

April 22, 2021

The Hon. Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

As the nation's largest and most diversified agricultural organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation appreciates the opportunities we have had to collaborate with your administration. Our mission to build a sustainable future of safe and abundant food, fiber and renewable fuel for our nation and the world is supported not only by our members, but also by elected leaders and the public. Our 6 million grassroots members are spread across 2,800 counties in 50 states and Puerto Rico, so we hear from farmers and ranchers in every region of the country. Their questions about an initiative you recently announced are the reason for this letter.

On January 27, you signed the Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, which directed a sweeping set of actions to agencies across the federal government related to climate change. Section 216, Conserving Our Nation's Lands and Waters, includes a goal of conserving at least 30% of our lands and waters by 2030. Farmers and ranchers are the original conservationists and have been good stewards of lands, both private and public, for generations. This "30x30" goal has received a great deal of attention in farming and ranching communities across the country. America's agriculturalists are asking whether their good work will be recognized by the administration. They have voluntarily enrolled more than 140 million acres of private land into federal and non-federal conservation programs – a land mass larger than the size of New York and California combined. Any discussion about conservation must begin with the recognition that farmers and ranchers are already leaders in this space and have been for decades.

Moreover, about 28% of U.S. land, over 640 million acres,<sup>1</sup> is currently held in federal ownership and conserved as part of the federal estate. Additionally, about 8% of U.S. lands are owned by states, which is over 180 million acres of land.<sup>2</sup> Farmers and ranchers are seeking assurance that multiple-use management of federal lands as well as actively managed and working lands in state or private ownership will be recognized for their conservation and open space benefits.

The concerns of farmers and ranchers are escalating regarding the intent of the 30x30 goal, the definition of conservation, and the metrics for defining success, among other things. We have

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data, Congressional Research Service, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42346.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Public Land Ownership in the United States, Headwaters Economics, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/protected-lands/public-land-ownership-in-the-us/>

appreciated the initial engagement from your administration, especially the Department of Agriculture, to hear from our members. We urge you to move swiftly to provide clarity about your intentions for the initiative, and when you do so, it will be important for you to invite public comment because farmers and ranchers are leaders in conservation and deserve to have their voices heard.

We look forward to continued dialogue with your team about conservation and land-use when details of the 30x30 initiative are made public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zippy Duvall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "Z".

Zippy Duvall  
President