



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

The Honorable Kevin Cramer
Senator
United States Senate
330 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

July 14, 2022

Dear Senator Cramer,

Thank you for your letter regarding the President's America the Beautiful Initiative. Your letter requested that a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) be used to assess the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030. I am happy to share more information on this issue.

Conservation has long been a shared American value. President Theodore Roosevelt said, "There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country." As President, he made conservation a major national issue by establishing the United States Forest Service, expanding our national parks and protected areas, and creating game reserves. He understood the invaluable benefits that our nation's lands and water bring to all Americans and how critical it is that we protect them for generations to come. The need to continue prioritizing conservation is higher than ever before. We cannot ignore the harsh reality that climate change is reshaping our lands, rivers, lakes, wetlands, ocean, and coasts. We are witnessing staggering declines in wildlife populations, with species' habitats being fragmented into smaller and smaller patches. And too many children are growing up with little or no chance to explore and recreate among the wonders of nature. More than that, they are not reaping the benefits of clean air, clean water, and healthy lands gleaned from living near parks and open space.

America the Beautiful is President Biden's initiative to address these issues by supporting locally-led, voluntary conservation and restoration efforts of all kinds, all over America. It represents the President's commitment to honor our nation's conservation traditions, private property rights, the sovereignty of Tribal Nations, and the values and priorities of local communities. America the Beautiful complements the Great American Outdoors Act, landmark, bi-partisan conservation legislation that provides needed maintenance for critical facilities and infrastructure in our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas and American Indian schools.

Your letter requested that CEQ conduct an environmental review under NEPA to assess the impact of America the Beautiful. NEPA requires Federal agencies to analyze the environmental impacts of major federal actions. Because America the Beautiful is not a major federal action, but rather a goal to orient conservation efforts across the government, NEPA is not required at this time. Please be assured that NEPA will apply

to major federal actions taken by a Federal agency to further the President's conservation goal.

Thank you for your interest in this important issue. I look forward to working with you to continue to conserve iconic places across this country that contribute to our economic strength and our shared identity.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda Mallory".

Brenda Mallory
Chair
White House Council on Environmental Quality