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OPINION COLUMNS

Opinion: Why our Colorado mountain town supports Biden's 30×30 public lands goals

We all have a choice to either engage in efforts to help combat the loss of biodiversity and climate change, or watch from the sidelines.



Town of Frisco seen on Tuesday, July 14, 2020. (Hugh Carey, Special to The Colorado Sun)



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Because we love our public lands and want to protect them for future generations, the Frisco Town Council recently unanimously passed a [resolution](#) that states that we stand with President Biden, U.S. agencies, members of Congress, state and local officials, and others in support of science-based, locally-led conservation efforts that help the country achieve the goal of protecting 30% of our country's lands and waters by 2030, commonly referred to as [30x30](#).

These efforts are a part of the administration's [America the Beautiful](#) vision for how the United States can work collaboratively to conserve and restore the lands, waters, and wildlife that support and sustain our country and create jobs and strengthen the economy.

Last month, the world's leading biodiversity and climate experts released an important peer-reviewed [report](#) that emphasizes the importance of looking at the loss of biodiversity and climate crises as one problem rather than tackling each individually. The report authors warn that if we don't take this approach and instead try to solve these problems in isolation, we do so at our peril.

I am very encouraged that the 30x30 goal contained in the America the Beautiful vision does just what scientists are recommending by acknowledging that we have to address the loss of nature and climate change together. If we can restore whole ecosystems, then they will, in turn, cheaply and quickly absorb the carbon emissions that are the root cause of climate change and are wreaking havoc on the planet.

30x30 can ensure that we preserve a healthy network of biodiversity and protect our natural areas while not only helping to offset climate change, but also protect and restore more public lands that are foundational to our way of life, health, and economies in mountain communities like Frisco.

Local governments know how important it is to set attainable and forward-looking goals. Achievable targets can make small differences in the near term, and more significant impacts over the long term.

Making decisions about finite resources like lands and waters and climate change can be overwhelming, but they are so important because they have lasting impacts. We have to ensure that we are stewards for future generations.

I am proud that the Town of Frisco is committed to conserving our lands and waters. In 2020, we worked with Colorado Open Lands to [place a permanent conservation easement](#) on 10.88 acres in the Meadow Creek wetlands and also restored 0.41 acres of wetlands. This effort grew out of the need to restore and preserve a new wetlands area because we lost wetlands during the Frisco Bay Marina's 2019 ["Big Dig" project](#).

Because of this conservation easement, the land is protected from development allowing community members and visitors the opportunity to enjoy these lands for recreation and rejuvenation well into the future.

Because Frisco is surrounded by public land, we must continue to work in partnership with community partners, the U.S. Forest Service, Summit County, and Denver Water to protect natural resources and wildlife habitat, encourage human-powered recreation, and mitigate wildfire risk.

I would like our town to engage in more regional conservation efforts like [Summit Safe Passages](#), which works to create safer roads for wildlife and people by building wildlife crossing structures across roads to reduce wildlife related collisions, ensure healthy wildlife populations and save taxpayers money.

We all have a choice to either engage in efforts to help combat the loss of biodiversity and climate change, or watch from the sidelines. I am grateful that President Biden has chosen the former by setting forth an inclusive and locally-led America the Beautiful conservation vision that includes the 30x30 goal — a way for us to collaborate and achieve results for natural resource protection at a national scale.

We and future generations will benefit if local, state, tribal governments, and local communities like Frisco can collaborate more frequently to achieve science-based voluntary landscape scale conservation.

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