



EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN 30x30

**HOW TO INCREASE ACCESS TO NATURE FOR COMMUNITIES OF COLOR
AND ENSURE EQUITY IN HOW FUNDS ARE SPENT ON PROTECTION**



Hispanic
Access
Foundation



INTRODUCTION

To strengthen the Biden Administration’s America the Beautiful initiative to protect 30% of the United States’ lands, water, and ocean by 2030, Hispanic Access Foundation aims to increase access to nature for communities of color and ensure equity in how funds are spent on protection, to assure that all communities – no matter where they live – have safe, accessible public spaces and nature where they can recreate and restore.

Inequitable access to nature is a problem that national, state, and local leaders can no longer ignore. With scientists urging policymakers to protect at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and ocean by 2030 to address the biodiversity and climate crises, now is the time to imagine how, by protecting far more lands and waters over the next decade, the United States can guarantee every child in America the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of nature near their home.

That said, nature protection and restoration cannot be the only elements to America the Beautiful, or we risk

1. unintended consequences negatively impacting communities of color, such as green gentrification, and
2. missing out on the fullest range of benefits provided by nearby nature and clean water access, which range from job creation to improving education and public health to climate mitigation and resilience.

To prevent negative knock-on effects and harness the maximum benefits of investing in nearby nature, policymakers must also consider public and active transportation needs, affordable and dense housing, living wages, the border wall and immigration reform, and law enforcement reform as additional components necessary to creating meaningful equity and safety in the outdoors. In addition, lack of federal recognition of dozens of Tribal Nations impedes meaningful consultation, co-management, and enfranchisement of indigenous communities in the outdoors.

Therefore, a whole-of-government approach centering equity and BIPOC perspectives throughout the America the Beautiful initiative is necessary to design a deliberately inclusive program that accounts for the myriad ways in which communities of color are excluded from a safe, accessible, pollution-free outdoors that addresses environmental justice and meets community needs.



THE IMPORTANCE OF 30x30

Why does protecting 30% of U.S. lands and waterways matter to Latino communities?

Latino health

- Hispanic Access Foundation has found that communities of color are three times more likely than white communities to live in nature deprived places. Seventy-four percent of communities of color in the contiguous United States live in nature-deprived areas, compared with just 23 percent of white communities.
- Latinos are 21% more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to live in urban heat islands, or areas dominated by asphalt and concrete where parks, shade-providing trees, and other vegetation are lacking. Urban heat islands can produce breathing difficulties, exhaustion, heat cramps, heat stroke and even death.
- Areas within a 10-minute walk of a park can be as much as six degrees cooler than surrounding parkless areas. However, parks in majority non-white neighborhoods are half as large and serve nearly five times more people than parks in majority white neighborhoods. Also, parks serving majority low-income households are, on average, four times smaller and serve nearly four times more people than parks that serve majority high-income households.¹
- Safe access to water is a matter of life or death for Black and Latino children, who are more likely to drown due to a lack of access to swimming lessons and clean, safe water to learn to swim.²
- Reduced access to safe outdoor areas limits opportunities for exercise and may present obstacles to doctor-prescribed outdoor recreation.³

Latino cultural heritage and history

- The U.S. Latino identity is composed of many narratives; there is not one dominant story that can completely tell the history and the contributions of Latinos, nor any particular community or culture, to the United States. Too often our stories and contributions to this nation are not represented in the narrative that our public lands portray.
- Thus, the protection of existing monuments, such as Cesar E. Chavez National Monument, and the creation of new parks and monuments are an opportunity to expand our nation's narrative to be inclusive of the histories and contributions of Latino communities in the United States.

Latino recreation

- Demographics are changing: whites are projected to become a minority in the U.S. around 2045. By 2021 nonwhites will account for the majority of the nation's 74 million children.⁴ Yet in 2018, almost three-quarters of outdoor recreation participants were white Americans, compared to only 10% Hispanic.⁵ The future of public lands and public health thus depends on engaging and welcoming our diverse youth.
- Latinos are great users of public lands — 91% of Latino voters in the West have visited national public lands before, and 59 percent of Latinos would visit national public lands more often assuming the pandemic is under control.⁶

Latino jobs and economy

- 94% of Latinos see public lands, such as national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas as an “essential part” of the economies in these states.
- The outdoor recreation economy generates \$887 billion in consumer spending and 7.6 million jobs.⁷
- 79% of National Park Service employees are white, and 62% of all employees are male. Black employees comprise almost 7% of the NPS's permanent full-time workforce, significantly less than the 13.4% of Black people in the national population. Hispanic and Latino employees also are underrepresented, making up 5.6% of the Park Service general workforce despite accounting for 18.5% of the population.⁸ Lack of racially-diverse representation is common across the U.S. conservation workforce.



Latino public opinion

- 83% of Latino voters in the West support setting a national goal of conserving 30 percent of U.S. land, inland waters, and ocean by the year 2030.⁹
- 93% of Latino voters agree that we should create new national parks, national monuments, national wildlife refuges and tribal protected areas to protect historic sites or areas for outdoor recreation.
- 70% agree that we should strictly limit where and how new oil and gas development takes place on public lands.
- 86% support directing funding to ensure adequate access to parks and natural areas for lower-income people and communities of color that have disproportionately lacked them.
- 78% of Latino voters agree that we should find money to protect their state's land, water and wildlife, even with state budget problems.

Why does protecting 30% of the ocean matter to Latino communities?

Latino health

- 23% of coastal residents are Latino, and 6% of coastal residents live in primarily Spanish-speaking households.
- Beach and fishery advisories and closures—or a lack thereof—disproportionately impacts Latinos. Latinos are among the most susceptible to health issues following visits to polluted beaches remaining open for recreation. Latino anglers and consumers, including subsistence fishers, are less likely to be aware of fishery advisories.
- Systemic and environmental racism have caused poverty, economic instability, health challenges,

and reduced access to social and political resources among many Latinos. This lack of resources puts coastal Latinos into an “elevated coastal hazard risk category” with increased vulnerability to the consequences of climate change.

- The ongoing loss of estuarine wetlands contributes to Latinos’ increased susceptibility to coastal hazards, including sea level rise and storms.

Latino cultural heritage and history

- Coastal sites throughout the U.S. safeguard and honor Latino heritage. Contemporary Latino culture also thrives at other sites, existing and emergent, fostering strong coastal communities and connection to place.
- These sites include San Diego’s Friendship Park, Cumberland Island in Georgia, Chicago’s Paseo Boricua, Miami’s Jose Marti Riverfront Park, Padre Island National Seashore in Texas, Assateague Island in Maryland, San Juan Island in Washington, Monterey Bay in California, and many more.

Latino recreation

- 4.2 million Latinos participate in fishing, averaging more outings per year than the general fishing population. 12% of saltwater fishing participants over the age of six are Latino.¹⁰



Latino jobs and economy

- More data on the role Latinos play in the marine economy is needed, but it’s reasonable to infer the role is significant. The states with the largest Latino populations—California and Texas—are also the states with the greatest contributions to the U.S. ocean and coastal economy.¹¹ Three of the top five largest states with Latinos—California, Florida and New York—are among the five largest contributors to ocean-based tourism and recreation.
- More than 18 million people in the U.S. visit estuary and coastal waters each year for recreation and tourism. Ocean-based tourism and recreation alone, contributes approximately \$124 billion in GDP and 2.4 million jobs.
- Nationwide, the leisure and hospitality industry is 24% Hispanic and/or Latino. Nearly one third of workers in the U.S. construction industry are Hispanic and/or Latino; as marine construction is concentrated in California, Florida and Texas, Latinos are taking a large part in this ocean and Great Lakes economic sector.¹²

Latino public opinion

- 83% of Latino voters support setting a national goal of conserving thirty percent of U.S. land, inland waters, and ocean by the year 2030.
- Relative to other demographics, Latinos are most likely to find the ocean very important for their emotional well-being.
- Latinos are 73% in agreement that the health of the ocean is essential to human survival.

1 <https://www.tpl.org/the-heat-is-on>

2 <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/water-safety/drowning-prevention-and-facts.html>

3 <https://hispanicaccess.org/news-resources/research-library/item/893-nuestro-oceano-y-la-costa-latino-connections-to-the-ocean-and-coast>

4 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/children-of-color-projected-to-be-majority-of-u-s-youth-this-year>

5 https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.americancanoe.org/resource/resmgr/general-documents/2018_outdoor_recreation_part.pdf

6 <https://hispanicaccess.org/ccpoll>

7 <https://outdoorindustry.org/advocacy/>

8 <https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2020/07/national-park-service-continues-grapple-diversity-workforce#:~:text=Whites%20account%20for%2079%20percent,Americans%20in%20the%20national%20population.>

9 <https://hispanicaccess.org/ccpoll>

10 <https://hispanicaccess.org/news-resources/research-library/item/893-nuestro-oceano-y-la-costa-latino-connections-to-the-ocean-and-coast>

11 <https://hispanicaccess.org/news-resources/research-library/item/893-nuestro-oceano-y-la-costa-latino-connections-to-the-ocean-and-coast>

12 <https://hispanicaccess.org/news-resources/research-library/item/893-nuestro-oceano-y-la-costa-latino-connections-to-the-ocean-and-coast>



THE SOLUTION

To correct for the inequitable distribution of nature in America we must:

- Create more close-to-home outdoor opportunities in communities of color and low-income communities;
- Protect areas important to the culture and heritage of Latino, Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, with their stories told in their words;
- Deepen consultation and participation by local communities, with opportunities for co-management by Tribal Nations, to ensure community needs are met in terms of facilities, maintenance, language, safety, programming, and accessibility of local green and blue spaces;
- Change hiring and workplace practices in government agencies, nonprofits, and foundations to elevate the voices of traditionally marginalized communities of color in leadership roles and create more representative leadership teams, boards, and staff; and
- Work to overcome the Nature Gap among children by bolstering education and outreach programs.

In advocating for these major goals, HAF is calling for these specific actions as part of the America the Beautiful plan:

- Spending at least 40% of the funds on public access and public lands and waters which facilitate close-to-home outdoor opportunities in communities of color, environmental justice, and low-income communities.
- Committing to hiring 40% people of color or representatives from environmental justice communities in the Civilian Climate Corps and other conservation job creation.
- Investing in the tools to track federal, state and local spending of the investments in public lands, parks and transit, to show how those funds are reducing the Nature Gap in communities of color.
- Linking federal land acquisition to the Nature Gap, climate and biodiversity goals as part of the prioritization, while maintaining public access as a key item. Have states and federal applicants put these both into their individual submissions as well as their state-based planning programs.

- Establishing specific set asides for tribes in the state-side funds.
- Establish tribal co-management of areas and establish frameworks/guidance for how to create, manage and coordinate to support tribal co-management.
- Assuring that definitions in existing conservation programs such as LWCF, State Parks and Grants programs, such as urban, low income, etc., are up to date, representative of target groups to send funds at places that have a historical record of underinvestment in parks and public spaces.
- Increasing the percentage match for stateside funding for underinvested/underserved communities by allowing more in-kind contributions for these specific areas.
- Ensuring that the process is transparent, inclusive, and equitable at every step and level of engagement, emphasizing collaboration and valuing local and traditional knowledge.
- Establishing grants for underserved communities to integrate federal lands and acquisition into their existing public lands and open space planning.
 - This could begin as a pilot program in Washington, DC to establish a cooperative process between the city and National Park Service to coordinate a city-wide redesign of public land and space investment, allowing the Land & Water Conservation Fund to contribute to this redesign with coordination from other community and urban investment grants. This cooperative process could focus on underutilized lands, identify areas for acquisition, and evaluate the best use of the space for local communities, while also improving urban planning. The program could then expand to other cities with large federal footprints, such as New York City and Cincinnati.



What does success look like for America the Beautiful?

- Water and nature access for all, urban and rural alike, especially for communities that have historically lacked access or are nature deprived.
- No observable disparities in the distribution of local green and blue space.
- Prevention of further loss and degradation of nature and clean waterways, which has especially concentrated near low-income and communities of color.
- Restoration of nature and clean waterways in urban areas and near low-income and communities of color.
- Diverse geographic representation of protected lands and marine sanctuaries.
- Indigenous and tribal nations have their ancestral and sacred lands protected, managed, and honored in the manner of their choosing.
- The conservation workforce represents the diversity of communities that it serves.
- Public spaces are safe for all communities and well-maintained.
- Local communities are enfranchised and able to meaningfully participate in outdoor recreation and management of outdoor spaces.
- The histories and stories of communities of color on the local lands and waters are told in their words.

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.

HAF was actively involved in elevating the Latino community's voice around the Browns Canyon, San Gabriel Mountains, Boulder-White Clouds, Sand to Snow, Mojave Trails, and Castle Mountains National Monument efforts. Additionally, HAF has launched the initiatives Por la Creación Faith-based Alliance, which unites Latino faith leaders around the protection of God's creation and creating tomorrow's environmental stewards, and Latino Conservation Week, which includes more than 150 conservation and outdoor-related events across the country.



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