Fact Sheet: The 30x30 Campaign
A nonpartisan, national goal to conserve 30% of lands and waters by 2030

What’s the background? Research shows that conserving – at a global scale – 30% of lands and waters by 2030 is the minimum commitment needed to protect essential ecosystem services and buffer against the worst impacts of climate change. Recognizing this truth, 86% of voters in the U.S. support a national 30x30 goal (survey of 1,203 registered voters conducted by Hart Research Associates, Feb. 20-26, 2019), including 73% of voters in eight western states (survey of 3,200 voters conducted by New Bridge Strategy and FM3 Research, Jan. 11-19, 2020). In support of the 30x30 campaign, the Land Trust Alliance is working to elevate the role of private land conservation.

How much land is already conserved? The most widely accepted figure is 12% or 293 million acres (U.S. Geological Survey Gap Analysis Project). This includes national parks, wilderness areas, permanent conservation easements, state parks and other conserved areas. Approximately 60% of all land in the U.S. remains in a mostly natural condition or could be restored to one, making a national 30x30 target ambitious but achievable.

How do we achieve 30x30? Reaching this goal requires the conservation of many types of habitat through a variety of conservation methods. To be clear, this doesn’t mean locking up these acres and throwing away the key. Rather, it means keeping our farms, ranches and forested working lands in working hands. The Nature Conservancy’s Resilient and Connected Landscapes project has identified and mapped a proposed conservation network of climate-resilient sites that could form the basis of a potential strategy for reaching 30x30. (Learn more here.)

Is this a federal land grab? No. The 30x30 campaign amplifies local approaches to conservation and highlights the important role that America’s farmers, ranchers and forest landowners play in conserving and restoring nature. A recent executive order regarding 30x30 merely recognizes the importance of the 30x30 campaign and commits the federal government to work in collaboration with landowners and other stakeholders to support it.

What’s the solution? Conserving 30% of lands and waters by 2030 is an audacious goal and the land trust community has an important role to play. But for us to do our part, Congress must provide increased support to land trusts and the private landowners with whom they work. This includes protecting the integrity of the federal tax incentive for conservation easement donations; increasing mandatory funding for Farm Bill conservation programs that maintain viable working farms, ranches and forests; and creating mechanisms to compensate landowners when they increase the capacity of their lands to store and absorb carbon. But we will not reach the necessary rate of land conservation exclusively through increased funding or new legislation. It will take determination and commitment — qualities already embodied by land trust personnel, volunteers and supporters. And it will require a new recognition that we all must prioritize land trusts and the work they do as essential for the well-being of neighborhoods, towns, counties and states across the country.