



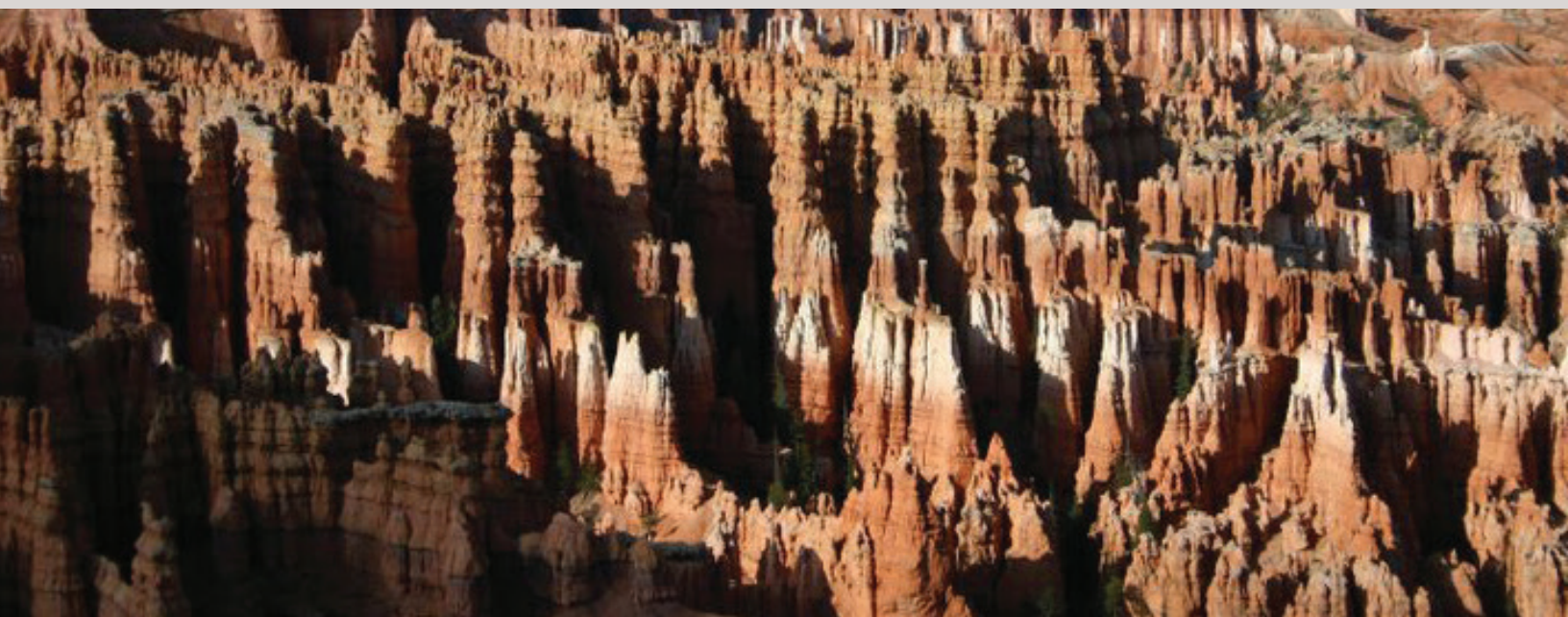
## INTRODUCTION

In this report, [The Mountain Pact](#) provides some background on the America the Beautiful initiative and why it is important to Western mountain communities. We also highlight examples from local elected officials in the Mountain Pact Network of how Western mountain communities have and are helping to achieve the goal of conserving and restoring 30% of our lands and waters by 2030 through locally-led collaborative projects. These examples include the adoption of resolutions, on-the-ground conservation work, and policy recommendations.

We also recommend new strategies and projects to help achieve the America the Beautiful goals and next steps.

Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) educates, empowers, and mobilizes local elected officials in over 80 Western mountain communities with outdoor recreation based economies to speak with a collective voice on federal climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation policy.

The Mountain Pact Executive Director Anna Peterson said, “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. We celebrate that this remarkable vision also works towards a more inclusive and equitable vision of nature conservation that better reflects our country’s values and expands access to the outdoors for all. 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.”





## BACKGROUND

The United States is facing a conservation and climate crisis as nature declines and greenhouse gas emissions [continue to increase](#). Science tells us that worldwide [biodiversity is deteriorating](#) at a faster rate than at any time in human history. From [2001 to 2017](#), more than 24 million acres of land were lost to human development in the lower 48 United States, which equals the loss of one football field-sized patch of land every 30 seconds.

In fact, many [scientists](#) continue to warn that we must conserve and restore [at least 30 percent](#) of lands and waters by 2030 if we want to preserve biodiversity and ecosystems, support an increasing global population, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Through an [executive order](#) in January 2021, President Biden announced his administration's goal to conserve 30% of U.S. lands and water by 2030 (commonly referred to as 30x30). Then in May 2021, the administration followed up on the executive order by issuing a report, [Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful](#), which recommends "a ten-year locally-led campaign to restore the lands and waters upon which we all depend, and that binds us together as Americans."

America the Beautiful is a bold, science-based initiative that includes the [30x30 goal](#), the first-ever national conservation goal to address the twin threats of climate change and the rapid loss of biodiversity and safeguard America's lands, water, and wildlife. It supports the conservation efforts of people across the country in rural and coastal communities, Tribal Nations, private landowners, and many others on the frontlines of conserving, stewarding, restoring, using, and enjoying nature.

The America the Beautiful report recommends that conservation efforts adhere to the following eight key principles:

1. Pursue a collaborative and inclusive approach to conservation.
2. Conserve America's lands and waters for the benefit of all people.
3. Support locally led and locally designed conservation efforts.
4. Honor Tribal sovereignty and support the priorities of Tribal nations.
5. Pursue conservation and restoration approaches that create jobs and support healthy communities.
6. Honor private property rights and support the voluntary stewardship efforts of private landowners and fishers.
7. Use science as a guide.
8. Build on existing tools and strategies with an emphasis on flexibility and adaptive approaches.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), working with the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce, including the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, has formed an interagency working group that will create the [American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas](#), which will compile baseline information about how much land and water are currently conserved and restored in the U.S. This process will determine how to best measure the country's progress toward the America the Beautiful goal and properly account for the many innovative and effective ways communities conserve their lands and waters for current and future generations.

Recent polling found that [77 percent](#) of voters in the Rocky Mountain West support this initiative. Many local governing bodies across the West [have passed](#) resolutions supporting the America the Beautiful initiative and the 30x30 goal.

Reaching the America the Beautiful goal does not involve a one-size fits all approach. To the contrary, different communities around the country will develop conservation strategies that reflect their unique needs and interests. Efforts to reach the America the Beautiful goal will rely on varied and flexible approaches.

## WHY IS THE AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL INITIATIVE SO IMPORTANT?

### PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

Scientists say that the loss of biodiversity, the increasing number of extreme weather events, and human encroachment upon wildlife habitat may [increase the risk](#) of the transmission of infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and SARS.

Our natural places help provide food security, clean air to breathe, and clean water to drink while offering us a wide range of health benefits; and every person, regardless of race, background, or economic status, should have access to close-to-home opportunities to get outside in nature.

### ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Wilderness, wildlife refuges, national conservation lands, monuments, and other protected areas drive our local economies and provide access for hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, camping, and other outdoor recreation pursuits.

Economic research shows that employment and personal income [grew significantly faster](#) in rural counties with conserved, restored, and protected public lands than rural counties with fewer protected and conserved areas. Conserved public lands are the backbone of the rapidly growing outdoor recreation economy, [generating](#) \$788 billion in consumer spending nationally and supporting 5.2 million jobs. One hundred economists and scientists [have found](#) that the global economy would benefit from the creation of far more protected areas on land and at sea than we have today.

Conserved private lands, including working forests, farms, and ranches, protect open spaces, preserve threatened wildlife, and help maintain the way of life in many Western mountain communities.

Science has shown that conserving nature can provide [over one-third](#) of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed through 2030 to hold warming below 2°C.



## WESTERN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES HELPING TO ACHIEVE THE AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL GOAL

This report presents a small sample of land preservation and climate action projects that Western mountain communities have completed or are currently working on and ideas for not only future projects, but also policy prescriptions that can help achieve the America the Beautiful goal.

The projects described in this report range from local conservation efforts to federal conservation designations, but in no way do they represent the full spectrum of ideas for how the country can achieve the America the Beautiful goal. We hope that these examples will help spark new thinking in communities across the country about the diversity of projects and policies that can fall under the 30x30 umbrella.

