



STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD PROVIDED BY THE NATURAL RESOURCES
DEFENSE COUNCIL TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 4, 2019

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) appreciates the opportunity to submit our position on the world’s nature crisis as detailed by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in its Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (“Global Nature Assessment”). NRDC also thanks the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology for holding today’s hearing, “Nature in Crisis: Biodiversity Loss and its Causes.”

The Global Nature Assessment and other recent reports, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C and the U.S. Global Change Research Program’s Fourth National Climate Assessment, lay bare two interrelated crises—climate change and ecosystems collapse—that threaten the natural systems we depend on for life and will cause tremendous human suffering and upend life as we know it if we do not make transformative changes over the next decade.

NRDC is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world’s natural resources, public health, and the environment. While NRDC and the movements it has been a part of for the last fifty years have contributed to significant achievements for the environment and public health, we have never faced crises like those before us today. To retain a natural world that resembles what our ancestors left us and to save the species and natural systems that support human survival, such as pollinators, fish, and healthy soil for food, forests for breathable air, and freshwater for drinking and agriculture, we must firmly break with the policies and approaches of the past.

The stakes have never been higher. According to the Global Nature Assessment, up to a million species are at risk of extinction, many within decades; more than 500,000 species have insufficient habitat for long-term survival, which means they are “committed to extinction” unless we restore their habitats; human activities have severely altered 75 percent of our land environment and 66 percent of the marine environment, putting at risk the ecosystems supporting the air, water, and food humans need to live; land degradation is so harmful that it has reduced agricultural productivity in almost a quarter of our lands; loss of pollinators threaten annual global crop outputs of between \$235 billion and \$577 billion; 33 percent of fish stocks are overfished and 60 percent are fished at the edge of sustainability; etc.

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Over the next decade, our governments, economies, and resources must be reconfigured to address the major drivers of these losses and threats (changes in land and sea use; direct exploitation of species; climate change; pollution; and invasive species). As the details of that reconfiguration continue to take shape (*e.g.*, how we achieve net-zero global greenhouse gas emissions by 2050), the Global Nature Assessment makes clear that we must start the process of transformative change. Here are some of the things we should be doing now:

- **Protecting vast areas of land and ocean:** to stem the tide of destructive land and ocean alterations, we must fully protect at least 30 percent of the world's land and ocean by 2030.
- **Reducing wasteful practices:** to maintain healthy forests and carbon sinks, we must stop harvesting wild timber.
- **Sustainably feed the world:** to secure access to food, we must improve fishing methods, land use decisions, and farming practices.
- **Safeguard freshwater:** to maintain enough clean water and healthy fish and wildlife populations, we must maximize efficiency, increase storage capacity, improve water quality, and minimize the disruption of our natural water systems, which includes ensuring that existing wetlands and source waters are protected by strong national laws, while preventing industrial and agricultural practices from contaminating our waters.
- **Disrupt current patterns of consumption and waste:** to save biodiversity and reduce pressures on sustainable consumption, we must limit consumption of wildlife to those circumstances where sustainability has been affirmatively demonstrated and we must eliminate wasteful consumption.
- **Uphold keystone environmental laws:** as we look toward a future of new laws that will reconfigure our relationship with nature, we must defend and strengthen existing laws that protect our natural resources, public health, and biodiversity.
- **Eliminate the use of toxic chemicals:** to safeguard human health and critical biodiversity, like pollinators, we must ban the use of toxic chemicals such as neonics.
- **Empower indigenous communities:** to recognize the valuable conservation taking place in indigenous communities, we must recognize the rights of indigenous communities by ensuring that development on their territories has their free, prior, and informed consent.

Actions like these are but a small sampling of the kind of transformative change necessary to address our nature crisis. We thank the Committee for holding this hearing and look forward to working with Congress as it focuses on reversing the harmful trends that are destroying the biodiversity and ecosystems we value and depend upon for human survival.