

ENVIRONMENT

Report touts local Colorado conservation efforts in support of Biden's 30×30 goal

BY: [CHASE WOODRUFF](#) - JULY 28, 2021 4:34 PM



Mountain big sagebrush is seen at the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge in Colorado. Big sagebrush is perhaps the most important shrub on western rangelands. It provides winter food source to numerous species of large mammals, nearly 100 bird species depend on sagebrush ecosystems for habitat, and there are several animal species that have an obligate relationship with big sagebrush, including greater and Gunnison's sage grouse. (Tom Koerner/USFWS/[CC BY 2.0](#))

A coalition of local government officials from across the West on Wednesday released a [report](#) highlighting the region's efforts to support President Joe Biden's "America the Beautiful" initiative, which aims to boost conservation nationwide with an eye towards protecting 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.

"The America the Beautiful goal to expand conservation and protect even more of America's lands and waters is an ambitious and critical step to conserve nature and buffer the United States' Western mountain communities from the worst impacts of climate change," Anna Peterson, executive director of [The Mountain Pact](#), said in a statement. "By uniting local governments, private landowners, and Tribal communities and individuals, this plan will bring us all together towards a shared vision of a better America."

In early May, Biden administration officials outlined the America the Beautiful initiative in a [24-page report](#) to the National Climate Task Force, following a January executive order that [endorsed the "30 by 30" campaign backed by scientists](#) and environmental advocates as a way to protect biodiversity and battle climate change.

Colorado's rural communities are split over 30 by 30, with a number of counties having passed resolutions opposing the initiative. The opposition campaign has been organized in large part by American Stewards of Liberty, a Texas-based conservative group with ties to the oil and gas industry, which has falsely [claimed](#) that the initiative would involve the mass seizure of private property and has [compared](#) it to the actions of Nazi Germany.

The Biden administration describes 30 by 30 as a "locally led and voluntary" goal, and 77% of Americans support the initiative, according to polling released in February by Colorado College's [State of the Rockies Project](#).

Founded in 2014, The Mountain Pact's membership includes local elected officials from more than 80 communities in nine western states, including many of Colorado's mountain resort towns.

Colorado conservation efforts highlighted by the group's report include:

- The Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act, federal legislation [backed by Democratic members of Congress](#) that would establish or make permanent a range of protections for more than 400,000 acres of Colorado public lands.
- The [Swan River Restoration Project](#) in Summit County. The project was launched in 2016 and aims to restore more than two miles of stream and floodplain in the Swan River valley northeast of Breckenridge, which was badly damaged by dredge mining in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- San Miguel County’s work with federal officials on efforts to improve habitat for the Gunnison sage grouse, as well as the county’s [“Payment for Ecosystem Services”](#) program, which aims to pay farmers and ranchers to implement practices that improve soil and ecosystem health.
- A [conservation easement](#) established by the Town of Frisco near Dillon Reservoir, which aims to restore 11 acres of wetlands following reconstruction of the Frisco Bay Marina in 2019.
- The Pitkin County Open Space and Trails Program, which has conserved more than 20,000 acres of land since its establishment in 1990, as well as the county’s sales-tax-funded [Healthy Rivers and Streams Fund Program](#), which was approved by voters in 2008.

“Pitkin County is enthusiastic about collaborative and inclusive approaches to conservation and for reducing carbon emissions,” Pitkin County commissioner Greg Poschman said in a statement. “30 by 30 is a great initiative and the time has come for implementation.”