Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham’s Executive Order to Establish a 30x30 Conservation Goal

What is in the Executive Order?
On August 25, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed an executive order to establish a state-wide goal of protecting 30 percent of the lands and waters in New Mexico by 2030. The order—“Protecting New Mexico’s Lands, Watersheds, Wildlife, and Natural Heritage”—creates a committee of agency officials to begin laying out a plan, in coordination with citizen stakeholders, to achieve this conservation goal. The governor’s announcement calls for a significant increase in the scale and pace of conservation to protect biodiversity and for the designation of additional climate stabilization areas.

Land conservation is central to the state’s identity and the New Mexican way of life. Governor Lujan Grisham’s leadership to protect and restore our lands and waters over the next decade will preserve our state’s heritage for future generations. Looking forward, the state’s support of locally led conservation initiatives will expand access, improve community wellbeing, preserve wildlife habitat, and improve climate resiliency.

Protected lands provide significant economic benefits for our communities by providing restoration jobs on working lands. The protections will also support our growing outdoor recreation economy.

What is the “30x30” Goal?
This is a conservation vision, informed by scientific guidance, with the aim of preventing ecological collapse and mitigating against the worst effects of climate change. This order is complementary to the existing state climate goals established in the Energy Transition Act and recommended by the governor’s existing Climate Task Force. The human impacts on our climate and lands are one and the same—both need to be addressed through ambitious state efforts.

The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that just six percent of lands in New Mexico are protected. However, the 30x30 committee created by this order will be charged with inventorying the state’s protected lands and making recommendations to conserve additional lands accordingly. These additional conservation efforts could include the creation of new state parks, new state wildlife areas, community open spaces, and conservation easements and restoration on private lands. The order also directs state agencies to work cooperatively with federal land managers and provide policy recommendations to increase protections on federal public lands.

New Mexico is uniquely positioned to lead this effort. In the 116th Congress, former Senator Tom Udall and former Representative Deb Haaland introduced resolutions in their respective chambers calling for a national 30x30 goal. And in her current position as Secretary of the Interior, Haaland is leading the Biden administration’s “America the Beautiful” initiative to protect 30 percent of the nation. Governor Lujan Grisham’s state goal is integral to the success of the national 30x30 effort and a strong signal of localized support.

What’s Next?
The governor’s 30x30 committee is expected to determine the necessary steps we need to take to achieve this conservation goal. The committee will conduct extensive community outreach and be guided by a set of principles contained in the order, including support for locally-driven conservation efforts; an equitable and inclusive vision for nature; adherence to the best available science; respect for tribal sovereignty; a drive to expand public access for hunting and fishing; and support of voluntary conservation initiatives on working lands.

We look forward to working with the governor to develop the state’s 30x30 roadmap and to explore options to fund the state’s existing conservation programs.

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