

HEARTWIRED TO LOVE THE EARTH

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT



Hispanic
Access
Foundation



HEARTWIRED

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT HISPANIC ACCESS FOUNDATION & HEARTWIRED

Hispanic Access Foundation (HAF) is a national 501c(3) nonprofit that aims to elevate Latino voices, connect Latinos with opportunities, and improve lives for a more equitable society. Our vision is that one day every Hispanic individual in America will enjoy good physical health and a healthy natural environment, a quality education, economic success, and civic engagement in their communities with the sum of improving the future of America.

Heartwired (<https://heartwiredforchange.com/>) is a joint project of Goodwin Simon Strategic Research¹ and Wonder: Strategies for Good² that provides guidance to individuals and organizations on persuading audiences to act for social good. Human decision-making is influenced by how people are heartwired — the mind circuits and connections that tie together their emotions, identity, values, beliefs and lived experiences. Heartwired is designed to help changemakers put this deeper understanding to work in their efforts to create social change.

Over the course of 2020, HAF implemented a project, led by five of our key faith leader partners, that uses Heartwired messaging strategies to persuade audiences to act on ocean conservation. Because much of HAF's network, and several of the faith leaders themselves, live inland, we added river and watershed conservation as a potential direction for our leaders to take as they carried out the messaging project. In 2021, we expanded the scope of the project to include not just ocean and river conservation, but also land conservation and climate protection. However, it is important to note that the Heartwired ocean messaging³ strategies are based on extensive research and message testing. This toolkit is an effort to summarize and apply Heartwired messaging strategies to topics beyond the ocean, though we recognize these messaging recommendations have not been explicitly researched as was Heartwired to Love the Ocean⁴.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is intended to be a guide for advocates and community leaders who want to motivate broad audiences in support of conservation and climate action. The first section is a set of recommendations that can apply to any of the conservation topics in this toolkit. You may think of these recommendations as a checklist that ensures that you are leveraging the ways that your audience's emotions, values, beliefs, identities and lived experiences shape their attitudes and behaviors, and emphasizing storytelling and empathy as a way to persuade audiences to act in support of conservation and climate protection.

Following the Recommendations are sections containing brief overviews of the importance of land, freshwater, ocean, and climate protection - what is at stake, and why we do what we do, in simple language. For those who may be newer to conservation or need a more in-depth introduction to the "why" of these topics, longer factsheets are included as a supplement to this toolkit. Following the overview of each conservation topic, we give a list of examples for communicating about these topics, which are based on Heartwired methodology⁵. Lastly, each section includes talking points and social media guidance.

For in-depth information on how these conservation topics relate to Latino community health, cultural heritage, jobs and economy, recreation, and public opinion, please see HAF's 2021 Conservation Policy Toolkit⁶ in English and Spanish. You may also wish to view our Policy Recommendations⁷ on these topics.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSERVATION MESSAGING

HEARTWIRED MINDSETS

The Heartwired research showed that people have certain mindsets that can open them to being persuaded to act for conservation. While the Heartwired research was specific to ocean conservation, we believe that these mindsets can apply to other conservation and climate topics, and that tapping into them with your messaging can motivate people to action. The mindsets are as follows:

- **Incredible wildlife:** Use images and photos of wildlife, including stories of people interacting with wildlife, to spotlight the need for their protection.
- **God's beautiful creation:** Use language associated with faith and spirituality to evoke awe and a feeling of stewardship in caring for nature.
- **The 5 senses:** Use multi-sensory language (and/or photos and videos) to transport your audience to a place with descriptions of sights, sounds, smells, touch, and taste.
- **Laws and policy:** Spotlight your efforts to advance laws and policies, demonstrate the success of existing policies that may be threatened, or paint a picture of the future success of a proposed policy.
- **Feeling of peace:** Invoke a shared experience many of us have felt - feeling peace and a relief from stress and distractions when out in nature.
- **Family traditions:** Feature families, family memories, and family traditions and vacations enjoying nature and the outdoors.

Weaving one or more of these mindsets into your messaging can help activate your audience to take action.



CHECKLIST FOR DESIGNING YOUR MESSAGING

The Heartwired methodology involves more than just mindsets. Following this checklist will help you leverage your audience's emotions, values, beliefs, identities and lived experiences - in other words, their heart-wiring - to persuade them to act in support of conservation and climate action.

DOES YOUR MESSAGE:

- Have an appropriate messenger, or diverse messengers, for the audience you're trying to reach?
- Include photos, videos, or other graphics?
- Tap into the awe, wonder, joy, love, and even spirituality that people find in nature?
- Make use of one or more of the Heartwired mindsets?
 - Incredible Wildlife
 - God's Beautiful Creation
 - The 5 Senses
 - Laws and Policy
 - Feeling of Peace
 - Family Traditions
- Use a storytelling approach in addition to facts?
- Show the problem at an accessible, human scale?
- Use a "redemption" frame - i.e., showing that while people make mistakes, we are also capable of overcoming them?
- Spotlight a local success, or a variety of potential solutions?
- Give examples of how people like your audience are taking action?
- Include a specific call to action?



LAND CONSERVATION

OVERVIEW

All over the world, from the middle of our most nature-deprived cities to faraway wild landscapes, it's important to protect natural areas and restore vegetation to places that have been degraded.

Plants, trees, and natural areas are valuable economically and have huge benefits to human health. Just having trees on your street will make you feel younger than if you were living in a concrete jungle, and having a view of trees from your hospital window will send you home from the hospital faster and in better shape. Natural areas also boost local businesses, lower stress and crime rates, protect your mental health, encourage immune-boosting exercise, and help children develop into happier, healthier, and more successful adults. For every dollar invested in planting and maintaining a tree, there is a \$3-6 benefit⁸.

Furthermore, plants absorb pollution from the air, water, and soil, leaving our world cleaner and safer. They also provide shade, block the wind, and their roots help hold the soil together. This means that if you have a lot of vegetation nearby, you'll have a lower risk of floods, you will pay less in heating and cooling bills, and you'll be safer in heat waves, cold snaps, and if the power goes out. Therefore, protecting nature also helps protect us from the effects of climate change.

In the United States, every 30 seconds, a natural area the size of a football field is cut down and paved over⁹ to build suburbs, highways, or energy infrastructure. If this continues, by 2050 we will see the disappearance of wild spaces the size of South Dakota. This threatens our clean air, water, soil, and much of our outdoor-based economy. It also lessens the natural protection that nature gives to the increasing effects of climate change, such as severe weather, wildfires, and storms.

Protecting nature in all of its forms, from a single tree to a national park, is beneficial. This is true in the middle of the city and out in the wilderness. In the US, Latinos and other communities of color are much more likely to be deprived of nature's benefits and lack natural areas around them¹⁰. Every bit counts when it comes to bringing nature to these communities.

EXAMPLES

INCREDIBLE WILDLIFE

"This land is beautiful and diverse. It's home to countless wildlife that fly above, walk on, and depend on its natural resources. For the sake of the wildlife, I want to do my part to preserve and conserve the land and its bountiful resources."

GOD'S BEAUTIFUL CREATION

"I believe that the land is a beautiful creation of God. It is my personal responsibility, as a steward of God's word, to take care and steward the land, as well."

THE 5 SENSES

"I love to feel the afternoon breeze on my face and to hear the crunch of the leaves underneath my feet. This land is a special place that provides vast experiences for everyone, I want to protect these special places for future generations."

LAWS AND POLICY

"To ensure that the land is protected and preserved for future generations, we must encourage our lawmakers to create laws and policies to protect the land and its natural resources."

FEELING OF PEACE

"I turn to the land and to spending time in nature to find inner peace and to take a break from the stress of everyday life. I want to do my part to ensure others can find this peace in nature, as well."

FAMILY TRADITIONS

"I grew up visiting parks with my family for birthday parties, Easter eggs hunts, and for carne asadas on the weekends. These lands should be protected so that my grandchildren and their children can create these memories with their families, as well."



TALKING POINTS

BACKGROUND:

All over the world, from the middle of our most nature-deprived cities to faraway wild landscapes, it's important to protect natural areas and restore vegetation to places that have been degraded.

Benefits:

- Maintained neighborhood green space lowers violence and fear, increases safety¹¹
- Increases children's school performance
- Economic:
 - Plants, trees, and natural areas create jobs and business opportunities
 - For every dollar invested in planting and maintaining a tree, there is a \$3-6 benefit¹²
 - Lower energy costs
- Health:
 - Cleaner air and water leads to healthier hearts and lungs
 - Having trees on your street will make you feel younger
 - Lower stress and mental health boost
 - Encourages immune-boosting outdoor recreation
- Climate:
 - Plants absorb pollution from the air, water, and soil and reduce climate change
 - With a lot of vegetation, you'll have a lower risk of floods
 - Provides shade in the summer and windbreaks in the winter - increases safety in a changing climate
- In the US, every 30 seconds, a natural area the size of a football field is cut down and paved over¹³ to build infrastructure.
- In the US, Latinos and other communities of color are much more likely to be deprived of nature's benefits and lack natural areas around them.

Solutions:

- Protect and restore natural lands, coasts, and greenery, including in cities
- Promote access to nature and recreation for underserved communities
- Create dense housing, public transit, and walkable neighborhoods to avoid developing land for highways and sprawl
- Restrict mining and energy development
- Use regenerative agriculture techniques



SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

SAMPLE POST 1:

- Parks & protected lands are the home of countless wildlife that fly above, walk on and depend on its natural resources. It's #TimeToAct and protect our lands from the effects of #ClimateChange, not only for us, but for our wildlife. Learn more: [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 2:

- As stewards of our #nature, it's our personal responsibility to make sure we protect natural areas and restore vegetation in places it has been degraded. #ProtectNature Learn how you can help: [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 3:

- Spending time in nature is a great way to destress from our everyday lives. Without #LandConservation, our future generations won't be able to turn to parks as a form of feeling at peace. We need to #ProtectNature, here's how: [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 4:

- Every 30 seconds, a natural area size of a football field is cut down and paved over to build infrastructure. We need to #ProtectNature for our children and grandchildren, so they can create memories as we all have. Learn more: [LINK]



HASHTAGS:

- #LandConservation
- #Nature
- #PublicLands
- #ProtectNature
- #Protect30x30



RIVER CONSERVATION

OVERVIEW

Rivers, and the watersheds they belong to, provide our sources of clean drinking water and the water we need for cooking, hygiene, and sanitation. They provide water for agriculture, to grow our crops and the fodder for livestock. They also provide water for industrial processes and energy generation. 1 out of 3 Americans get their drinking water from rivers!

Rivers are a source of fun and family memories, as well as an economic lifeline. River-related recreation and tourism brings \$97 billion to the US economy. Every \$1 spent on water infrastructure in the U.S. generates nearly \$3 to the private economy. Rivers are also a center for religion, culture, and spiritual practices for many people, and have played a large role throughout history.

Healthy rivers are important for more than just people. They are crucial to their surrounding ecosystems as well, providing water and habitat for thousands of fish, bird, and mammal species.

When the health of rivers is threatened, all of these benefits are at risk. Unfortunately, rivers face threats from many sides. Rivers are frequently polluted by coal, oil, and gas development, agriculture, and industrial waste. Rivers may be threatened by development that paves over the surrounding ecosystems, which increases pollution and flood risk for nearby neighborhoods. Rivers may be blocked by dams, or threatened by invasive species.

Actions that protect and restore river habitats and lessen pollution are critical to protecting our clean water. This includes transitioning away from coal, oil, and gas for energy, avoiding development in sensitive river ecosystems, reducing agriculture and plastic pollution, increasing water and energy efficiency, and implementing "green infrastructure" that uses vegetation to naturally absorb stormwater and pollutants.¹⁴

EXAMPLES

INCREDIBLE WILDLIFE

“Rivers flow in through vast landscapes on this earth. They are home to countless species that swim, grow and drink from the river, and depend on the river to survive. For the sake of the countless species that call these rivers home, I want to do my part and preserve and conserve rivers.”

GOD’S BEAUTIFUL CREATION

“Rivers are a part of God’s creation. I feel it is my personal duty as a steward of God to protect rivers and streams as a part of His beautiful creation.”

THE 5 SENSES

“I love the sounds of the river ebbing and flowing and splashing against the river banks. Seeing the river bend and create mini waterfalls throughout the water brings me joy and inspires me to care for and protect our rivers and streams.”

LAWS AND POLICY

“To ensure the sustainability of the rivers and streams that are a part of our watershed, it is important to push for laws and regulations that could ensure the protection and conservation of river health for generations to come.”

FEELING OF PEACE

“I visit the river to relax and feel at peace, escaping from the stress and anxiety of everyday life. I want to do my part to protect rivers and allow others to enjoy that peace for years to come.”

FAMILY TRADITIONS

“I grew up visiting the local river with my grandfather where he taught me to fish and clean our fish to eat. It’s important to me for these rivers to be protected, so that my children and their children can create their own memories like this.”



TALKING POINTS

BACKGROUND:

Rivers, and the watersheds they belong to, provide our sources of clean drinking water and the water we need for cooking, hygiene, sanitation, agriculture, industrial processes and energy generation

Benefits:

- Clean water
- Economic:
 - River-related recreation and tourism brings \$97 billion to the US economy
 - Every \$1 spent on water infrastructure in the U.S. generates nearly \$3 to the private economy.
- Recreation:
 - Rivers are a source of fun and family memories
 - Rivers are also a center for religion, culture, and spiritual practices
- Climate:
 - Healthy rivers serve as ecosystems, providing water and habitat for thousands of fish, bird, and mammal species.
- Rivers are frequently polluted by coal, oil, and gas development, agriculture, and industrial waste.

Solutions:

- Transition from coal, oil and gas to clean energy
- Avoid development in sensitive river ecosystems
- Reduce agriculture and plastic pollution
- Increase water and energy efficiency
- Implement green infrastructure



SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

SAMPLE POST 1:

- #HealthyRivers serve as an ecosystem for thousands of fish, birds, and mammal species. When the health of rivers is threatened, so is their habitat. For the sake of countless species, we need #RiverConservation. Learn how you can help: [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 2:

- Rivers are a part of God's beautiful creation and serve as a center for religion, culture and spiritual practices for many people. It is our job to protect our rivers and watersheds from the effects of pollution. Learn how: [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 3:

- To protect our rivers and streams, it is crucial we all push for laws and regulations that could ensure the protection and conservation of river health for generations to come. Learn more: [LINK] #ProtectRivers #RiverConservation



SAMPLE POST 4:

- Rivers are a source of fun and family memories, as well as an economic lifeline. Every \$1 spent on water infrastructure in the U.S. generates nearly \$3 to the private economy. We need to #ProtectRivers for our future generations. [LINK]



HASHTAGS:

- #RiverConservation
- #ProtectRivers
- #HealthyRivers
- #Protect30x30



OCEAN CONSERVATION

OVERVIEW

Similar to rivers, the ocean is a source of life. Every other breath we take comes from the ocean. Ocean species provide food and medicine to billions of people. Corals and coastal wetlands provide animal habitats, and also protect coastal communities from floods and storm surges.

As with rivers, the ocean is a means of transportation, trade, and a magnet for human settlement. The ocean centers in global history and is a font of cultural exchange, as well as recreation and employment. Almost 40% of the US population lives in coastal shoreline counties, which contribute \$6.6 trillion to the U.S. economy. Ocean-based tourism and recreation alone contributes \$124 billion in GDP and 2.4 million jobs to the US economy.

The same pollution threats facing rivers also affect the ocean, since all watersheds eventually drain into the ocean. The ocean is also vulnerable to pollution from plastics. Plastic does not decompose - every single plastic item that has ever been created still exists in the world, breaking into tiny pieces that eventually end up in fish stomachs, entangling wildlife, or destroying habitats. In addition, overfishing and harmful fishing gear and practices destroy wildlife habitat, kill unwanted animals caught in nets like dolphins and turtles, and harm fisheries by catching fish faster than they can reproduce. Offshore drilling and mining frequently cause accidents that harm wildlife and can devastate coastal communities that rely on the ocean economy.

Climate change is also a threat - warmer and more acidic oceans harm coral reefs, which threatens the wildlife that live in them, as well as the coastal communities that rely on reefs for tourism, fishing, medicine, and protection from shore erosion and flooding. Climate change also causes the sea level to rise as the water expands and ice caps melt from the heat.

Protecting the life-giving benefits of the ocean means reducing all types of pollution, transitioning away from coal, oil, and gas for energy, farming and fishing seafood sustainably, supporting the protection and restoration of coastal lands and habitats, and increasing protections in marine areas. Because of the interconnectedness of land, water, and ocean, actions that protect nature on land and rivers also help protect the ocean.

EXAMPLES

INCREDIBLE WILDLIFE

"The ocean is a vast body of water that covers 70% of the earth, it is home to countless plant and animal species we have yet to discover. It provides shelter, resources, and protection to many. For the sake of the countless species that call the ocean home, I want to do my part and preserve and conserve the ocean."

GOD'S BEAUTIFUL CREATION

"God created the ocean in all of its majesty. As a believer in God and a steward of His creations, I feel it is my personal duty to protect the ocean as a part of His beautiful creation."

THE 5 SENSES

"I love feeling the sand between my toes, listening to the waves crashing, smelling the salt of the ocean, and watching the sunset over the ocean. The beach is a special place that we should protect for future generations."

LAWS AND POLICY

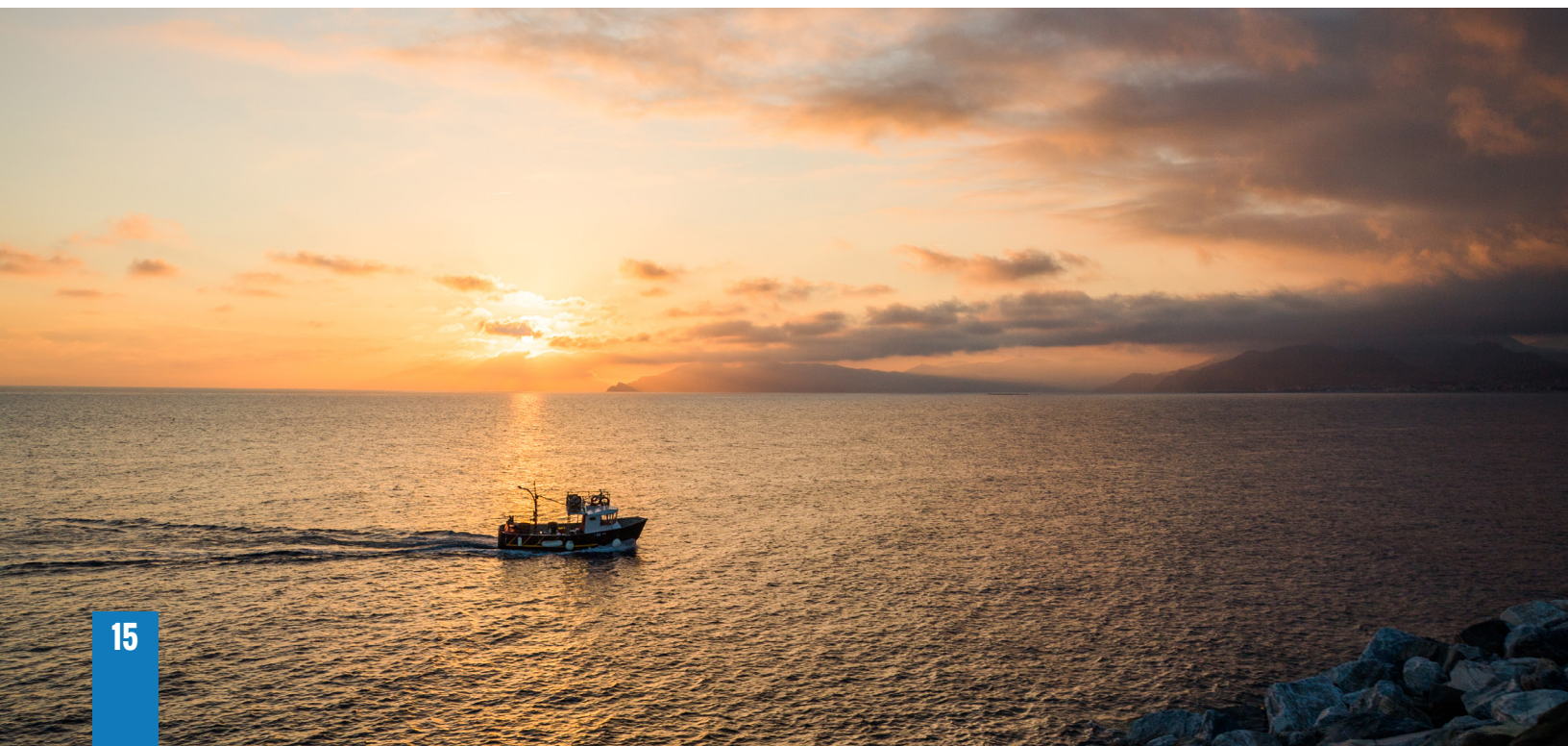
"To ensure the sustainability to the ocean, it is important to push for laws and regulations that could ensure the protection and conservation of the ocean's health for generations to come."

FEELING OF PEACE

"I visit the ocean to feel at peace, hearing the waves of the ocean crashing on the beach. The sound of the waves crashes helps me cleanse myself of daily stresses and anxiety. It is important to me to protect the ocean to ensure everyone can destress as well."

FAMILY TRADITIONS

"I grew up visiting the beach with my family during the summer making sandcastles, collecting seashells, and learning how to surf. It's important to me for the beaches and the ocean to be protected, so that my children and their children can create their own memories like this."



TALKING POINTS

BACKGROUND:

The ocean is a source of life, joy, and family memories. Every other breath we take comes from the ocean. Ocean species provide food and medicine to billions of people.

Benefits:

- Human:
 - Transportation
 - Trade
 - Food
 - Oxygen
 - Cultural Exchange
 - Recreation
 - Employment
- Economic:
 - \$6.6 trillion to the U.S. economy from US population living in coastal shoreline counties
 - \$124 billion in GDP from tourism and recreation
 - 2.4 million jobs
- Climate:
 - Absorbs some of the heat that causes climate change
 - Corals and coastal wetlands provide animal habitats, and also protect coastal communities from floods and storm surges.

Threats:

- Pollution from plastic - non-decomposable
- Overfishing and harmful fishing gear and practices
- Offshore drilling and mining
- Climate change
- Pollution from agriculture and industry

Solutions:

- Reducing all types of pollution and plastic use
- Transitioning from coal, oil and gas to clean energy
- Sustainable fishing and farming
- Supporting protection and restoration of coastal lands and habitats
- Increasing protection in marine areas



SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

SAMPLE POST 1:

- The ocean is a source of life. It provides shelter, resources and protection to many. For the sake of the countless species that call the ocean home, we need to #conservetheocean. Learn how [LINK] #ProtectOcean



SAMPLE POST 2:

- As stewards of our #oceans, we need to protect them from the threat of climate change. We need to pass legislation that reduces pollution and ensures our future generations can also benefit from the ocean's majesty. Learn more: [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 3:

- Ocean-based tourism and recreation contributes \$124 billion in GDP and 2.4 million jobs to the U.S. economy. For many, the ocean serves as a place to cleanse themselves of daily stresses and anxiety. We need to #ProtectTheOcean: [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 4:

- The feeling of the sand between your toes, listening to the waves crashing, smelling the salt of the ocean, watching the sunset over the ocean – there are many ways we feel at peace in the ocean. It's time we #ProtectTheOcean for future generations. [LINK]



HASHTAGS:

- #Oceans
- #ProtectTheOcean
- #ConserveTheOcean
- #OceanConservation
- #Protect30x30



CLIMATE PROTECTION

OVERVIEW

Climate conditions affect our whole lives, economies, and society. When the climate changes, it threatens the most basic human necessities, such as food, water, and shelter. For example, farmers rely on a stable climate to grow their crops, since plants need certain climate conditions to grow properly. Our clean water supply also depends on a stable climate. As the climate changes, rainfall patterns also change, leading to drought and potentially famine, disease and migration from water shortages. In other areas, climate change might cause too much rain to fall and storms to increase, leading to flooding and the loss of lives, homes, businesses, farms, and infrastructure.

Because climate change causes the disruption and instability of weather patterns, both heat waves and cold snaps are becoming increasing threats, especially for outdoor workers and the elderly. Longer summers and increases in heat and dryness can lead to worsening wildfires. In addition, a warming planet is melting glaciers and icy land masses and causing the sea level to gradually rise. This is causing salty ocean water to intrude on the coast, contaminating freshwater and destabilizing land. It also makes flooding worse during storms and high tides, as more water can be pulled onto the coast.

Last but not least, climate change is causing an increase in disease. The habitats of ticks, mosquitos, and other creatures that carry disease expands as the weather overall gets warmer and winter becomes milder.

Climate change is caused by the release of pollutants into the atmosphere, known as greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gases act like an insulating blanket over the Earth, trapping the sun's heat on our planet's surface. One of the main ways greenhouse gases are released is by burning coal, oil, and natural gas for energy and transportation. Natural gas is also released from certain methods of agriculture, raising livestock, and waste and trash. Lastly, chopping down trees and burning wood and plant matter releases greenhouse gases.

To protect a stable climate, we must stop burning coal, oil, and gas for energy, protect nature from destruction, and restore nature where possible. We can use alternative energy sources that use natural features like sunlight, wind, water, and the heat of the Earth to provide electricity. Scaling up the use of, for example, wind and solar power while winding down the use of coal, oil, and gas is one of the primary ways to keep the climate healthy. We can also make our homes, businesses, and pipes more energy and water efficient, by preventing leaks and using less. In terms of transportation, we can lower the use of cars, trucks, and airplanes and instead encourage public transit, trains, etc. There are also several ways to reduce the climate impact of agriculture, livestock, and waste.

EXAMPLES

INCREDIBLE WILDLIFE

"There are about 8.7 billion different species of wildlife on our planet that rely on natural resources to survive and as our climate changes, the risk of extinction increases. To protect these species from the devastating effects of climate change, we must act to address climate change for the sake of their existence."

GOD'S BEAUTIFUL CREATION

"As climate change effects increase, the impact on the planet and God's beautiful creation is more and more threatened. As a steward of God's creation, it is my personal responsibility to work towards addressing climate change and deter its negative effects."

THE 5 SENSES

"This past summer, I watched the sky turn red from the smoke of the nearby wildfires. I smelled the smoke and felt it in my lungs as the acreage of the fire grew. Each year, these wildfires get bigger and more destructive and it is imperative to address climate change as the catalyst for more devastating natural disasters."

LAWS AND POLICY

"The most effective way to ensure our earth is sustainable for future generations is to pass strong climate action laws that hold people accountable for their part in climate change. Supporting these laws is a lasting and powerful way to show your love for our planet."

FEELING OF PEACE

"I find peace in the reliability of nature as beneficial for my mental health, but as the effects of climate change intensify, the sustainability of nature becomes more threatened. Feeling safe in nature motivates me to protect our natural resources and address climate change to do so."

FAMILY TRADITIONS

"I grew up going to climate change rallies and marches with my parents to fight for our government to work towards addressing climate change. My goal is to instill that same drive for protecting our planet from the effects of climate change in my children, but at the same time hope that they will live in a reality where these marches don't exist - because we're already beating climate change."

**THERE ARE ABOUT 8.7
BILLION DIFFERENT
SPECIES OF WILDLIFE
ON OUR PLANET THAT
RELY ON NATURAL
RESOURCES TO
SURVIVE**

TALKING POINTS

BACKGROUND:

Climate conditions affect our whole lives, economies, and society. When the climate changes, it threatens the most basic human necessities – food, water, and shelter.

Effects:

- Ability for farmers to grow crops - potential for famine
- Having a clean water supply
- Migration from water, food, and employment shortages
- Extreme weather and natural disasters: drought, wildfires, storms, flooding, extreme heat
- Increase in disease
- Climate change is leading to unstable weather patterns
 - Heat waves and cold snaps are threats to outdoor workers and the elderly
 - Increases in heat and dryness is leading to worsening wildfires
 - Sea level rise and worsening flooding during storms and high tides

Causes

- Release of pollutants (greenhouse gases) into the atmosphere
- Greenhouse gases trap the sun's heat on our planet's surface
- Gases are released by:
 - Burning coal, oil and natural gas for energy and transportation
 - Certain methods of agriculture, raising livestock, and waste and trash
 - Chopping down trees and burning wood and plant matter

Solutions:

- Transition from coal, oil and gas to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar
- Protect nature from destruction
- Restore nature
- Lower the use of cars, trucks and airplanes
- Use regenerative agriculture techniques
- Prevent waste



SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

SAMPLE POST 1:

- Climate conditions affect our whole lives, economies, and society. As stewards of our planet, we need to do our part in addressing #ClimateChange and protect our planet for future generations. Learn how: [LINK] #ClimateProtection



SAMPLE POST 2:

- About 8.7 billion species of wildlife rely on natural resources to survive. As our climate changes, the risk of extinction increases. To protect these species from the devastating effects of #ClimateChange, we must act now. [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 3:

- As the effects of #ClimateChange worsen, the destruction from wildfires increases. It is imperative we address #climatechange as the catalyst for more devastating natural disasters. Learn how: [LINK]



SAMPLE POST 4:

- The sustainability of nature is being threatened by #ClimateChange. It's leading to drought, flooding, unstable weather patterns, and more. To protect our children and their children, we need to fight for our government to work towards addressing the #ClimateCrisis. [LINK]



HASHTAGS:

- #ClimateChange
- #ClimateProtection
- #ProtectOurClimate
- #EndClimateChange
- #ClimateCrisis

APPENDICES: FACT SHEETS

Fact Sheet on Climate, Land, and Nature Conservation

Climate change

Why is a healthy, stable climate important?

While it is difficult to describe the climate, because it is not something that we can directly see, hear, feel, or touch, it affects our lives every day. Our climate is the long-term, average weather conditions of our area, such as temperature, sunshine, wind, clouds, and humidity. If the climate changes, then so does the weather – it may get hotter or colder, we may get more or less rain and snow than usual, and it may get drier or stormier. These changes may even happen all at the same time, causing the weather and seasons to become erratic and unpredictable.

This may not sound consequential, if you have proper clothing, reliable access to food and clean water, a stable income, and a comfortable, dry, insulated home with heating and air conditioning. However, the reality is that climate conditions affect our whole lives, economies, and society. When the climate changes, it threatens the most basic human necessities, such as food, water, and shelter.

For example, farmers and agricultural workers rely on a stable climate to grow their crops, since plants rely on certain climate conditions to grow properly. Changes in the temperature and amount of rainfall means that crops may not get the proper amounts of water, soil nutrients, and sunlight that they need, threatening the growth of our produce, legumes, animal fodder, and cereal grains. Changing temperature and acidity conditions in the ocean mean that fish and seafood are moving out of their habitats or even dying out, threatening a basic human source of protein. In the short run, this means that certain foods will become scarce and prices will go up. In the long run – and in many parts of the world today – people will go hungry from failed harvests, if nothing is done to prevent this.

Our clean water supply also depends on a stable climate. As the climate changes, rainfall patterns also change, leading to drought in many regions of the US and throughout the world. The US draws water from lakes, rivers, reservoirs, and underground water sources known as aquifers, and many of these are drying up. This leads to water shortages, high water costs, and challenges for agriculture. In other parts of the world, a lack of clean water could lead to famine, disease and migration.

On the other hand, climate change might also cause too much rain to fall in some areas, leading to flooding and the loss of lives, homes, businesses, farms, and infrastructure.

Because climate change causes the disruption and instability of weather patterns, both heat waves and cold snaps are becoming increasing threats. Outdoor workers, who are largely Latino, are particularly vulnerable to periods of extreme heat, while elderly people are more vulnerable to the cold.

Longer summers and increases in heat and dryness can lead to wildfires in many parts of the country. Wildfires are harmful in many ways: they can destroy lives, homes, businesses, farms, and infrastructure, and smoke hurts people's lungs and makes them more susceptible to severe COVID-19 symptoms. In some areas in the American Southwest, fire is a normal and necessary part of the ecosystem. But climate change is making wildfires larger, more destructive, and difficult to control.

Sea level rise is another concern that results from climate change. As the atmosphere heats up, glaciers and icy land masses like Greenland and Antarctica are beginning to melt. Ice that was previously on land is now melting into the ocean, causing the sea level to gradually rise. This is already causing salty ocean water to intrude on the coast. This contaminates coastal sources of fresh water and destabilizes land in places like Miami, causing it to sink or erode. It also makes flooding worse during storms and even high tides, as more water can be pulled onto the coast. This is already threatening homes, farms, businesses, and infrastructure in some coastal cities, causing migration and the loss of people's livelihoods and homes. In the long run, sea level rise will threaten major coastal cities in the US and throughout the world.

Last but not least, climate change will cause an increase in disease. The habitats of ticks, mosquitos, and other creatures that carry disease expands as the weather overall gets warmer and winter becomes milder. Diseases such as Lyme, dengue, malaria, and many others are becoming more frequent, and are occurring in new parts of the world where they didn't previously exist.

Maintaining a healthy and stable climate would reduce the risk of these natural disasters and keep vulnerable communities safer, healthier, and in their homes.

What are the threats our climate faces? Why is it changing?

Climate change is caused by the release of pollutants into the atmosphere, known as greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gases act like an insulating blanket over the Earth, trapping the sun's heat on our planet's surface. This is a good thing – if we didn't have greenhouse gases, the Earth would be frozen and look more like Mars! But the key is balance. Too much greenhouse gases trap too much heat, causing the climate to change. Since the 1850s, people have been releasing more and more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, causing it to become hotter and hotter.

So, what releases greenhouse gases? Why are we doing this?

Greenhouse gases are released in many ways. One of the main ways is by burning what are known as "fossil fuels" – coal, oil, and natural gas. Most electricity is generated this way, as well as transportation, heating, cooling, and industrial processes. If your car uses gasoline, then you burn fossil fuels every time you drive and fly.

Natural gas, also known as methane, is a powerful greenhouse gas even when it's not burned. Natural gas is released every time a cow burps or farts, and from certain farming methods, so our agriculture and livestock industries also contribute to climate change. Waste and trash also release natural gas, and it frequently leaks from pipelines.

Lastly, chopping down trees and burning wood and plant matter releases greenhouse gases. This is a huge problem in regions like the Amazon and South Asia, where tropical forests are being cut down to grow livestock and plantations for palm oil. On a smaller scale, it is also a problem in the United States, where every 30 seconds, a natural area the size of a football field is cut down and paved over to build suburbs, highways, or energy infrastructure.

What can we do about those threats?

You may have already figured out what needs to be done to keep the climate stable and healthy. In short: stop using fossil fuels, protect nature from destruction, and restore nature where possible. However, this could be a difficult transition, given that fossil fuels power our electricity, transportation, and industry.

Thankfully, there are alternative energy sources that do not release the pollutants that cause climate change. Rather than burning fossil fuels, these energy sources use natural features like sunlight, wind, water, and the heat of the Earth to provide electricity. Scaling up the use of, for example, wind and solar power while winding down the use of coal, oil, and gas is one of the primary ways to keep the climate healthy. In terms of transportation, we can lower the use of cars, trucks, and airplanes and instead encourage public transit, trains, etc. There are also several ways to reduce the climate impact of agriculture and livestock.

The climate actions below range from things you can do at the individual level, to the business, political, and societal levels. Many of these actions have the additional benefit of lowering your monthly bills, creating jobs, and increasing your and your community's overall health and safety.

As an individual, you can:

- Make your home more water and energy efficient by adding insulation and fixing leaks
- Eat less meat and dairy, especially beef products, and buy local produce. If possible, you can start your own garden and grow your own produce.
- Prevent food waste by buying only what you need, eating leftovers, using your freezer, using vegetable scraps and bones to make broth, and finding recipes for using overripe produce. You can also find a service that delivers “unwanted” produce that would otherwise be thrown away.
- Avoid buying new products when possible – the most sustainable car, phone, clothing, etc. is the one you already have!
- Use reusable products where you are able, such as cloth napkins, rags, and cloth bags instead of paper towels and plastic bags
- Be mindful of the waste you produce, and reuse, donate, compost, or recycle when possible
- Instead of mowing and watering your lawn, plant native plants and water them with a rain barrel
- Reduce the amount of energy and water you use by driving and flying less, turning off lights and appliances when you're not using them, being mindful of your thermostat, lowering the temperature of your washer and dryer, etc.
- Plant native trees and vegetation, and ask your city to plant trees in your area

- If you are able, use renewable energy sources such as wind and solar for electricity
- Volunteer or donate to organizations that work on climate action or on projects that avoid, reduce, or absorb pollutants
- Spread the word - educate your friends, family, coworkers, your children's teachers, etc.

As a voter and advocate, you can support candidates and policies that:

- Promote renewable energy and a just transition away from coal, oil, and natural gas
- Create new public transit and dense, walkable neighborhoods rather than suburban sprawl
- Support protection and restoration of nature, including in cities
- Fund science and research related to climate change
- Create new jobs and economic sectors in climate, clean energy, and nature, and strengthen workers' rights to ensure that new jobs are good jobs
- Prioritize the communities that have suffered the most from pollution, systemic racism, and climate disasters with pollution reduction programs, financial and emergency support, job programs, and local and tribal management structures
- Advocate for environmental justice

As a business, religious, or organization leader, you can:

- Make your property and buildings more water and energy efficient by adding insulation and fixing leaks
- Plant native trees and vegetation on your property
- Reduce the need for your employees to fly and drive by offering virtual meetings and work from home options
- Avoid disposable products like water bottles when catering, and use local and environmentally conscious vendors and suppliers
- Incentivize employees to bring reusable lunch containers, reusable water bottles, and avoid driving to work
- Save energy by turning off computers, machines, lights, and thermostats outside of business hours
- If you are able, use renewable energy sources such as wind and solar for electricity
- Create and sell products that are reusable, compostable, or recyclable, or offer other climate benefits
- Spread the word - educate your congregation, employees, and fellow leaders

As a farmer, rancher, or agricultural worker, you can:

- Lease your land for solar or wind energy development, or for conservation easements
- Transition to growing plant-based protein rather than raising livestock
- Use regenerative agriculture techniques to protect the climate and increase yields, such as planting trees and cover crops to prevent soil erosion and lower pollution, using no-till farming

and windbreaks to reduce erosion, and reincorporating organic matter (like compost) into the soil

A note on electric cars. This is often provided as a potential solution to climate change because it gets gasoline-powered cars off of the road. However, it only works as a solution when the electricity that powers the cars is clean, e.g. powered by solar panels or wind turbines. This is not the case for the vast majority of us. Also, it is not an equitable solution, because most of us can't afford to buy new electric cars, and it only deals with one relatively small slice of a large, multifaceted problem. *In reality, we will need climate solutions in many aspects of our lives, from transportation to city planning to building design to energy to food to nature protection.***

Land and Nature Protection

Why is it important to protect land and nature, and what does that have to do with climate change?

As described above, cutting down and burning trees and plants releases pollutants that cause climate change. Therefore, protecting natural areas from this destruction, and restoring degraded areas with new plants and trees, are ways to help reverse the release of these pollutants.

Unlike humans, plants breathe in carbon dioxide and breathe out oxygen. Carbon dioxide is one of the chemicals that causes global warming, so plants can keep this chemical from causing more climate change, simply by breathing it in.

Protecting both land and the climate can be complicated, however, because the renewable energy methods mentioned above require materials and space to be built. We need to protect as much natural land as possible, and we need to transition our energy systems to renewable energy as soon as possible. These goals occasionally come into conflict, such as when a solar energy developer wants to clear parkland to mine or put up solar panels. To serve our overall goals of protecting the health of the climate and of nature, we should promote solutions like recycling old materials so that new mines aren't necessary, and of developing clean energy in ways that are least likely to harm natural landscapes, such as putting solar panels on rooftops.

Are there other reasons to protect nature?

With or without climate change, it's a good idea to protect natural areas and restore vegetation to places that have been degraded. Plants, trees, and natural ecosystems do much more for us than just breathing in carbon dioxide.

Plants, trees, and natural areas have huge benefits to human health. Just having trees on your street will make you feel younger than if you were living in a concrete jungle, and having a view of trees from your hospital window will send you home from the hospital faster and in better shape. Natural areas

also lower stress, protect your mental health, encourage immune-boosting exercise, and help children develop into happier, healthier, and more successful adults.

Furthermore, plants absorb pollution from the air, water, and soil, leaving our world cleaner and safer. They also provide shade, block the wind, and their roots help hold the soil together. This means that if you have a lot of vegetation nearby, you'll have a lower risk of floods, you will pay less in heating and cooling bills, and you'll be safer in heat waves, cold snaps, and if the power goes out. Therefore, protecting nature also helps protect us from the effects of climate change.

Protecting nature in all of its forms, from a single tree to a national park, is beneficial. This is true in the middle of the city and out in the wilderness. In the US, Latinos and other communities of color are much more likely to be deprived of nature's benefits and lack natural areas around them. Every bit counts when it comes to bringing nature to these communities.

In addition to the benefits that nature brings to nearby communities, protecting nature is also a matter of protecting our history and cultural heritage. Throughout the US, there are places with rich histories of Native, Latino, and American settlements and events that are in need of protecting and sharing their stories.

It's important to note that nature protection does not mean, say, replacing a natural forest with a banana plantation or timber farm. While farms and plantations also have vegetation, they lack the diversity of life (known as biodiversity) found in a natural ecosystem, and often use pesticides and fertilizers that pollute the soil and water. Therefore, they do not provide the benefits that natural ecosystems do, and may even contribute to climate change and other environmental problems.

Also, when we talk about restoring natural lands, it is important that the restoration be appropriate to the area. For example, it could do more harm than good to try and replace a prairie ecosystem with a pine forest.

What can we do about threats to land and nature?

The same solutions that protect our climate also help protect nature from the potentially devastating effects of climate change. But the land has its own needs for protection as well.

As an individual, you can:

- Organize and/or participate in clean-ups and other stewardship activities
- Avoid pesticides when gardening, and plant native plants instead of a lawn
- Keep your cats indoors
- Volunteer or donate to organizations that work on nature and land protection and restoration

As a voter and advocate, you can support candidates and policies that:

- Support protection and restoration of natural lands, habitats, and historical sites
- Promote underserved groups accessing and enjoying the outdoors

- Create dense housing, new public transit, and walkable neighborhoods to avoid land being paved over for highways and suburban sprawl
- Restrict mining and energy development on public lands

As a farmer, rancher, or agricultural worker, you can:

- Use integrated pest management techniques to avoid using pesticides

How are climate change and nature conservation connected to COVID-19?

COVID-19 and nature conservation are connected both directly and indirectly. For one, having natural areas that are nearby and accessible provides mental and physical health boosts as well as economic and recreational opportunities. This is especially important while many Americans, and Latinos in particular, are suffering from mental health problems related to the coronavirus. The ability to access nature and “green spaces” also incentivizes outdoor physical activity, which boosts the immune system and provides an outlet when schools and gyms are restricted and unsafe. Also, the job opportunities afforded by nature protection and restoration will help our troubled economy.

As mentioned above, Latinos and other communities of color are the most likely to live somewhere that has no access to nature. This means that they are disproportionately suffering from the restrictions and mental and physical health problems caused by COVID-19.

In addition, scientists believe that deforestation was one of the causes of the pandemic. Deforestation brings humans closer to animals that may harbor diseases like the coronavirus, so preventing deforestation has the additional benefit of reducing the risk of other new diseases.

Even more worrying is the connection between climate change and the pandemic. Disasters that are caused or worsened by climate change, such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and severe heat waves, have even more risk when you consider the risk of contagious disease that may arise from the need to evacuate or access a cold center to get away from the heat. In particular, communities in fire danger zones or those that are currently in active wildfire areas face the compounded risk of smoke health effects and respiratory illnesses like COVID-19.

Lastly, living somewhere with high levels of air pollution makes COVID-19 symptoms worse and increases the risk of death. Latinos are more likely to live in highly polluted areas, which partly explains why this community has been so devastated by the pandemic. Since air pollution is also the main cause of climate change, the goals of a healthy climate and keeping people safe from the pandemic are aligned in the need for pollution reduction.

Resources for more information

- HAF’s Congressional Conservation Toolkit including information on land protection, climate change, heat, drought, and wildfires as they affect Latinos:

<https://hispanicaccess.org/news-resources/news-releases/item/867-haf-releases-its-2nd-annual-congressional-conservation-toolkit-policy-recommendations>

- HAF's report on how Latinos and other communities of color lack access to nature: <https://hispanicaccess.org/news-resources/news-releases/item/979-new-report-shows-racial-and-economic-disparities-in-access-to-nature>
- HAF's report on Latino historical sites that need protection: <https://hispanicaccess.org/news-resources/research-library/item/68-place-story-culture-a-top-ten-list-of-places-important-to-the-latino-community-and-in-need-of-preservation>
- NASA on climate change: <https://climate.nasa.gov/>
- The campaign to protect 30% of America's lands and waters by 2030, known as 30x30: <https://www.natureamerica.org/>
- Organization that works on regenerative agriculture: <https://regenerationinternational.org/why-regenerative-agriculture/>
- Explore different scenarios and solutions for reducing climate change using this online simulator: <https://en-roads.climateinteractive.org/>
- Report on the potential conflict between land protection and the need for renewable energy: https://www.tu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Critical-Minerals_Interactive.pdf
- Example of a service that reduces food waste and hunger by delivering unwanted produce: <https://www.hungryharvest.net/>
- Examples of projects you can donate to that reduce the risk of climate change: <https://offset.climateneutralnow.org/>

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Climate Change

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#justiciaclimática

#justiciaambiental

Protecting land and nature

English

#Protect30x30

#nature

Spanish

#30x30

#porlanaturaleza

#medioambiente

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Fact Sheet on River and Ocean Conservation

Rivers and Watersheds

Why are clean, healthy rivers important?

Rivers, and the watersheds they belong to, provide our sources of clean drinking water and the water we need for cooking, hygiene, and sanitation. They provide water for agriculture, to grow our crops and the fodder for livestock. They also provide water for industrial processes and energy generation. 1 out of 3 Americans get their drinking water from rivers!

Rivers are a means of transportation, since for most of human history traveling by water was the fastest available option. Even today, shipping by river remains common. Because of that, and of their importance as sources of clean water, rivers are a magnet for human settlement and have played a central role throughout history. They are also a center for religion, culture, and spiritual practices for many people.

Rivers are a source of fun and family memories, as well as an economic lifeline. River-related recreation and tourism brings \$97 billion to the US economy. Every \$1 spent on water infrastructure in the U.S. generates nearly \$3 to the private economy.

Healthy rivers are important for more than just people. They are crucial to their surrounding ecosystems as well, providing water and habitat for thousands of fish, bird, and mammal species.

What are the threats our rivers face?

When the health of rivers is threatened, all of these benefits are at risk. Currently, 40% of America's freshwater species are at risk of extinction, and 44% of America's waterways are too polluted for fishing and swimming. Some rivers, such as the Colorado River, are fully dried up before they reach the sea, and countless others have been paved over by roads and railroads.

Unfortunately, rivers face threats from many sides. Rivers are polluted by energy generation from coal, oil, and gas, as byproducts such as coal ash, fracking fluids, and oil from pipeline spills make their way into the watershed. Pesticides from agriculture can also harm water quality, and the fertilizers and nutrients used to grow crops can cause dead zones and harmful algae blooms, which are deadly to wildlife and toxic to humans. Pollution can also come from industrial waste, mining, chemicals leaching from landfills, manure from livestock, and waste from municipal sewers and septic systems. It is important to note that this pollution does not stay confined to the river itself - it also seeps into the surrounding soil, aquifers, and eventually makes its way into the ocean.

Rivers and all of the ecosystems and benefits that they represent are threatened by development that destroys wetlands, floodplains, and forests. Paving over what was once soil and greenery means that these areas are no longer able to absorb floodwaters or pollutants, and groundwater does not get replenished because the water is not able to soak into the earth. In addition to harming the wildlife dependent on these ecosystems, this exacerbates both flooding and drought cycles.

Climate change is a factor that both affects the other threats to rivers, and also has impacts on its own. Climate change is increasing the severity of droughts and storms, so it worsens the threat of flooding as well as water shortages. More than one-third of all counties in the US will face higher risks of water shortages by 2050 as a result of climate change.

Invasive species are present in every state in the US. They change the ecosystems where they're located, and have a range of consequences. Depending on the species, they may cause harm to fisheries, agriculture, and recreation, as well as damage infrastructure and boats.

Over the past century, the US built tens of thousands of dams that blocked river flows, flooded the surrounding areas, harmed water quality, and became a public safety risk as they aged. Thankfully, the harmful effects of dams have been increasingly recognized, and hundreds have been removed and had their river flows restored in the past few decades. Similarly, levees and floodwalls, while seemingly protecting against floods, can also cause more harm than they solve due to deteriorating the health and absorptive capacity of floodplains and causing problems as they age.

What can we do about those threats?

Countless actions can help boost the health of rivers, even if you don't live near one. These actions range from the individual level, such as the products you use, to the business, political, and societal levels.

As an individual, you can:

- Make your home more water and energy efficient by fixing leaks and replacing old equipment and appliances
- If you have a yard or garden, water it with rain or gray water, grow native plants, and start a compost pile
- Dispose of dog poop properly
- Don't throw away or flush medications - use drug take-back programs
- Clean and dry your recreational (e.g. fishing and hiking) gear and clothing before and after use
- If you are able, use renewable energy sources such as wind and solar for electricity
- If you are able, choose organically farmed produce
- Volunteer or donate to organizations that work on river and watershed health
- Participate in cleanups
- Spread the word - educate your friends, family, coworkers, your children's teachers, etc.

As a voter and advocate, you can support candidates and policies that:

- Support protection and restoration of lands and habitats, particularly river floodplains
- Avoid development in sensitive areas such as floodplains
- Promote renewable energy (aside from hydropower) and a just transition away from coal, oil, and gas
- Update waste infrastructure to prevent sewage leaks, and implement green infrastructure that uses vegetation to naturally absorb water and pollutants

As a business, religious, or organization leader, you can:

- Put green infrastructure on to your property that uses vegetation to naturally absorb water and pollutants
- Make your property and buildings more water and energy efficient by fixing leaks and replacing old equipment and appliances
- If you are able, use renewable energy sources such as wind and solar for electricity
- Spread the word - educate your congregation, employees, and fellow leaders

As a farmer, rancher, or agricultural worker, you can:

- Keep animals away from waterways
- Plant cover crops to prevent erosion of bare soil, and plant vegetation along the edges of fields and near waterways
- Adopt nutrient management and tillage techniques that reduce pollution runoff
- Adopt organic farming techniques to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers

Ocean and Coast

Why is it important to keep the ocean and coastal areas healthy?

Similar to rivers, the ocean is a source of life. Every other breath we take comes from the ocean - specifically, the algae that live in it. 250,000 species are known to live in the ocean - though scientists believe as many as 91% of marine species are waiting to be discovered. Those species provide food and medicine to billions of people. Corals and coastal wetlands provide animal habitats, and also protect coastal communities from floods and storm surges.

As with rivers, the ocean is a means of transportation, trade, and a magnet for human settlement. The ocean centers in global history and is a font of cultural exchange, as well as recreation and employment. Almost 40% of the US population lives in coastal shoreline counties, which contribute \$6.6 trillion to the U.S. economy. Specifically, ocean-based tourism and recreation contributes \$124 billion in GDP and 2.4 million jobs to the US economy.

What threatens the health of the ocean and coasts?

The same pollution threats facing rivers also affect the ocean, since all watersheds eventually drain into the ocean. 80% of ocean pollution comes from sources on land. As with rivers, the ocean also suffers from dead zones and harmful algae blooms.

The ocean is also vulnerable to pollution from plastics. Plastic does not decompose - every single plastic item that has ever been created still exists in the world, breaking into tiny pieces that eventually end up in fish stomachs, entangling wildlife, or destroying habitats. Scientists think about 8 million metric tons of plastic enter the ocean every year. It is important to note that while plastic accumulates in the ocean, as with the other pollutants mentioned, it often begins by being littered or washed into rivers by stormwater.

As with rivers, climate change is both a factor in other ocean threats, as well as a threat in itself.

One of those threats is acidification. The same carbon dioxide emissions that cause climate change also cause the ocean to become more acidic, since the ocean absorbs part of the carbon dioxide that is emitted into the atmosphere. This has changed the chemistry of seawater to become 30% more acidic, which threatens corals, oysters, and other ocean wildlife that build shells.

Climate change also causes the sea level to rise as the water expands and ice caps melt from the heat. This poses a threat to coastal communities from flooding and storm surges - which are also exacerbated by the increased intensity of storms caused by climate change. Warmer and more acidic oceans also harm coral reefs, which threatens the wildlife that live in them, as well as the coastal communities that rely on coral reefs for tourism, fishing, medicine, and protection from shore erosion and flooding.

Offshore drilling and mining also pose a threat. There is the potential for horrific accidents, such as the Deepwater Horizon explosion or the Exxon-Valdez oil spill from transporting oil. In addition to these prominent incidents, lesser-known accidents such as oil rig fires have happened hundreds of times in the Gulf of Mexico alone. These incidents harm wildlife and can devastate coastal communities that rely on the ocean economy.

Overfishing and harmful fishing gear and practices destroy wildlife habitat, kill unwanted animals caught in nets like dolphins and turtles, and harm fisheries by catching fish faster than they can reproduce. About one-third of assessed fish populations are overfished and over half are fully-fished. Millions of people rely on fishing for their livelihoods, and billions rely on fish as an essential source of protein, so these losses could be catastrophic if they continue.

What can we do about those threats?

The same solutions that protect river health also help protect the ocean from pollution and climate change (see above). But the ocean has its own needs for protection as well.

As an individual, you can:

- Choose seafood that is fished or farmed sustainably

- Use reusable products rather than disposable ones, such as cloth napkins, cleaning rags, tote bags, water bottles, coffee cups, and more - especially avoid plastic items such as plastic bags, water bottles, and straws
- Participate in beach cleanups
- Volunteer or donate to organizations that work on ocean and coastal health and resilience

As a voter and advocate, you can support candidates and policies that:

- Support protection and restoration of coastal lands and habitats, particularly coastal wetlands and sea grasses
- Support increasing protections of areas of seas, oceans, and estuaries (known as marine protected areas)
- Avoid development in sensitive coastal areas

How is ocean and river conservation connected to COVID-19?

COVID-19 and ocean and river health are connected both directly and indirectly. For one, having bodies of water that are nearby, clean, and accessible provides mental and physical health boosts as well as economic and recreational opportunities. This is especially important while many Americans, and Latinos in particular, are suffering from mental health problems related to the coronavirus. The ability to access nature and “blue spaces” also incentivizes outdoor physical activity, which boosts the immune system and provides an outlet when schools and gyms are restricted and unsafe. Also, the job opportunities afforded by nature protection and restoration will help our troubled economy.

More worrying is the connection between climate change and the pandemic. Disasters that are caused or worsened by climate change, such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and severe heat waves, have even more risk when you consider the risk of contagious disease that may arise from the need to evacuate or access a cold center to get away from the heat. Since climate change is also so tied into river and ocean conservation, taking action on climate will reduce these disaster risks, along with improving ocean and river health.

COVID-19 is also increasing the problem of plastic in the ocean, as many turn to disposal masks, gloves, and take-out containers to reduce the risk of spreading the disease.

Resources for more information

- HAF’s whitepaper on Latino Connections to the Ocean and Coast: <https://hispanicaccess.org/news-resources/research-library/item/893-nuestro-oceano-y-la-cost-a-latino-connections-to-the-ocean-and-coast>
- American Rivers: <https://www.americanrivers.org/>
- Seafood Watch on sustainable seafood: <https://www.seafoodwatch.org/>
- NOAA on oceans and coasts: <https://www.noaa.gov/oceans-coasts>

- The EPA on green infrastructure:
<https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure>
- NASA on climate change: <https://climate.nasa.gov/>
- AZUL - <http://azul.org/es/>

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#Protect30x30

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#30x30

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Spanish

#AcciónClimática

#cambioclimático

#CrisisClimática

#justiciaclimática

#justiciaambiental

ENDNOTES

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- 16 <https://climate.nasa.gov/>

ABOUT HAF

Hispanic Access Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that connects Latinos with partners and opportunities improving lives and creating an equitable society. Our vision is that all Hispanics throughout the U.S. enjoy good physical health, a healthy natural environment, a quality education, economic success and civic engagement in their communities with the sum improving the future of America. For more information, visit www.hispanicaccess.org

ABOUT HEARTWIRED

Heartwired (<https://heartwiredforchange.com/>) is a joint project of Goodwin Simon Strategic Research and Wonder: Strategies for Good that provides guidance to individuals and organizations on persuading audiences to act for social good. Human decision-making is influenced by how people are heartwired — the mind circuits and connections that tie together their emotions, identity, values, beliefs and lived experiences. Heartwired is designed to help changemakers put this deeper understanding to work in their efforts to create social change.



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