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Biden’s “30 By 30 Plan” – a Slap at American Private Property Rights

Op Ed by Karen Budd-Falen

No matter how far agriculture has come in showcasing our environmental stewardship; no matter how many times agriculturists explain that we are feeding, clothing, and providing energy to the citizens of the world; no matter how loud we shout that we have more incentive than anyone in protecting the health and resiliency of our private and federally permitted land because we can only sustain a ranch or farm by caring for the environment, agriculture is still condemned by those with no knowledge of agriculture. A prime example is Biden’s 30 X 30 Plan. (*Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, January 27, 2021).

While there are a lot of things in the Executive Order that give me concern, the thing that hurts the most is the thought that the ownership and use of private property and the multiple use of federal land (in Biden’s view) is antithetical to protecting the world from climate change and preserving biodiversity. Revealingly, under the *Executive Order*, for the Biden administration, the solution to global climate change is for the federal government to (1) acquire more private land to take it out of production and (2) eliminate all use on federal land--- to the tune of a total federal control of an additional 440 million acres of land or oceans in the U. S. by 2030. This is shocking in its scope. To break it down, under the Executive Order and documents published by the Department of the Interior, the Biden Administration believes that only 12% of the approximately 563 million acres of federal land in the United States is managed for “the preservation of biodiversity” thus additional uses have to be eliminated to ensure this land is managed in its “natural state.” Then the Biden plan is to acquire an additional 440 million acres by 2030. That amounts to more land than twice the size of Texas.

The question now is how will the federal government acquire an additional 440 million acres of private land and eliminate more uses of federal lands that already contain many restrictions? Condemnation and “strong-arming” will likely be the answer.

Even though it won't make the nightly news, federal agencies are already implementing this "Biden vision." On February 11, 2021, the Acting Secretary of the Interior signed an Order eliminating the Trump Administration's requirement for State and local government approval prior to the federal government's acquisition of more private lands with moneys from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Shockingly, that Order claimed that allowing local governments to have a voice in land acquisition directly impacting their counties "undermined" the program. While LWCF moneys are touted as being used to "secure public access and improve recreational opportunities," the money can also be used to acquire private lands into federal ownership. Because no property taxes are paid when land is owned by the federal government and since there will be no jobs associated when the newly acquired land is left in its "natural state," the acquisition of these lands and the elimination of more uses from the federal lands will absolutely harm the local tax base and employment opportunities that supports rural schools, roads, and other necessary services. With the passage of the Great Americans Outdoor Act in 2020, Congress already will make \$900 million a year available for the LWCF, but they will need billions more to achieve this radical acquisition goal.

All of rural America and anyone who believes that local control of resources and that the American farmer and rancher is the backbone of this country should be alarmed at the notion that only the federal government, owning land in its "natural state," can combat climate change and the loss of biodiversity. I think we are in for a fight to protect American agriculture and our rural way of life.

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