

Conserving land and water: The Biden Administration 30×30 plan

We are writing this column on the Biden Administration's climate plan and its impact on agriculture just ahead of a report on 30×30 that is to be submitted by the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, and the heads of other relevant agencies, to the National Climate Task Force.

The 30×30 plan was included as an element of Executive Order 14008 of January 27, 2021 "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad" (<https://tinyurl.com/t5smar2h>) with "the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030."

Spike Jordan responded to the 30×30 announcement with a post at the "Fence Post." In his post, Jordan wrote, "the new Federal land grab is a serious threat to private property owners in the United States" (<https://tinyurl.com/k4mevd2b>).

US Representative Tracey Mann, Kansas, in a tweet addressing the 30×30 plan wrote, "I am deeply concerned with Pres. Biden's 30×30 plan. It is egregious that the Biden Administration would consider these land grabs to meet an arbitrary climate goal. I will continue to advocate for Kansas agriculture and work to stop Democratic overreach" (<https://tinyurl.com/56vhtpx2>).

The response by National Farmers Union President Rob Larew stands in contrast to these statements. Larew wrote, "Climate change is an immense, complex crisis with far-reaching consequences. To be successful in our fight against it, we must approach it immediately and from every angle possible – just as President Biden's economy-wide climate plan intends to do. National Farmers Union is especially encouraged by the administration's focus on climate-smart agriculture, whose capacity for mitigation and adaptation has been largely overlooked until recently.

"We are also pleased that President Biden has instructed the USDA to solicit input from farmers and other stakeholders as they develop and carry out climate programs; though lawmakers and administration officials are generally well-intentioned, they may not always recognize policies' unintended consequences. By offering farmers a seat at the table, they can ensure that programs are feasible and beneficial for all parties involved.

"In the coming months, National Farmers Union will hold the administration to this promise and work with them to flesh out policies that provide farmers with the support they need to implement solutions and build resilience" (<https://tinyurl.com/awdd8xcm>).

While 30 percent seems like a large number, we need to put it into perspective. Currently, 12 percent of the land in the US is permanently protected. At the same time "approximately 60 percent of land in the continental US is in a natural state" (<https://tinyurl.com/tprp9nf2>).

That suggests that the remaining 18 percent will not have to come from agriculture alone but could involve activities on other lands as well.

As we await the 90 day report, we are well aware that climate change has the potential to have a significant impact on farmers and ranchers in the US and around the world. Some are likely to see a significant reduction in rainfall, while others will see large rainfall events that will flood out crops and put cattle at risk. Growing zones could shift so that land that is highly productive today could be arid or under water in the future.

There is a significant possibility that farmers, ranchers, and orchardists could be at greater risk from the results of climate change than from the 30×30 plan.

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