

October 26, 2021

Sent via email

Dear Secretary Crowfoot:

Representing all seven schools at Stanford University, the undersigned faculty write to support Governor Newsom's bold action in Executive Order N-82-20, calling for California to protect and conserve at least 30 percent of the State's land and coastal waters by 2030, and to offer our assistance as the California Biodiversity Collaborative works to implement this visionary response to the biodiversity, public health, and climate crises that are unfolding in California and across the planet.

As Executive Order N-82-20 recognizes, these interconnected crises touch virtually every aspect of life and are affecting the physical, psychological, economic, and social well-being of all Californians. We thus applaud the State's resolve to bring together and engage representatives from across California's diverse regions and communities as it develops a strategy to restore and steward the State's extraordinary ecological resources. The inclusion of historically underrepresented communities in this process is particularly critical, in our view, to avoid a "business as usual" outcome.

California stands at an ecological tipping point. Our truly exceptional natural assets are threatened as never before by drought, wildfire, species extinction, pollution, unsustainable exploitation, and other stressors. The dramatic loss of biodiversity and continuing degradation of natural places that we face jeopardizes the State's economic vitality and the health and welfare of its residents. Once-abundant salmon fisheries are collapsing. Vineyards and rural communities are burning. Parks and public lands are closed. Drinking water supplies are contaminated and depleted. Asthma rates in vulnerable populations are rising.

As California takes up the urgent challenge posed by these and many other colliding catastrophes, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to think outside the box and beyond the usual special interests that have contributed disproportionately to our present circumstances. For this effort to succeed, California must base its conservation and stewardship decisions on science, not politics. For this effort to succeed, California must inclusively and equitably consider the needs of all 40 million residents. For this effort to succeed, California must craft durable solutions that provide access to nature for everyone, including urban and economically disadvantaged communities that historically have had little opportunity to experience wild places and open spaces.

We submit that, in developing criteria for the long-term conservation and stewardship of land and coastal waters, California should focus its efforts at a biologically and ecologically meaningful landscape scale and, in particular, should prioritize the stabilization, restoration, and maintenance of diverse ecosystems and ecological functions. While some working landscapes may satisfy these criteria, mere public ownership of land or voluntary activities on private lands will not alone guarantee success; metrics, milestones, and monitoring for protection will be critical, and cutting the bureaucratic 'green tape' to accomplish these goals is necessary. Building these foundational scientific and policy principles into the 30x30 decision

process is the best, and perhaps only, way to ensure resilience over time in the face of our changing climate and competing demands.

California has often been a leader in developing science-based policy solutions to complex governance challenges. The need for innovation, boldness, and courage has never been greater. As Stanford faculty with expertise spanning the natural sciences, the social sciences, engineering, education, humanities, public health, law and policy, and business, we stand ready to assist in whatever way we can as the State moves forward with this potentially transformational endeavor.

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