COB, [Financial Mechanism](#), U.N. Doc. CBD/COP/DEC/15/15 (Dec. 19, 2022).
- [111] *Id.* at 9.
- [112] See Glob. Env't Facility, 64th GEF Council Meeting, [Programming Directions for the Glob. Biodiversity Framework Fund](#), at 15, GEF/C.64/06/Rev.01 (June 29, 2023).
- [113] See COB, [Kunming-Montreal Glob. Biodiversity Framework](#), at 12, CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022).
- [114] *Id.* at 12, n.13.
- [115] *Id.* at 13. Emphasis added.
- [116] See Glob. Env't Facility, 64th GEF Council Meeting, [Programming Directions for the Glob. Biodiversity Framework Fund](#), at 11-12, GEF/C.64/06/Rev.01 (June 29, 2023). Emphasis added.
- [117] See [Biodiversity Fund Approves 18 New Project Preparation Grants](#), Glob. Env't Facility (May 20, 2024).
- [118] See [New Biodiversity Fund Approves Project Preparation Requests](#), Glob. Env't Facility (Mar. 20, 2024).
- [119] *Id.*
- [120] *Id.*
- [121] For a complete list of approved Project Preparation Grants, see [Biodiversity Fund Approves 18 New Project Preparation Grants](#), Glob. Env't Facility (May 20, 2024).

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