

Natural Climate Solutions

Policy Principles for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

Natural climate solutions are critical to the success of any climate change policy. These solutions can enhance the health of our soils and ecosystems, conserving forests, watersheds, grasslands, farmlands, and more—all while reducing emissions and boosting the resilience of communities across America.

Natural climate solutions often offer the most cost-effective means of climate action, while providing numerous co-benefits to humans and wildlife. They can improve the quality of wildlife habitat and create economic opportunity through the reclamation, restoration, and maintenance of carbon stocks.

The National Wildlife Federation supports natural climate solutions as part of a broader set of policies and programs that reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and enhance climate adaptation for natural and human systems.





What are natural climate solutions?

The National Wildlife Federation defines natural climate solutions as strategies that support the ability of natural systems to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strategies that increase the resilience of populations to climate impacts.

Natural climate solutions harness nature's inherent ability to sequester carbon. And they are a powerful tool that can protect human communities and wildlife from the effects of our rapidly changing environment.



Natural Solutions for Climate Mitigation



Natural climate solutions have the potential to remove and store up to 10 gigatons of carbon dioxide cumulatively by 2050. They should be a central component of any mitigation strategy by enhancing the removal or storage of harmful carbon dioxide from our atmosphere.

Principles for Carbon Sequestration

- **Global climate policies should work towards the goal of slashing global greenhouse gas emissions roughly in half by 2030, reaching net zero emissions by midcentury at the latest.** These are the benchmarks established by the International Panel on Climate Change as necessary if we are to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change.
- **Mitigation strategies should include carbon removal and storage, in addition to emissions reductions.** Meeting a net zero goal will require strategies to sequester and store carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere, as well as strategies to capture emissions from industry and reduce carbon emissions from all economic sectors.
- **Natural solutions should be part of any carbon emissions strategy, particularly in the near term.** Natural solutions are readily available, cost-effective, and should be employed immediately.
- **Carbon sequestration efforts must be compatible with other ecological values.** Carbon sequestration and other climate mitigation strategies should not undermine natural ecosystem resilience, and the benefits that natural systems provide.
- **Carbon offset policies should adhere to strong environmental integrity principles.** This includes ensuring that carbon pools are quantifiable and sustainable. Natural carbon sequestration should not come at the expense of air and water quality elsewhere, particularly in disadvantaged communities, communities of color, and areas already facing a disproportionate pollution burden.



Natural Solutions for Climate Adaptation

Climate adaptation is a necessary compliment to mitigation efforts. Broadly, climate adaptation refers to strategies and actions that enhance the ability of natural and human communities to withstand or adjust to climate change and its associated impacts. Resilience—the ability of human and ecological systems to maintain desired functions in the face of change—may be a desired outcome of adaptation strategies.

Principles for Natural and Nature-Based Resilience

- **Protecting and restoring natural infrastructure, such as wetlands, dunes, and riparian corridors, can enhance resilience of human communities to climate-fueled disasters and provide critical co-benefits to society.** Natural and nature-based approaches should be prioritized for hazard mitigation.
- **Up-front investments in risk reduction should be prioritized.** It is estimated that for every \$1 spent on risk reduction, America saves \$6 in disaster costs, producing large savings for taxpayers and insurance policy holders over the long term.
- **Social equity considerations are a necessary component of any community resilience strategy.** Frontline communities, especially those that are historically underserved, should play a key role in planning for any nature-based resilience project or policy. Social justice and equity are crucial considerations in the development and implementation of durable and fair climate policies.

Building on these principles, the National Wildlife Federation has produced the *Natural Climate Solutions Federal Policy Platform* to lay out recommendations to swiftly scale up natural climate solutions, for both climate mitigation and climate resilience. Recommendations are structured around several analytical categories based on land or habitat type. The solutions offer benefits for the climate, local environments, communities, wildlife, and job creation.

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