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## FACT SHEET

# Interior Department to Take Action to Restore Lands and Waters, Advance Climate Resilience

Through President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, the Department of the Interior is putting people to work restoring our nation's lands and waters with a \$2 billion down payment that builds on existing Department programs and invests in locally led landscape, partner driven restoration. At a time when tackling the climate and biodiversity crises could not be more critical, this investment in clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, cultural resources and open spaces will benefit people, wildlife and local economies for generations to come.

The Department has announced a Restoration and Resilience Framework to support coordination across agency restoration and resilience programs and drive transformational outcomes with strategic investments that improve degraded lands and waters as well as advance climate resilience. The framework is anchored by restoration and resilience goals to guide Department funding toward collaborative, strategic and measurable ecosystem restoration benefits that will:



### Address climate change impacts

including wildfire, drought and coastal flooding



### Restore healthy lands and waters

including rivers, wetlands, grasslands, islands and cultural resources



### Enhance communities' quality of life

by improving outdoor spaces and addressing legacy pollution

Nested within the goals are an initial set of keystone initiatives, each focused on turning the tide on a conservation challenge. In selecting these initiatives, the Department considered key ecosystems where restoration efforts:

1. align with priorities including improving biodiversity, climate resilience, and advancing co-stewardship and equity;
2. are driven by a locally-led, collaborative restoration strategy in place or in progress;

3. leverage funds from multiple Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or Inflation Reduction Act programs and can be coordinated with multiple partners; and
4. where the Department has an opportunity to have transformational impact at scale.

While these keystone initiatives will receive additional attention, the Department will continue to fund many initiatives and projects outside these areas.



## RESTORATION AND RESILIENCE GOAL #1

# Address climate change impacts including drought, wildfire and coastal flooding

Climate change is driving longer, more frequent, and more intense heat waves, more volatile weather, record drought conditions, and wildfires that are increasing in frequency and severity. Coastal hazards such as hurricanes, sea-level rise, flooding, erosion and extreme storms threaten lives, health and property along our nation's coasts. Protecting and restoring coastal habitats can buffer the worst of these impacts. The Department will invest resources in nature-based solutions to better safeguard communities, wildlife and ecosystems from extreme weather.

## DROUGHT

To advance drought resilient basins and support drought-stricken communities, the Department will coordinate with partners to leverage restoration actions, replace culverts that limit fish and other species movement to colder and deeper waters, and restore floodplains and riparian habitats.



### Keystone Initiative Drought: Klamath

To build and expand drought resilience in the Klamath Basin, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act include dedicated funding for Klamath Basin restoration activities to reduce water loss and increase water availability. Through this keystone initiative, the Department will leverage additional funding across our programs as well as coordinate with Tribal and other partners to advance wetlands enhancement and post-fire restoration efforts in the Klamath.

to migrate as sea levels rise, the Department will help recover salt marsh sparrow and many other coastal dependent species and communities. The Department is working in coordination with many partners, including the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, utilizing salt marsh prioritization tools to rehabilitate and realign salt marsh habitat.

## WILDFIRE

To reduce the threat to communities from more extreme wildland fire, the Department will invest in fuels and invasive vegetation management, post-fire restoration and rehabilitation activities, and efforts to keep water on the landscape.



### Keystone Initiative Wildfire: Sagebrush

Half of the sagebrush ecosystem has been lost in the last 20 years, but over 30 million acres of core sagebrush habitat remains. To defend and grow these critical landscapes, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law directs significant funding to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to build ecological resilience in core habitats, particularly through preventing invasive annual grasses to reduce wildfire risk, reducing other negative impacts from fire, and advancing the Sagebrush Conservation Design.

## COASTAL RESILIENCE

To foster resilience across coastlines and support robust economies and communities, the Department will work to restore coastal wetlands using nature-based solutions to improve coastal and estuarian habitats and increase resilience against hazards such as storm surge and sea-level rise, while protecting important natural carbon storage opportunities.



### Keystone Initiative Coasts: Saltmarsh

Salt marsh sparrow populations are in steep decline and by restoring existing salt marshes and protecting adjacent, inland areas to allow marshes



## RESTORATION AND RESILIENCE GOAL #2

# Restoring healthy lands and waters including rivers, wetlands, grasslands, islands and cultural resources

America's people, economy and wildlife rely on healthy lands and waters, and our open spaces are woven into our nation's identity. Investments in conservation and restoration can reverse trends stemming from the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. In coordination with the Administration's America the Beautiful initiative, the Department is working toward a national goal for the stewardship of these resources. Interwoven with this goal is conserving and restoring cultural resources, and the Department is committed to upholding federal Tribal trust responsibilities, integrating local and Indigenous Knowledge, and co-stewarding natural resources and open lands, all of which serve to support Indigenous religions, customs and languages.

## RIVERS

America's rivers and freshwater systems are the lifeblood of many communities, providing drinking water to local populations, serving as habitat for wildlife, and offering unparalleled recreational opportunities.



### Keystone Initiative Rivers: Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim

As part of our effort to build resilient freshwater systems, the Department is working to develop baseline ecosystem information to inform salmon conservation, prevent invasive species through early detection and rapid response actions, foster natural river processes and connectivity and support ecological services for surrounding and downstream communities. To assess and restore salmon habitat in the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim basin, the Department is committing to a collaborative effort with Tribal partners to assess, monitor and restore physical and biological processes in the basin to benefit salmon habitat.

## GRASSLANDS

We have already lost more than 70% of the nation's grasslands. As a result, grassland migratory bird populations in North America have plummeted by 53% since 1970, and 75% of those species are declining significantly. Pollinator and aquatic species face similar declines. Current conservation efforts, while extensive, are out-paced by grassland conversion and degradation.



### Keystone Initiative Grasslands: Bison Restoration

As part of a larger keystone initiative to restore and protect grasslands, Secretary Haaland signed a new Secretary's Order to enhance co-stewarded, healthy, bison herds as well as a commitment of over \$25 million from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act to empower Department bureaus and other partners to use the best available science and Indigenous Knowledge to help restore bison across the country, as well as the vast grassland habitats on which they depend on.

## ISLANDS

Island systems are incredibly biodiverse, yet their susceptibility to damages from invasive species and associated changes, such as to fire regimes, means they lead the nation in the number of species listed under the Endangered Species Act. Warmer and more acidic oceans are adding to existing stresses on coral reefs and fish communities that are at the center of these islands' economic and cultural practices. To foster stable and sustainable island communities, the Department will work to build climate resilience across critical habitats, systems and infrastructure and reduce threats from pollution sources, invasive species, increased fire risk, and changes in ocean conditions throughout U.S. Territories and islands.



### Keystone Initiative Islands: Hawaiian Forest Bird Conservation

To foster native biodiversity in island ecosystems, the Department is working to prevent imminent extinction of Hawaiian Forest Birds through a multiagency strategy that employs a multi-pronged approach for native Forest Bird conservation and avian malaria control, and strengthening of local partnerships. Additional work to better incorporate biocultural knowledge into conservation of island biodiversity is underway.



## RESTORATION AND RESILIENCE GOAL #3

# Enhancing communities' quality of life by improving outdoor spaces and addressing legacy pollution

Millions of Americans across the country live within just one mile from an abandoned coal mine or an orphaned oil and gas well. These legacy pollution sites are environmental hazards and jeopardize public health and safety by contaminating groundwater, emitting noxious gases like methane, littering the landscape with rusted and dangerous equipment, creating flooding and sinkhole risks, and harming wildlife.



### Keystone Initiative: Appalachia

To improve human and environmental health in Appalachia, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$16 billion for the cleanup of orphaned oil

and gas wells and abandoned mine lands, and nearly \$10 million for environmental remediation around legacy pollution sites and to address pollution in riparian zones. These funds are being used to address these toxic sites, create good paying jobs and revitalize economies, in coordination with the Appalachia Landscape Partnership. While these resources can remediate pollution and environmental hazards, additional resources are required to complete full land and water restoration. The Department will coordinate investment of restoration resources to meet this need in key areas in this landscape.

## National Frameworks that Support Coordinated Restoration and Resilience

Two additional keystone initiatives coordinate across all Department bureaus to support fundamental needs for all seven of the above restoration and resilience goals.

### ADVANCING A NATIONAL EARLY DETECTION AND RAPID RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

Invasive species are a substantial threat to native plants and wildlife, human health and economies, cultural heritage, and commercial, agricultural and recreational activities.

Through investments from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Department is advancing numerous components of a National Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) Framework and working with partners to identify, enhance and coordinate capacity, build new tools, and establish coordinated processes to proactively find and eradicate new invasive species before they establish, spread and cause harm. Specifics include identifying high risk invasive species and invasion hotspots across the nation to inform strategic early detection efforts, developing and enhancing molecular tools to aid early detection capabilities, boosting capacity for on-the-ground rapid response actions, and creating an online clearinghouse to serve as a central hub for coordinating EDRR information so that managers can share and have access to current information to guide strategic program implementation.

### PLAN, DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL SEED STRATEGY

Human influences such as invasive species, altered wildfire regimes, and natural disasters are negatively affecting our native plant communities and the many species that depend upon them. Our ability to repair these damaged lands and stem the loss of cultural and economic benefits to society depends upon appropriate and sufficient seed resources for replanting and the associated research, decision tools, and public support for ecological restoration.

Through collaboration and communications, the Department is working to build and implement a national strategy to ensure native seed availability for ecological restoration. This work will assess native seed needs and ensure availability, increase “seeds of success” collecting teams, promote seed research and provide tools and training for land managers to maximize native plant restoration success.