

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 494

Expressing the need for the Federal Government to establish a national biodiversity strategy for protecting biodiversity for current and future generations.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 12, 2023

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. WELCH, and Mr. BOOKER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

RESOLUTION

Expressing the need for the Federal Government to establish a national biodiversity strategy for protecting biodiversity for current and future generations.

Whereas the planet is facing an unprecedented biodiversity crisis, largely driven by human activity;

Whereas recent scientific studies have confirmed human-driven activities are significantly damaging the ecosystems of the planet by—

- (1) altering 75 percent of the area of terrestrial environments and 66 percent of marine environments;
- (2) directly exploiting wildlife and plant species;
- (3) accelerating climate change, directly harming nature and exacerbating other threats;

- (4) polluting air, land, and water; and
- (5) introducing invasive species;

Whereas recent scientific studies have shown that human-driven threats have harmed biodiversity by—

(1) threatening approximately 1,000,000 species with imminent or near extinction, including—

- (A) more than 40 percent of amphibians;
- (B) 33 percent of corals, sharks, shark relatives, and marine mammals;
- (C) more than 60 percent of cycads and more than 30 percent of conifer trees; and
- (D) approximately 10 percent of the more than 5,000,000 insect species on the planet; and

(2) causing population sizes of wild species to decline by—

- (A) an average of 68 percent for species of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, and reptiles;
- (B) approximately 3,000,000,000 birds in North America since 1970;
- (C) approximately 50 percent for species of live corals; and
- (D) an average of more than 20 percent overall;

Whereas human activity is accelerating the decline of important economic and cultural services, including—

(1) land productivity, with a reduction in the productivity of approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the land surface;

(2) land and freshwater resources, with more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the land surface and 75 percent of freshwater resources devoted to crop or livestock production;

(3) global crops, with approximately \$500,000,000,000 of global crops at risk due to pollinator loss;

(4) marine fisheries, with $\frac{1}{3}$ of marine fisheries overfished, 60 percent fished at capacity, and only 7 percent fished below capacity; and

(5) environmental health, with 25 percent of greenhouse gas emissions caused by land clearing, crops, and fertilization;

Whereas the decline of biodiversity disproportionately impacts indigenous and other communities that rely on nature for essential services, including Native Americans and Alaska Natives, who offer unique perspectives and traditional ecological knowledge critical to preserving biodiversity;

Whereas the decline of biodiversity and ecosystem services observed worldwide is occurring in the United States;

Whereas the United States possesses an abundance and great diversity of species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are of significant value to the United States for intrinsic, aesthetic, ecological, educational, cultural, recreational, economic, and scientific reasons;

Whereas the decline of biodiversity presents a direct threat to the security, health, and well-being of the people of the United States by causing economic harm through the loss of valuable ecosystem services, including zoonotic disease buffering, pollination, water filtration, soil replenishment, the provision of game species, medicinal products, and recreational opportunities;

Whereas communities of color, low-income communities, Tribal communities, and other populations that have been systematically and deliberately targeted for citing environmentally degrading activities and excluded from conservation efforts face disproportionate impacts from biodiversity loss;

Whereas Federal agencies are tasked with protecting and conserving biodiversity in the United States and worldwide through a variety of legal and policy channels;

Whereas there is no coordinating policy to maximize the effectiveness of the conservation efforts of the Federal Government and collaboration by the Federal Government with States, local governments, Indian Tribes, private landowners, and other nongovernmental stakeholders;

Whereas the United States should play a leading role on the international stage in addressing the biodiversity crisis, yet the United States—

(1) is not a party to—

(A) the Convention on Biological Diversity, done at Rio de Janeiro June 5, 1992;

(B) the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (commonly known as “the Convention on Migratory Species”), done at Bonn November 6, 1979; or

(C) other relevant international agreements;

(2) does not issue a periodic national biodiversity outlook, contrary to most other countries; and

(3) does not have a national biodiversity strategy as part of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; and

Whereas scientific research highlights essential pathways forward, including—

(1) establishing the effective conservation, restoration, and durable protection of not less than 30 percent of an ecologically representative area of the lands, freshwaters, and oceans in the United States and in the world by 2030 by working collaboratively with govern-

ments, land owners, fishers, indigenous peoples, communities, and others;

(2) restoring or rewilding species, degraded habitats, and ensuring integrity and connectivity of protected areas;

(3) retaining and protecting highly intact ecosystems;

(4) reducing pesticide use to levels not higher than necessary for ecologically sustainable and safe food production; and

(5) addressing the threats posed by invasive species:
Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

2 (1) it is in the national interest for the Federal
3 Government to establish a national biodiversity
4 strategy to—

5 (A) ensure the conservation and restora-
6 tion of the biodiversity of the United States;

7 (B) secure and restore the ecosystem serv-
8 ices provided by nature for current and future
9 generations;

10 (C) deliver on the United Nations Sustain-
11 able Development Goals;

12 (D) set ambitious, yet necessary, goals for
13 protecting biodiversity in the coming decades;

14 (E) promote social equity and justice in
15 the conservation of the biodiversity of the
16 United States;

1 (F) coordinate the actions of Federal agen-
2 cies to advance the conservation of biodiversity;

3 (G) promote collaboration among Federal,
4 State, and Tribal governments, nongovern-
5 mental stakeholders, civil society, and inter-
6 national parties to advance conservation;

7 (H) honor the Federal trust obligations to
8 Indian Tribes and Native Americans; and

9 (I) provide global leadership in addressing
10 the biodiversity crisis; and

11 (2) the national biodiversity strategy described
12 in paragraph (1) should include direction on—

13 (A) achieving the national goal of con-
14 serving not less than 30 percent of the lands
15 and waters of the United States to protect bio-
16 diversity and address climate change by 2030
17 (referred to in this resolution as “30x30”), sup-
18 porting international efforts to achieve the same
19 goal on a global scale, and setting other goals
20 necessary to reduce the threats to biodiversity
21 as indicated by the best available scientific in-
22 formation;

23 (B) taking action to protect threatened,
24 endangered, and at-risk species from further
25 imperilment or extinction;

1 (C) climate adaptation and mitigation
2 strategies for biodiversity conservation, includ-
3 ing—

4 (i) leading international agreements to
5 combat climate change, including the deci-
6 sion of the 21st Conference of Parties of
7 the United Nations Framework Convention
8 on Climate Change adopted in Paris on
9 December 12, 2015 (commonly known as
10 the “Paris Agreement”);

11 (ii) establishing climate refugia and
12 climate corridors for conservation of spe-
13 cies affected by climate change; and

14 (iii) the rapid build-out of renewable
15 energy;

16 (D) reviewing existing laws, plans, pro-
17 grams, and strategies that are relevant to ad-
18 dressing threats to biodiversity to assess how
19 the laws, plans, programs, and strategies can
20 contribute to the objectives of this resolution
21 and, as necessary, recommending new laws,
22 plans, programs, and strategies;

23 (E) ensuring integration of biodiversity
24 protection across the activities of the Federal

1 Government, including foreign policy and for-
2 eign assistance;

3 (F) advancing conservation in collaboration
4 with State and Tribal governments and on pri-
5 vate lands through incentives, funding, tech-
6 nical support, and partnerships;

7 (G) incorporating indigenous knowledge
8 and practices to support conservation and bio-
9 diversity, safeguarding the rights and needs of
10 indigenous peoples, and ensuring fulfillment of
11 the Federal trust obligations that apply to gov-
12 ernment decision making that impacts the in-
13 terests of Native Americans;

14 (H) ensuring equitable access to nature,
15 inclusive decision making on biodiversity protec-
16 tion, and just allocations of resources to achieve
17 the goals of this resolution, including with re-
18 spect to systematically and deliberately targeted
19 populations such as communities of color, low-
20 income communities, and Native American com-
21 munities;

22 (I) establishing regular monitoring and re-
23 porting on the status of biodiversity in the
24 United States and globally, including a quad-

1 rennial assessment reported to Congress and
2 the people of the United States;

3 (J) prioritizing programs to identify knowl-
4 edge gaps and accelerate research and develop-
5 ment of new conservation solutions across sec-
6 tors;

7 (K) assessing and integrating the role of
8 the United States in international biodiversity,
9 ecosystem services, and nature conservation
10 in—

11 (i) national security and foreign policy
12 strategies, including in international devel-
13 opment policies, planning and finance, dip-
14 lomatic dialogues, and trade agreements;
15 and

16 (ii) advancing global adoption of and
17 progress toward 30x30; and

18 (L) funding existing conservation pro-
19 grams, developing new funding sources, and re-
20 ducing subsidies that harm biodiversity in
21 amounts commensurate with the scale of the
22 harm to biodiversity.

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