



The Honorable Joe Manchin  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 17, 2021

Chairmen Manchin and Pallone, Ranking Members Boozman and McMorris Rodgers, and Committees:

Founded in 1982, the Land Trust Alliance (Alliance) is a nonprofit corporation and national land conservation organization based in Washington, D.C. that works to save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America. The Alliance represents nearly 1,000 member land trusts. Alongside our members, we harness three fundamental aspects of the American ethos: volunteerism, community spirit and connection to the land. Our members have worked with enthusiastic landowners in their communities to conserve well over 56 million acres of land across our country, simultaneously boosting rural economies and keeping working lands in working hands.

The Alliance recognizes that climate change poses a serious threat to protected lands – and that protected lands are an integral part of the solution. Natural and working lands can sequester large amounts of carbon, potentially contributing up to one-third of the total emissions reductions needed to meet our nation’s stated climate goals.<sup>1</sup>

To leverage our natural and working lands in support of climate change mitigation and resilience, we must first ensure these lands will continue to be conserved. The Alliance is supportive of the movement to conserve, in partnership with private landowners, 30 percent of our nation’s lands and waters by 2030 to maximize this potential for natural climate solutions while concurrently addressing the biodiversity crisis.

Of course, the Alliance recognizes this is only one part of a broader, balanced solution that must include investment in both small- and large-scale renewable energy developments that help reduce emissions and avoid the worst impacts of climate change. At the same time, ambitious renewable energy targets can put pressure on undeveloped landscapes, many of which have high conservation and agricultural value. Without proper planning, these potentially competing priorities can create conflict between our clean energy and conservation goals, even as both are crucial for mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Additionally, the land area needed to achieve both of these important climate goals presents a major challenge. One recent study from Princeton University found that we will need 228,000 square miles –

---

<sup>1</sup> Griscom et al. “Natural climate solutions,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Oct 2017, 114 (44) 11645-11650. <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645>

an area the size of Colorado and Wyoming combined – in order to meet our nation’s future clean energy needs.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Administration’s commitment to conserve 30% of U.S. lands and waters in the coming decade means aiming for an additional 400 million acres to be permanently protected and thus unavailable for energy infrastructure development.


As the Committees undertake drafting landmark clean energy legislation, we urge you to consider the importance of natural and working lands in combating climate change. By crafting policies that direct renewable energy projects and related transmission infrastructure away from conserved lands, we can continue to protect priority ecological sites, prime agricultural lands and landscapes with high carbon sequestration potential – all of which are essential to achieving the goal of conserving 30% of our nation’s lands and waters by 2030. We must strategically ensure that climate progress in one sector does not diminish important work in another. This can be done. Studies suggest there is a plethora of low-impact land available for renewable energy development.<sup>3</sup> We are especially concerned about proposals for expedited siting processes for renewable energy and related transmission infrastructure without explicit consideration for protected lands. Failure to include protections for conservation lands as part of the policy conversation for energy infrastructure siting could put these important and beloved places at risk of development. We must not undermine our nation’s investments in conservation by siting energy infrastructure in protected places.

Equally of concern is the history of energy infrastructure being sited in communities that have historically been denied a voice in siting decisions at the same time they have been disproportionately impacted by that infrastructure. To this end, we are encouraged by recent progress on the development of an Office of Public Participation at FERC to give citizens an amplified voice when it comes to land-use planning for energy production in their communities. Public listening sessions hosted by the Commission also represents welcome progress. The Alliance urges Congress to consider policies that will further amplify community voices in energy infrastructure planning, particularly those that have been denied this opportunity in the past, and to ensure oversight on FERC’s public engagement processes.

We appreciate the Committees’ leadership on our clean energy future and we hope that the Committees, with input from the land trust community, will more explicitly address the role of land conservation in forthcoming energy infrastructure siting policy. Nature is not a luxury but a necessity, especially in the global fight against climate change. With careful planning, we can meet both clean energy and conservation goals, but the most meaningful conversations begin with an acknowledgement that both goals are integral pieces of one comprehensive climate plan.

We look forward to continuing the discussion of the land trust community’s role in a clean energy future and have included our publication “Reshaping the Energy Future” for further insight. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with Committee staff at your convenience. If you have any questions, please contact me at lfaeth@lta.org or 202-807-8197.

Sincerely,



Lori Faeth  
Government Relations Director Land Trust Alliance

---

<sup>2</sup> E. Larson et al., “Net-Zero America: Potential Pathways, Infrastructure, and Impacts, interim report”, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, December 15, 2020. <https://netzeroamerica.princeton.edu/the-report>

<sup>3</sup> The Nature Conservancy. July 2019. Site Wind Right: Accelerating Clean, Low-Impact Wind Energy in the Central United States. The Nature Conservancy’s Great Plains Renewable Energy Initiative. <http://www.nature.org/sitewindright>