

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer,

As we take up President Biden’s American Jobs Plan, much of the focus will rightly be on the transformational investments proposed for transportation, clean energy, water infrastructure, broadband, buildings, manufacturing, and innovation. We must also prioritize the historic investments President Biden proposed in natural infrastructure restoration, resilience, and reclamation that will create millions of desperately needed good jobs all across the country, while making our communities safer and healthier.

By investing ~\$200 billion in natural infrastructure restoration and resilience, we will create more than 3.5 million good jobs over five years—in many of the exact places where unemployment is highest—at a highly cost-effectively rate because much of the investment goes towards labor, rather than materials and equipment. Restoration and resilience investments will also help confront the climate crisis by naturally sequestering more carbon and bolstering community resilience to wildfires, hurricanes, and flooding; advance environmental justice by removing pollution from our air, water, and soils; creating jobs in rural communities by improving productivity of working lands and growing the outdoor recreation economy; and recover imperiled wildlife species by restoring degraded habitat. In doing so, we will support workers in industries and regions affected disproportionately by the pandemic, such as agriculture, forestry, ranching, energy, and tourism.

The priorities identified in this letter align with the President’s Plan and will create millions of jobs starting immediately, while reducing taxpayer liabilities and reducing our long-term debt. Many recommendations execute existing “NEPA-ready” plans and authorized projects that are already vetted and approved, but currently unfunded, to allow work to start quickly. We also encourage increased funding for compliance and permitting offices of Federal agencies to expedite project delivery without undermining careful environmental review, as well as delivering direct resources to States, Territories, local governments, and Tribes, suspending and reducing non-Federal match requirements, and preventing rescissions.

We encourage the inclusion of the following restoration and resilience priorities in the final package:

**Civilian Climate Corps (\$10 billion)**

- Fund \$10 billion to employ a new, diverse generation of Americans to work conserving our public lands, waters, and our nation’s forests, while bolstering community resilience, and advancing environmental justice, all while placing good-paying union jobs within reach for more Americans (DOI, USDA, CNCS).

### **Bolster Resilience to Wildfire and Drought & Restore Public Lands (\$87 billion)**

- Fund \$33.8 billion for restoring, reforesting, and improving resilience of the National Forest System by implementing National Forest Plans and National Grassland Plans and accelerating Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration, Vegetation & Watershed Management, Wildlife & Fisheries Habitat Management, Hazardous Fuels, Forest Products, and Reforestation Trust Fund, including improvements proposed by the REPLANT Act (USFS).
- Fund \$5 billion for implementing the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy on Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands (USFS, BLM, BIA, NPS, FWS, DOD, DHS).
- Fund \$6.5 billion for Forest Restoration and Hazardous Fuels Management, and reduction of fire risks on Bureau of Land Management lands (BLM).
- Fund \$6 billion for Rangeland Management and restoration of sagebrush steppe and grasslands, removal of invasive vegetation, water resources resilience, and research on Bureau of Land Management and Tribal lands (BLM, BIA).
- Fund \$5 billion for improving wildfire preparedness in vulnerable communities through Community Wildfire Defense Grants, Assistance to Firefighters Grants, and Fire Protection and Safety Grants (FEMA).
- Fund \$7.2 billion for Forest Health Management Federal and Cooperative (State, Tribal, Private), including implementation State Forest Action Plans (USFS).
- Fund \$8.2 billion for State Fire Assistance (USFS).
- Fund \$5.2 billion for Capital Improvement and Maintenance, including the Legacy Roads and Trails Program, which would address failing roads, improve public safety, reconnect fragmented wildlife habitat, expand recreation, reduce flooding, and improve water quality (USFS).
- Fund \$640 million for the Urban & Community Forestry Program, which creates jobs in establishing, restoring, and sustaining community forests (USFS).
- Fund \$2 billion for the National Fire Capacity program, which helps the Forest Service implement FireWise, to prevent, mitigate, and respond to wildfire around homes and businesses on private land (USFS).
- Fund \$2 billion for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program to improve resiliency for communities impacted by wildfire (FEMA).
- Fund an additional \$3.5 billion for the U.S. Forest Service and \$2 billion for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to support science-based projects aimed at improving forest health and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire (USFS, BLM).

### **Bolster Resilience to Hurricanes, Flooding, Earthquakes, and Other Hazards (\$55 billion)**

- Fund \$36.5 billion for implementation of ecological restoration plans and authorized projects, such as the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Everglades, Mississippi River and Delta, Gulf Coast, San Francisco Bay, Delaware River, Missouri River, Ohio River, Colorado River, Rio Grande, Columbia River Basin, Puget Sound and the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans of National Estuary Programs (ACE, EPA, FWS).
- Fund \$6.5 billion for resilience programs at FEMA and HUD, including FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program and HUD's Community Development Block Grant program, to create jobs and bolster community resilience by investing in pre-disaster mitigation, especially natural infrastructure solutions like floodplain restoration. Funds should also be allocated to accelerate flood mapping to inform strategic infrastructure investments and development decisions (FEMA, HUD).

- Fund \$10 billion for NOAA habitat and resiliency grants to create jobs restoring wetlands, dunes, reefs, marshes, kelp forests, and mangroves and other living shorelines to reduce flood risks, create habitat, and restart tourism (NOAA).
- Fund \$1.5 billion for the General Services Administration to address seismic risk and infrastructure that is deemed “Exceptionally High Risk.”
- Fund an additional \$500 million for Tribal drinking water infrastructure repairs, prioritizing Tribal communities that have underfunded drinking water systems causing health and safety emergencies.

### **Restore Imperiled Fish and Wildlife Habitat (\$28.3 billion)**

- Fund \$14 billion over 10 years for enacting the State, Territorial, and Tribal Wildlife Action Plans (Recovering America’s Wildlife Act) to restore habitat for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (FWS).
- Fund \$3.5 billion for implementing Federal Recovery Plans for Endangered and Threatened Species, through FWS Ecological Services and Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation grants, to create near-term habitat restoration jobs and reduce regulatory uncertainty (FWS).
- Fund \$2 billion for bird conservation initiatives, including Migratory Bird Joint Venture implementation plans, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grants, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, and the Urban Bird Treaty program, to restore wetlands, grasslands, shrublands, saline lakes, forests, shorelines, and other habitat in priority conservation areas (FWS).
- Fund \$3 billion for implementing the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, reconnecting aquatic habitat through the National Fish Passage Program, restoring cold water systems, addressing invasive species, and eliminating the maintenance backlog of the National Fish Hatchery System and State and Tribal hatcheries (FWS).
- Fund \$1.5 billion for implementing National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans.
- Fund \$1 billion for National Marine Fisheries Service and the Species Recovery Grants to accelerate the recovery of marine mammals, sea turtles, and other endangered species (NOAA).
- Fund \$1 billion for wildlife crossings to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and reconnect habitat for terrestrial/aquatic species (DOT) and State and Tribal Wildlife Movement Grants to restore and reconnect habitat through voluntary projects on public, private, and Tribal lands (FWS).
- Fund \$750 million for managing and eradicating wildlife diseases by rebuilding the National Wildlife Health Center (USGS), the National Wildlife Research Center (APHIS), regional and State Wildlife Disease Cooperatives, incentivizing diagnostic laboratories to work on wildlife diseases, and funding research to manage and prevent the spread of potential zoonotic diseases, such as white-nose syndrome and chronic wasting disease (USGS, FWS, APHIS, BIA).
- Help restore and improve rangeland health by providing an additional \$150 million for the North American Waterfowl Management and Joint Ventures program and \$150 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Partners for Fish and Wildlife (FWS).
- Fund \$1 billion for the Department of Energy to begin a collaborative process with the States and Tribes of reevaluating the Bonneville Power Authority endangered species programs.

### **Reclaim Degraded Lands (\$29.5 billion)**

- Fund \$16 billion for the cleanup, reclamation, and restoration of abandoned coal, hard rock, and uranium mines, and on Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands (BLM).
- Fund \$8 billion for plugging and reclaiming thousands of orphaned onshore oil and gas wells on Federal, State, Tribal and private lands (BLM).
- Fund \$5 billion for the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield and Superfund sites.
- Fund \$1.5 billion for Appalachian Regional Commission priority restoration/revitalization projects.

- Support coal workers by enacting the Black Lung Benefits Disability Trust Fund Solvency Act and Protection of Social Security Benefits Restoration Act.

**Increase Resilience of Working Lands and Position Agriculture to Lead the Shift to Net-Zero Emissions (\$53.5 billion)**

- Fund \$50 billion for bolstering resilience, sequestering carbon, accelerating restoration, and supporting farmers and ranchers through the: Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, Healthy Forest Reserve Program, Conservation Stewardship Program (NRCS); incentive payments for Conservation Reserve Program signups (FSA); and the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program, Watershed Rehabilitation Program, and Emergency Watershed Protection Program (NRCS).
- Fund \$2.5 billion for grasslands restoration, management, and conservation by enacting the North American Grasslands Conservation Act (FWS).
- Fund \$1 billion for wetland restoration and conservation through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (FWS).
- Support voluntary climate stewardship practices on over 100 million acres of farmland by providing supplemental funding for USDA working lands conservation program (USDA).

**Rebuild Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure (\$9 billion)**

- Fund \$4 billion for building and repairing State, local, and Tribal outdoor recreational infrastructure and improving accessibility through block grants for States, cities/counties, and Tribes to implement Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans, the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program, Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership program, and municipal recreation infrastructure (NPS).
- Fund \$2.5 billion for repairing infrastructure within State and Tribal Wildlife Management Areas and other State and Tribal natural resource infrastructure (FWS).
- Fund \$1.5 billion for implementing management and recreation plans for National Park units (NPS).
- Fund \$1 billion for improving recreational infrastructure of the Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Forest Service (BLM, ACE, BOR, BIA, USFS).
- Increase access to public lands through expanding and investing in programs like Every Kid Outdoors and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership.

**Support for Compliance and Permitting**

- It is critical to increase funding for compliance and permitting offices of Federal agencies to expedite project delivery without undermining careful environmental review and protections for environmental justice communities.

We stand ready to work with you to advance these critical investments as part of the American Jobs Plan.

Sincerely,

/s/ Martin Heinrich  
MARTIN HEINRICH  
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher Coons  
CHRISTOPHER COONS  
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith  
TINA SMITH  
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein  
DIANNE FEINSTEIN  
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden  
RON WYDEN  
United States Senator

/s/ Ben Ray Luján  
BEN RAY LUJÁN  
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/s/ Chris Van Hollen  
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN  
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/s/ Debbie Stabenow  
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/s/ Alex Padilla  
ALEX PADILLA  
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet  
MICHAEL F. BENNET  
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker  
CORY A. BOOKER  
United States Senator

CC:  
Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Manchin  
Energy and Natural Resources Ranking Member Barrasso