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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. _____

Expressing the need for protecting and conserving at least 50 percent of the land, freshwater, and ocean ecosystems in the United States and encouraging diplomatic community efforts to achieve this goal worldwide.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BEYER submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Expressing the need for protecting and conserving at least 50 percent of the land, freshwater, and ocean ecosystems in the United States and encouraging diplomatic community efforts to achieve this goal worldwide.

Whereas the Earth is facing a crisis of biodiversity loss and species extinction;

Whereas there has been an average 73-percent decrease in population sizes of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and fish between 1970 and 2020;

Whereas the recent global rate of species extinction is at least tens-to-hundreds of times higher than the average rate

over the past ten million years, and has increased sharply since 1900;

Whereas today more than one million plants and animal species are threatened with extinction, including 41 percent of all amphibians and 70 percent of all cycads, and since the 16th century, at least 680 vertebrate species have gone extinct;

Whereas climate change increases the risks of species extinction and irreversible loss of biodiversity, presenting an existential crisis for humans and millions of other species around the world;

Whereas human-driven changes in land and sea use are drivers of both biodiversity loss and climate change;

Whereas ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, grasslands, and mangroves can sequester large amounts of carbon, and protecting these areas and their wildlife populations can mitigate climate change by preventing carbon from being released into the atmosphere;

Whereas conserving and restoring natural ecosystems provides greater net economic benefits than destroying natural spaces and wildlife for profit;

Whereas industries that foster connection to lands and waters, such as the outdoor recreation industry that supported five million jobs across the United States and accounted for \$1.2 trillion in gross output in 2023, enable individuals to have meaningful careers outside in nature;

Whereas establishing protected natural areas can contribute many benefits to people, including by—

- (1) mitigating effects of climate change and buffering the impacts of extreme weather events;
- (2) providing cleaner drinking water;

- (3) reducing air pollution;
- (4) being a source of new medicines;
- (5) reducing local rates of infectious diseases and broader risk of zoonotic spillover that can contribute to pandemics; and
- (6) supporting pollinators and other beneficial species for food production, globally valued at up to more than five hundred billion dollars;

Whereas access to nature ensures cultural and spiritual enrichment, as well as physical and mental health benefits;

Whereas all life depends on essential ecosystems, and, therefore, damaging or erasing them can have a profound impact on biodiversity and human health and well-being;

Whereas inequitable policies have led to a targeted denuding of biodiversity in communities of color, low-income communities, and Tribal communities, creating great harm and preventing these communities from having equal access to the benefits of biodiversity;

Whereas the degradation and destruction of natural habitat is the primary cause of biological diversity loss at every level;

Whereas only by the preservation and conservation of substantial, more natural, intact habitat than previously envisioned can human-driven extinctions be eliminated;

Whereas the late American biologist E.O. Wilson estimated that protecting half of the Earth's surface would ensure the sustainable persistence of 85 percent of the planet's species, and with it, global biodiversity;

Whereas the conservation science community has developed robust tools to inform the identification of natural habi-

tats that provide the best opportunity to safeguard species;

Whereas area-based conservation goals are key to averting biodiversity loss and can be achieved through collaborative efforts, including—

(1) public-private partnerships, which play a notable role in conservation within the United States and around the world;

(2) stewardship of local communities on the ground and indigenous peoples, honoring their rights to lands, territories, and resources; and

(3) international cooperation; and

Whereas former President Biden’s America the Beautiful Initiative and its goal of conserving 30 percent of land, freshwater, and ocean ecosystems in the United States by 2030 was a crucial first step to protecting biodiversity and mitigating the effects of climate change: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

3 (1) the Earth is facing an imminent crisis from
4 the extinction of species and the decline of biodiversity;
5 and

6 (2) Congress should work to support protecting
7 and conserving at least 50 percent of the land,
8 freshwater, and ocean ecosystems in the United
9 States and encourage diplomatic community efforts
10 to achieve this goal worldwide, including early and

- 1 often stakeholder consultation to ensure just impacts
- 2 and transition.