

ENDANGERED

EARTH

CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY • WINTER 2021



A WILD NEW YEAR

IN THE HEART OF THE SONORAN DESERT A SPECIES OF TINY, heat-tolerant pupfish fights for survival in Quitobaquito Springs, a place sacred to the Tohono O'odham people. The springs' waters trickle out of the earth just feet from the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2020 construction crews began extracting millions of gallons of desert groundwater nearby to mix concrete for border-wall construction.

Quitobaquito has served as a lifegiving oasis for wildlife and nurtured human cultures for thousands of years — long before any concept of national borders in this region, and long before the Trump administration. But now its survival hangs in the balance.

This is just one example of the devastating attacks on the environment by the executive branch over the past four years. It also opened the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to fossil fuel leasing, fast-tracked the destruction of Oak Flat in Arizona, gutted key provisions of the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act, removed vital protections from America's wolves, and violated international climate agreements.

Now the Trump administration is out. We're taking a moment to breathe a sigh of relief — but only a moment. Because the existential crises some attribute to one horrible year — 2020 — have been in the making for decades. The extinction and climate crises, and the demons of white supremacy and political corruption, were not born with Trump.

And they will not end with the Biden presidency — at least, not without a concerted, strategic, unified fight.

We lost four years under Trump, but we'll lose far more if we don't move forward boldly and ambitiously to heal our communities and our planet.

It will take courage: yours and mine. Together we fight, and together we win. We have no other choice.



Kieran Suckling
Executive Director

2020 WHAT WE WON IN A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

ENDANGERED SPECIES

- We defeated an illegal attempt to gut the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which would have let polluters off the hook for killing birds.
- In the most wildlife-hostile administration ever, achieved federal protection for eastern black rails and Humboldt martens, plus proposed protection for several other species;
- Helped end the contracting of private hunters to kill bears in Washington timberlands and advocated successfully for South Carolina’s ban on commercial turtle trapping.

PUBLIC LANDS

- Blocked a proposal to fund building a diversion on the Gila River that would threaten several threatened and endangered species in New Mexico;
- Defeated a 300-mile water pipeline that would have siphoned 7.8 billion gallons yearly from the fragile eastern Nevada desert for urban sprawl in Las Vegas;
- Helped prevent the Defense Department’s seizure of more than 1.7 million acres of public land in Nevada for bombing ranges.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- Secured a ban on the cancer-causing pesticide atrazine in Hawai’i and U.S. territorial islands, as well as throughout mainland roadsides and forests;
- Won a major legal victory over the drift-prone pesticide dicamba when an appeals court vacated its approval, then sued again after the Trump EPA reapproved it anyway;
- Sued the Trump administration over its approval of a new bee-killing pesticide, sulfoxaflo, for use across more than 200 million acres of crops.

CLIMATE LAW INSTITUTE

- Filed a petition with our allies to protect Alexander Archipelago wolves under the Endangered Species Act;
- Successfully challenged the Trump administration’s attempts to suppress a crucial national scientific review of the climate crisis;
- Won a precedent-setting lawsuit letting Californians challenge super-polluting methane gas power plants in their communities.

ENERGY JUSTICE

- Spearheaded an effort by 830 energy and racial justice organizations to demand a federal moratorium on utility shutoffs in the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Together with unions representing 50 million workers, sued the Trump administration to invoke the Defense Production Act to make lifesaving personal protective equipment for essential workers;
- Successfully defeated a federal attack on retail net metering, which sought to decimate rooftop and community solar development nationwide.

URBAN WILDLANDS

- Successfully petitioned the California Fish and Game Commission to take important steps toward permanent protections for imperiled mountain lion populations;
- Secured an agreement, following a courtroom win against a Temecula development, to permanently preserve a key wildlife corridor in Southern California;
- Through a court of appeals victory, forced California’s United Water Conservation District to do more to protect endangered steelhead trout in the Santa Clara River.

OCEANS

- Protected critically endangered North Atlantic right whales with successful challenges to seismic blasting and lobster fishing, and contested Trump’s removal of protections from marine monuments;
- Organized and publicized community opposition to multinational water polluter Formosa Plastics’ massive proposed plant in Louisiana, whose federal permits were suspended by our lawsuit;
- Fought the Trump administration’s expansion of oil drilling in the Arctic and Alaska’s Cook Inlet through lawsuits, outreach and organizing.

POPULATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Reached thousands of people through dozens of virtual conferences, webinars, trainings, trivia nights and other events about population and consumption;
- Conducted and released the results of a major national survey that revealed nearly three-fourths of Americans believe population growth is driving other species to extinction;
- Released a policy guide to advance sustainable diets in support of new research by University of Michigan and Tulane University on diet-related climate pollution.

INTERNATIONAL

- Won a ban on seafood imports to pressure Mexico to save its 10 remaining vaquita porpoises from fishing gear entanglement;
- Issued a groundbreaking report on the threat of zoonotic diseases (including COVID-19) from U.S. wildlife imports, including primates, rodents and bats;
- Fought trophy hunting by challenging imports of imperiled leopards and Trump’s trophy hunting advisory council, which was ultimately disbanded.

ORGANIZING

- Provided public education and support for Colorado’s Proposition 114, which passed and ensured that wolves will be reintroduced to the state;
- Together with our allies, we made more than 2 million phone calls to voters in key states during the 2020 election.
- In the Arizona election we engaged tribal, rural and youth communities in the voting process. We partnered up with other organizations to host essay contests, send more than 70,000 texts, get out voting kits, and host Q & A webinars.

OUR TOP FIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE

Brett Hartl • Government Affairs Director

It's hard to put our relief into words as the Trump presidency passes into history and a chance to turn the page hovers close. It wasn't only that Trump's policies were the most destructive we've seen in the past 50 years; it was also that we had to endure his insulting form of hatred and division, racism and misogyny every single day. It tore at us like an open wound.

Now we can start to repair the damage he's done to our wildlife, public lands and living spaces — and heal the deep divisions he made so much worse.

Our eyes are open to the challenges and battles we'll still face in a Biden administration. Even in the best of times, we've always had to push our government hard, during both Democratic and Republican administrations, to take strong action on environmental protection. We've had to sue to get desperately needed protections for species before they go extinct, to protect our public lands from fossil fuel development, and to fight dangerous chemicals in our air and water that harm people and wildlife alike.

As the extinction crisis deepens and our planet heats up, we need bold solutions to bring real, lasting change before our life-support systems unravel. As a candidate, back in July, President-elect Biden made a speech about the urgency of the climate crisis — and promised his administration would not implement policies that tinkered around the edges but that locked in progress no future president could undo.

Big picture? Our goal for the next four years is to hold him to that promise. And the good news is that our experts have specific plans for how he can make powerful and lasting changes — none of which hinge

on the whims of our gridlocked Congress. We sent these proposals to the transition team in early December. Our recommendations outline 50 progressive environmental reforms to transform the executive branch and achieve lasting environmental gains in the United States and globally. Here are five of the most important action items.

1 President Biden should declare that both the climate crisis and the extinction crisis are national emergencies. This is not a mere symbolic act: National emergency declarations unlock expansive powers under the National Emergencies Act that would marshal the entire federal government into the effort to save life on Earth in ways never before undertaken, including the use of the Defense Production Act to deploy renewable energy across the country.

2 He should fully use the Pelly Amendment to crack down on illegal wildlife trade and sanction nations that fail to take seriously the kinds of risky practices that likely caused the COVID-19 pandemic. The Pelly Amendment is an obscure provision of law that allows the president to implement sanctions on any nation undermining the effectiveness of international conservation laws. Past presidents, however, have been averse to using this power. Biden can show global leadership by cracking down on the ecologically devastating wildlife trade and patterns of habitat destruction that have driven both current and past pandemics.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

3 Using existing law, the president can establish new wildlife refuges without an act of Congress. To help achieve the goal of protecting 30% of all lands, waters and oceans by 2030, he should direct the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish dozens of new wildlife refuges, making sure that every ecologically distinct region in the country has at least one refuge dedicated to preserving the plants and animals found in that area.

4 The Environmental Protection Agency could use its existing authority to phase out the 100 most dangerous pesticides and reduce pesticide use by 25% over the next four years. The pesticide industry and many of its enablers in the pesticide office of the EPA have repeatedly asserted that they wish to bring newer, less toxic alternative pesticides to the market. If so the agency can “conditionally” permit these new pesticides, but only when they finally take the worst pesticides off the market.

5 President Biden can put people first by elevating environmental justice across the federal government. In one of his worst attacks on the environment, Trump gutted the implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which gives the public a voice in the decisions of the federal government. Biden can reverse Trump's attack on this bedrock law and also strengthen NEPA by requiring agencies to avoid approving actions that will have disproportionate impacts on already hard-hit, underserved and polluted communities.

Time's running out for us to avert the most cataclysmic damage to our home. But we're optimistic that if President Biden follows this roadmap, he can leave the generations to come a more vibrant, thriving planet.

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Wolf at Yellowstone National Park

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ENDANGERED EARTH

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ON THE COVER
Snowy Owl

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