

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Haaland,

We write to express concern with the directive in President Biden's January 27, 2021, climate change executive order (E.O. 14008) to identify strategies to conserve at least 30 percent of our land and waters by 2030, commonly referred to as 30 by 30.

The federal government already possesses approximately 640 million acres of the land in the United States. Unfortunately, there is a significant maintenance backlog on this federal land. Given this reality, acquiring additional federal land would be concerning to us and many of our constituents. With relatively few details about how this proposal would be achieved, additional concerns have been raised about the potential for onerous regulations and land use restrictions as a possible strategy. Such a proposal would have a devastating effect on private landowners.

We urge the administration to refrain from using the 30 by 30 directive as a means to pursue additional federal land acquisitions. In addition, the 30 by 30 directive should not be used to advance undue restrictions on the use of private land. A multiple-use approach to the management of our public lands benefits agriculture, outdoor recreational sports, wildlife enthusiasts, and natural resource development. This approach also plays an important role in creating jobs and supporting local economies.

Farmers and ranchers work every day to be good stewards of their land. Instead of pursuing federal land acquisitions and burdensome regulations, the administration should prioritize the targeted implementation of existing voluntary conservation programs, like the Conservation Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and Conservation Stewardship Program, to help address natural resource concerns. These programs play a critical role in improving wildlife habitat and water quality, building soil health, and sequestering carbon.

As you work to provide recommendations on climate focused initiatives, we would urge you to keep rural America and farmers at the front of your mind. Our policy should help, not hinder, those who feed the world. Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


JOHN THUNE
United States Senator


M. MICHAEL ROUNDS
United States Senator