



PRESS RELEASE
Friday December 9th, 2022

COP15: 3.2 million call for the conservation and protection of 50% of the Planet by 2030

****** According to groups, dangerous loopholes are being created with the 30x30 target promoted by some countries, putting in risk vital tropical forests ******

Montreal, December 7, 2022 – Already, the UN Biodiversity COP15 talks have hit a wall. The sea of brackets on the negotiating page are a visual metaphor for the handcuffs that have been placed on ambition and the rights of people around the world.

Perhaps one of the most egregious examples of this is how the Parties have fallen short on area-based targets grounded in scientific consensus, as noted by the grassroots organizations calling for the protection and conservation of 50% of the planet by 2030.

Nearly 70% of scientists from around the world conclude that the goal of protecting and conserving 50% of Earth's lands and seas, with express recognition of the roles and rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, is critically necessary if we are to put a stop to the existential crises of the climate and mass extinction emergencies.

Advocates of the science-based Half target argue that the 30x30 target, conceived in the drafting negotiation process between 2019 and early 2020, is now an outdated figure based on the latest understanding of science and technology. They warn that the national pledges from countries to protect 30% of their own territories by 2030 are now opening a “vulnerability policy loop” in the negotiations, where countries like Brazil, or Indonesia are pushing for national targets around 30%, which would allow catastrophic destruction in biodiversity-rich nations.

According to a 2019 survey of conservation scientists conducted by Dr. Stephen Woodley, the 50% target is recognized by over two-thirds of conservation scientists. This means it can be seen as the *de facto* biodiversity equivalent to the 1.5 °C goal in climate. And yet, it is entirely absent from official UN Biodiversity negotiations at COP15, as delegations prioritize political expediency over ecological reality.

The February 2022 report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that “conserving **half** may be necessary to restore the ability of natural ecosystems to cope with the damage wreaked on them.” It is time governments use 50% as an organizing principle for a stable and sustainable relationship with nature.



Some of the concerns and analyses shared by the NGOs behind this call include:

Julia Jackson, Founder of Grounded.org, says:

"World leaders need to set more ambitious, urgent targets to protect half of our lands and oceans, and in a faster timeframe than 2050. Over 100 Indigenous groups, a large coalition of civil society organizations, and over 3 million people worldwide have called for global leaders to commit to this 50% target. The decisions made right now at this summit in Montreal may be the most consequential in human history. We need even more people to join this growing chorus of protecting half of our planet right now during negotiations and beyond."

Amy Lewis, Vice President of Policy and Communications of WILD says:

"For years, conservation activists like myself have looked forward to this moment in Montreal as a turning point for humanity's relationship with nature. We were excited beyond measure by the potential to finally begin to put a stop to mass extinction and climate change. Instead, we arrive in Montreal to find that the only thing that has changed is the definition of ambition, which has come to mean, in these negotiations, a defense of the status quo. For those activists who pinned their hopes on this moment, 30x30 and COP15 are literally reverse viagra for our movement. Through their timidity, our leaders have deflated the potency and potential of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. I call upon civil society's strong hearts around the world to embrace the immediate necessity of protecting Half of Earth's lands and sea and take action in their communities now. We cannot wait for our diffident and fearful leaders to catch up."

Karl Burkart, Deputy Director of One Earth, says:

With biodiversity in critical decline we are on the precipice of losing critical ecosystem functions upon which all of humanity relies — balancing the global climate, provisioning freshwater, and securing food for billions of people. We need to save all remaining natural habitats to preserve the biological diversity that remains on our planet. According to the science, that means protecting and conserving 50% of both lands and oceans.

Oscar Soria, Campaign Director at Avaaz says

"We are already well beyond 30% conservation of the planet, if only our governments recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities over their territories, lands and waters. They're de facto the ones conserving biodiversity. Now's the time to strive for a higher target, of half the Earth. Any other number will put vital forests in jeopardy, and are clearly not enough to kickstart the necessary revolution to rebuild our relationship with nature."

Yen Parico, Director of CoalitionWILD, says:

"The only thing that limits us to achieving a harmonious relationship with nature is the level of our ambition. It is time for us to realize that 30% is a bare minimum target that lacks scientific consensus. We need to step up. I believe that many young leaders, like myself, are sick of the business-as-usual that governments seem to be so fond of. We can be central in the historic



effort of saving life on Earth and restoring land justice to Indigenous Peoples by setting the spatial targets to at least 50% by 2030.”

Eric Dinerstein, Director of Biodiversity and Wildlife, RESOLVE, says:

“30% would be a laudatory goal if the year were 1952. But it’s 2022 and we don’t have the luxury of waiting for more decision-makers to grasp that we are on a deadline.”

An invitation for journalists

If you are interested to learn more about how the protection and conservation of Half of the Planet is possible, join us at the event **“Let’s Talk About Half”** featuring eight expert panelists that will help you better understand the goal to protect half the planet by 2030, including the role it can play in helping to restore and expand the land tenure of Indigenous peoples and local communities.

When: Saturday, December 10, from 4-7 pm

Where: Humaniti Hotel in Montreal

Speakers:

- **Dr. Stephen Woodley** - Vice Chair, WCPA Science and Biodiversity
- **Karl Burkart** - Deputy Director, One Earth
- **Gwen Bridge** – Environmental Scientist and Conservation Advocate of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation
- **Catherine Traynor** – Programme Officer, The Tenure Facility
- **Callie Broaddus & Marcos Monteros** – Executive Director, Reserva: The Youth Land Trust; and Lead on Dracula Reserve Project - the first ever youth-funded nature reserve
- **Erinn Drage** - Lead Young Professionals Network and Programme Officer, WCPA
- **Maggie Fox** - Co-founder of Global Biodiversity Narrative Project



In the absence of official acknowledgment of the science, this event will be a rare opportunity to foster civil society dialogue around this important and misunderstood issue. The event is free to the public, but organizers ask that they register at the following link: <https://bit.ly/WILDatCOP15>

Can’t join in person? Catch our livestream instead: <https://youtu.be/mfj6Z1EIUsE>

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