

To: Special Committee on the 30x30 Federal Initiative, Representative Rahjes, Chairman
From: Ryan Flickner, Kansas Farm Bureau
Date: December 8, 2021
Re: American the Beautiful / 30x30 Federal Initiative

Chairman Rahjes and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB). KFB is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 30,000 farm and ranch families through our 105 county Farm Bureau Associations.

Ever since Executive Order 14008 (*Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*) was issued on January 27, 2021, questions have been pouring into Kansas Farm Bureau and our national affiliate American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF). Included in this E.O. is a goal to conserve at least 30 percent of our land and 30 percent of our waters by 2030. KFB leadership and staff have participated in multiple conversations with USDA Secretary Vilsack and USDO Secretary Haaland asking for policy intent and administrative goals. We received little clarification to date.

In May the administration released a rebranded 30x30 initiative report titled *Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful* (<https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/report-conserving-and-restoring-america-the-beautiful-2021.pdf>). The report outlines eight principles and six initial recommendations to the National Climate Change Task Force. According to the report, the **eight principles** “reflect a broad consensus of views and recommendations among the many stakeholders, agencies, and Tribes consulted in developing this report” and include the following,

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 report concludes with **six initial recommendations**,

1. Create More Parks and Safe Outdoor Opportunities in Nature-Deprived Communities
2. Support Tribally Led Conservation and Restoration Priorities
3. Expand Collaborative Conservation of Fish and Wildlife Habitats and Corridors
4. Increase Access for Outdoor Recreation
5. **Incentivize and Reward the Voluntary Conservation Efforts of Fishers, Ranchers, Farmers**
6. Create Jobs by Investing in Restoration and Resilience

Kansas and American Farm Bureau know farmers and ranchers are leaders in conservation. We appreciate that the report recognized the efforts and contributions of production and modern-day agriculture. **Farm Bureau views the report as a philosophical document that emphasizes important principles such as incentive-based voluntary conservation, protecting personal and property rights and continued ranching on public lands, but it lacks specifics.**

Farm Bureau will continue to work with federal agencies to ensure the programmatic details live up to promises made to protect American agriculture. There are still questions and topics that need addressed. For example, how would the federal government achieve a nationwide plan without infringing on farmers' and ranchers' privacy and private property rights? Does the federal government intend to subject farmers and ranchers to burdensome reporting requirements related to their private property? The document doesn't distinguish between publicly held land and private lands. A clear definition needs established between the two.

There are concerns across Kansas and the nation that this 30x30 conservation goal will lead to a federal land grab. Nothing in the report that shows this to be true. The report only cites voluntary conservation efforts. KFB and AFBF will continue to fight for and vigorously oppose any infringement on private property rights and burdensome regulatory schemes.

Thank you for your time and attention to better understand the significance and impact to Kansas on this important federal issue.

Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful also known as 30x30

In January, President Joe Biden issued Executive Order 14008 on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. Part of this executive order is establishing a goal to conserve at least 30% of our land and waters by 2030. The effort would be led by a National Climate Task Force with input from federal agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior. The executive order notes this task force shall facilitate planning and implementation of key Federal actions to reduce climate pollution; increase resilience to the impacts of climate change; protect public health; conserve our lands, waters, oceans, and biodiversity; deliver environmental justice; and spur well-paying union jobs and economic growth. Additionally, the executive order highlights the importance that agriculture plays in combating the climate crisis through sequestering carbon in soils, grasses, trees, and other vegetation.

President Duvall and AFBF participated in several calls with the White House, USDA, and DOI to express that farmers and ranchers are the original conservationists. They have been good stewards of both private and public land for generations. Additionally, the administration heard from AFBF that farmers and ranchers have significant concerns about what the goal means, what metrics the administration intends to use to meet it, and how it impacts the multiple-use mandate on public lands used for grazing.

In April, AFBF President Zippy Duvall sent a letter to President Biden asking for clarity on his goal to conserve at least 30% of our lands and waters by 2030. The main messages included in that letter were:

- Farmers and ranchers are leaders in conservation.
- 30x30 is raising questions among farmers and ranchers who want to ensure they are respected and heard in any climate initiatives.
- Four key requests are outlined in AFBF's letter to President Biden.
 - That the administration provide clarity on the initiative;
 - That the effort recognizes voluntary conservation efforts already underway;
 - That public lands multiple-use management continues, and
 - That the administration seeks input from farmers and ranchers.

In May, the administration released the 30x30 report titled *Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful*. The report outlines 8 principles and 6 initial recommendations to the National Climate change Task Force. The 8 principles "reflect a broad consensus of views and recommendations among the many stakeholders, agencies, and Tribes consulted in developing this report."

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1. Create More Parks and Safe Outdoor Opportunities in Nature-Deprived Communities
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5. **Incentivize and Reward the Voluntary Conservation Efforts of Fishers, Ranchers, Farmers**
6. Create Jobs by Investing in Restoration and Resilience.

Kansas and American Farm Bureau know farmers and ranchers are leaders in conservation. We appreciate that the report recognized the efforts and contributions of agriculture. **The report is a philosophical document that emphasizes important principles such as incentive-based voluntary conservation, protecting personal and property rights and continued ranching on public lands, but it lacks specifics.** AFBF has had several conversations with Secretary Vilsack about 30x30 and will continue to work with him and his colleagues to ensure the details live up to promises made to protect American agriculture.

There are still questions and topics that need addressed. For example, how would the federal government achieve a nationwide plan without infringing on farmers' and ranchers' privacy and private property rights? Does the federal government intend to subject farmers and ranchers to burdensome reporting requirements related to their private property? The document doesn't distinguish between publicly held land and private lands. A clear definition needs established between the two.

There have been concerns that this 30x30 conservation goal will lead to a federal land grab. There is nothing in the report that shows this to be true. The report only cites voluntary conservation efforts. KFB and AFBF will continue to fight for and vigorously oppose any infringement on private property rights.

AFBF Policy:

- **Market-based incentives**, such as pollutant credit trading are preferable to government mandates.
- AFBF *supports* **science-based, peer-reviewed research** to determine the causes and impact of global climate change.
- AFBF *supports* a **voluntary market-based** carbon credit trading system.
- AFBF *supports* compensation to farmers for planting crops or adopting farming practices.
- AFBF *supports* alternative energy sources.
- AFBF *supports* incentives to industries seeking to become more energy efficient or to reduce emissions.
- AFBF *supports* **market-based solutions, rather than federal or state emission limits** being used to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

- AFBF *supports* the **inclusion of the agriculture community as a full partner in the development of any policy, legislation, or markets.**
- AFBF *supports* efforts to promote soil health, water quality, and soil/water conservation, to be **implemented on a voluntary basis.**
- AFBF *supports* federal climate change policy that reflects regional variation.
- AFBF *opposes* mandatory cap-and-trade provisions.
- AFBF *opposes* climate change legislation that is not fair, affordable, or achievable.
- AFBF *opposes* mandatory restrictions to achieve reduced agriculture GHG emissions.
- AFBF *opposes* any regulation of GHG by EPA.
- AFBF *opposes* taxes on carbon uses or emissions.
- AFBF *opposes* any laws or policies that implicate agricultural activity of any kind as a cause of climate change without empirical evidence
- AFBF *opposes* a state-by-state patchwork of climate change policies

KFB Policy:

- Any legislation that is enacted or any environmental regulations, which are proposed for promulgation, must be based on: factual information, scientific knowledge, and economic impact studies.
- Success in protecting natural resources is dependent upon partnering and cooperation with affected organizations and entities by government at all levels.
- KFB *supports* voluntary, incentive-based programs that encourage groundwater conservation.
- We *oppose* the net expansion in the number of acres of land that the local, state, or federal government owns in Kansas.

April 22, 2021

The Hon. Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

As the nation's largest and most diversified agricultural organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation appreciates the opportunities we have had to collaborate with your administration. Our mission to build a sustainable future of safe and abundant food, fiber and renewable fuel for our nation and the world is supported not only by our members, but also by elected leaders and the public. Our 6 million grassroots members are spread across 2,800 counties in 50 states and Puerto Rico, so we hear from farmers and ranchers in every region of the country. Their questions about an initiative you recently announced are the reason for this letter.

On January 27, you signed the Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, which directed a sweeping set of actions to agencies across the federal government related to climate change. Section 216, Conserving Our Nation's Lands and Waters, includes a goal of conserving at least 30% of our lands and waters by 2030. Farmers and ranchers are the original conservationists and have been good stewards of lands, both private and public, for generations. This "30x30" goal has received a great deal of attention in farming and ranching communities across the country. America's agriculturalists are asking whether their good work will be recognized by the administration. They have voluntarily enrolled more than 140 million acres of private land into federal and non-federal conservation programs – a land mass larger than the size of New York and California combined. Any discussion about conservation must begin with the recognition that farmers and ranchers are already leaders in this space and have been for decades.

Moreover, about 28% of U.S. land, over 640 million acres,¹ is currently held in federal ownership and conserved as part of the federal estate. Additionally, about 8% of U.S. lands are owned by states, which is over 180 million acres of land.² Farmers and ranchers are seeking assurance that multiple-use management of federal lands as well as actively managed and working lands in state or private ownership will be recognized for their conservation and open space benefits.

The concerns of farmers and ranchers are escalating regarding the intent of the 30x30 goal, the definition of conservation, and the metrics for defining success, among other things. We have

¹ Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data, Congressional Research Service, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42346.pdf>

² Public Land Ownership in the United States, Headwaters Economics, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/protected-lands/public-land-ownership-in-the-us/>

appreciated the initial engagement from your administration, especially the Department of Agriculture, to hear from our members. We urge you to move swiftly to provide clarity about your intentions for the initiative, and when you do so, it will be important for you to invite public comment because farmers and ranchers are leaders in conservation and deserve to have their voices heard.

We look forward to continued dialogue with your team about conservation and land-use when details of the 30x30 initiative are made public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Zippy Duvall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "Z".

Zippy Duvall
President