

# Expanding national parks not enough to protect nature, say scientists

**‘Urgent’ coordinated action to tackle overconsumption, farming subsidies and the climate crisis also needed to halt biodiversity loss**



Protected parks such as Yellowstone national park in the US are ‘a good start’ say scientists, but more needs to be done to stop biodiversity loss. Photograph: Ryan Dorgan/AP

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Expanding national parks and protected areas will not be enough to halt the destruction of nature, warn leading scientists, who say urgent action on overconsumption, harmful subsidies and the climate crisis is also required to halt biodiversity loss.

Governments are expected to commit to a Paris-style agreement for nature at **Cop15 in Kunming**, China, later this year, with targets that include protecting at least 30% of the oceans and land by 2030.

An analysis of the draft **UN Convention on Biological Diversity** (CBD) agreement by more than 50 leading scientists has found that, while expanding

protected areas will, if done well, help slow the destruction of the natural world, much more is needed to stop it.

Prof Paul Leadley, an ecologist at Paris-Saclay University and co-author of the report, said: “The target of protecting 30% of all land and seas is important and attracting a lot of attention. And expanding protected areas is a good start if done well, but far short of what is needed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss – called ‘bending the curve’ for biodiversity.

“There is very good evidence that we will fail again to meet ambitious international biodiversity objectives if there’s too much focus on protected areas at the expense of other urgent actions addressing the threats to biodiversity.”

A “massive” reduction in harmful agricultural and fishing subsidies, holding global heating to 1.5C and tackling human overconsumption, including of meat, is necessary, the scientists said, as part of coordinated action across a diverse, interconnected set of “transformative” changes.

The **21 draft targets** to be negotiated at Kunming include **proposals to** eliminate plastic pollution, reduce pesticide use by two-thirds and half the rate of invasive species introduction. The agreement aims to stop what some scientists have called the **sixth mass extinction** of life on Earth, driven by human behaviour, which threatens ecosystems vital to human civilisation.

The analysis of the proposed agreement, conducted by the scientific bodies BioDiscovery and the Group on Earth Observations **Biodiversity** Observation Network (Geo Bon), has been sent to governments, who will give their feedback later this month.

The assessment looked at the impact of three scenarios on halting and reversing biodiversity loss: business as usual, improved quality and quantity of conservation, and transformative change of society. It found that only the last scenario will have the desired effect, assuming global heating is limited to 1.5C.

“What we’re doing is trying to take the best science and explain why the global biodiversity framework looks like it does. A lot of countries are saying it’s so complicated. We’re trying to explain why you need all the pieces and how each piece fits together,” Leadley said.

The analysis comes after confusion over the breath and complexity of the draft agreement, which ranges from pollution to the **inclusion of indigenous communities**.

In March, **governments are scheduled** to hold in-person negotiations for the first time since February 2020, after several delays to the process.

Governments **have** failed to meet a single target on halting the destruction of nature in the past decade.

María Cecilia Londoño Murcia, a researcher at the Humboldt Institute in Colombia and co-author of the analysis, said: “The sooner we act, the better. Time lags between action and positive outcomes for biodiversity can take decades, so we must act immediately and sustain our efforts if we are to reach the global goals by 2050.”