



Million Acre Pledge

Frequently Asked Questions about the Million Acre Pledge (MAP)

As of May 4, 2016

How is the pledge made?

The pledge is made by delivering a completed and signed pledge [form](#) to MAP. MAP may require substantial initial progress towards funding of the pledge before recognizing a pledger on its website and other media. For more information, potential pledgers may [contact](#) MAP.

Why make the pledge?

Pledgers are motivated by a desire to:

- Preserve forest and other ecosystems and their biodiversity
- Save endangered plants and animals
- Protect indigenous peoples
- Prevent massive carbon dioxide emissions from forest and other ecosystem loss
- Allow degraded forests and other ecosystems to recover and absorb huge amounts of carbon dioxide
- Inspire others to take the pledge

We are experiencing a mass extinction, in large part as a result of global forest destruction. Tens of millions of acres of forest continue to be destroyed each year in addition to degradation (partial deforestation via selective logging and other means) of hundreds of millions of acres of forest. If this state of affairs endures for the coming decades, very little forest will remain and animal and plant life on earth will be ravaged. Forests hold a majority of terrestrial plant and animal life and their sustained loss will devastate biodiversity. Many indigenous peoples have lived sustainably for centuries within forest, especially tropical rainforest. The survival of their unique cultures depends on intact forest.

When forest is burned or clear-cut, at least half (often much more) of the carbon within the

forest is released into the atmosphere as greenhouse gases, principally carbon dioxide but also methane. Additional greenhouse gases, such as nitrous oxide, are also discharged. Scientists have concluded that we cannot burn more than a fraction of the world's proven fossil fuel reserves without risking dangerous climate change. As the quantity of carbon within forest is similar to that within proven fossil fuel reserves, we also cannot afford to destroy or degrade much more forest without the peril of dangerous climate change. Moreover, if degraded forest were protected and allowed to regrow, it would absorb a vast amount of carbon dioxide and thus aid in the fight against global warming as we endeavor to reduce use of fossil fuels.

Forest preservation can be a very cost effective way to combat global warming. Saving an acre of threatened Amazon rainforest, for example, often costs just a few dollars, and, in some cases, as little as one dollar. But when an acre of tropical rainforest is destroyed and its carbon converted to carbon dioxide by burning or decomposition, the resulting carbon dioxide emissions exceed the lifetime emissions of five U.S. gasoline-powered cars. Destruction and degradation of tropical forest causes between 10% and 15% of annual carbon dioxide emissions. But adding in the huge capacity of recovery of degraded (generally selectively logged) tropical forest to absorb carbon dioxide would allow full and worldwide forest conservation and restoration to offset up to one-third of current fossil fuel emissions. Further, as forest conservation could be implemented much faster than the multiple decade period needed to convert to alternatives to fossil fuel use, forest conservation could be the dominant solution to global warming for the coming two decades and up to one-half of the cumulative solution over the crucial next 50 years. See www.halfthesolution.com.

Ecosystems other than forest can provide many of the same benefits, even if reduced per acre as a result of lower bio-density, as described above for forest.

How are forest and other ecosystems protected or restored?

The [International Union for the Conservation of Nature](#) defines a protected area as a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Forest and other ecosystems can be placed into conservation by several methods:

- Private land purchase: Land can be purchased and converted to a private or public reserve.
- Conservation easement: In certain countries, a conservation easement may be granted by a private landowner, eliminating the need for land purchase.
- Establishment of a public park or preserve: Publicly owned land can be protected as a park or preserve, on a large scale as a national park or a smaller scale as a municipal or regional watershed preserve.

- Land titling for indigenous peoples: An area that has been inhabited by a low density of indigenous peoples can, in some countries, be titled to the indigenous community based solely upon its historical occupation and sustainable use.

Where an area can be preserved without land purchase, there are still significant expenses. Declaration of a park or preserve on public land involves negotiation with governments and communities, biological surveys, mapping and a determination of a lack of rights to the land by third parties. To gain recognition of land as an indigenous community reserve, similar work is required, as well as legal representation of the community and documentation of historical use and occupation by the indigenous community.

Declaration of an area of forest or other landscape for conservation provides for legal exclusion of logging, mining, oil and gas exploration as well as extraction and clearing for agriculture or development. But these legal rights alone do not afford sufficient protection. Monitoring and guarding of the area is necessary to ensure that the area is secure from animal poaching, logging, mining, or other destruction or degradation. Funding to monitor and guard may be provided by national, regional, or municipal government, but supplemental funding may be needed. Funds for supplemental training and building of guard facilities may be crucial to indigenous communities' success in protecting their titled forestland.

For-profit conservation companies can provide funding to help guard and monitor threatened area for a period (generally 20 years or more) in return for a portion of the resulting carbon or other conservation credit revenues. To receive carbon credit revenues, such for-profit companies must also expend resources on carbon content surveys, threat assessments, carbon sequestration projections and carbon credit certifications.

Once part of a protected area, degraded forest and landscapes can be restored, often merely by preventing the cause, generally selective logging, of the degradation and allowing regrowth over a period of decades. To the extent that the seed base in the degraded forest or landscape is incomplete, missing plants species can be introduced from adjacent areas by animals transporting seeds or by limited human intervention.

The expertise and the funding for the activities described above are often provided by conservation charities, governments, or government supported entities, or, perhaps increasingly as carbon trading markets grow and extend, for-profit firms seeking to protect forest to generate saleable forest carbon credits. Individuals, companies, and foundations can provide critical funding to conservation charities and for-profit conservation efforts. It is these individuals, companies, and foundations that MAP seeks to encourage and recognize.

Is pledger progress independently verified?

MAP reviews pledger progress, in terms of funding of conservation projects, success of projects and acres covered by projects, at least annually. MAP requires independent verification of funding, acreage and continuing conservation success. Merely declaration of an area for conservation is not sufficient. Continuing and effective protection of the area must also be demonstrated. Failure of a pledger to make prompt progress towards the pledge goal will result in either a change of the pledge goal on MAP or removal of the pledger from MAP. Further, failure of a conservation project will also result in such an appropriate adjustment on MAP.

Does direct conservation work?

Direct conservation efforts, which the Million Acre Pledge advocates, have spread throughout the world in recent decades. Conservation charities have supported the efforts of many governments and community and indigenous groups to conservation natural lands. On the order of 1 billions areas of natural areas are under conservation worldwide. Nonetheless, direct conservation has yet to protect all threatened natural areas, with several billions acres of natural areas unprotected.

A substantial body of peer-reviewed research has shown the effectiveness of direct conservation. Research shows that both national parks and indigenous reserves have generally been effective in **preventing deforestation (even with very limited funding)** and **preserving biodiversity**. Other research shows that **protected areas have not merely displaced deforestation to other areas**.

Other techniques, such as REDD+ funding, cap-and-trade forest offsets, sustainable forestry and work to remove deforestation from supply chains, much supplement direct conservation, more so over time and as these methods proliferate.

Why are many pledgers focused on tropical forest?

Many pledgers to MAP have chosen to focus on tropical rainforest because of the alarming rate at which it is being destroyed, its irreplaceable biodiversity, its high carbon content, and the relatively low cost of protecting it. While about a billion acres of tropical forest has already been placed under some level of protection, over two billion acres remain completely or insufficiently protected. Tropical forest contains the greatest biodiversity and density of wildlife of any ecosystem on earth. Over half of the world's wildlife is within tropical forest. Most indigenous peoples still continuing their traditional ways live sustainably within tropical forest. Finally, tropical forest (including the peat soil beneath) contains the majority of carbon sequestered by the earth's forests. Nonetheless, other forest, including temperate and boreal forest, is also very important ecologically and for

carbon sequestration. Thus, while many new pledgers may chose to focus on tropical forest, MAP also encourages protection of temperate, boreal, and other forest.

How much does it cost to conserve one million acres?

Based on conservation projects currently available, one million acres can be placed into conservation for as little as approximately \$1 million of charitable donations. Income tax benefits from charitable donation deductions may effectively reduce the net cost by as much as half. At this cost level, such protection does not involve land purchase, but rather might involve establishment and protection of national parks, municipal watershed preserves, or indigenous reserves within public lands.

One can also preserve forest via investment in for-profit funds that protect forest to generate conservation credits to be sold. The amount of such an investment, in order to protect one million acres, is generally greater than a charitable donation to achieve the same, but the investment may generate financial returns.

Forest and other landscapes can also be put into conservation by land purchase and establishment of a private or public preserve (either directly or through a charity). The cost for this approach, which is based on local land prices, can vary widely. In the Amazon basin, for example, prices can range from tens of dollars per acre to as much as \$1000 per acre, with a typical price between \$100 to \$200 per acre. Costs in other areas can be significantly higher. For example, privately held California coastal redwood forest sells for \$30,000 or more per acre. Land purchase can be an effective approach when land parcels are adjacent to other protected areas or are habitat for threatened or endangered species.

In some countries, the law allows private landowners to grant conservation easements to conservation organizations. This can permit private land to be placed into conservation for less than the cost of purchase of the land.

Replanting of completely deforested land to forestland is generally much more expensive than protecting existing natural forestland, as invasive species removal and replanting of native species tends to involve substantial labor. For example, forest replanting projects in the Amazon Basin involving former forestland that was used for intensive agriculture over a period of years tend to cost thousands of dollars per acre.

How can a pledger find opportunities to save acres?

The organizations shown at the bottom of the MAP [home](#) page are being used by the current pledgers to achieve the bulk of their acreage pledges. Other conservation charities also offer the opportunity to conserve acres of forest and other landscapes via donations. New and potential pledgers are welcome to discuss options with founding pledgers Leslie Santos and Brett Byers as well as with other pledgers willing to share their knowledge and experience.

Why is the pledge in number of acres rather than in dollars?

MAP wishes to focus on results achieved rather than dollars spent. This encourages donors or investors taking the pledge to focus on the most efficient projects and also provides a more tangible accomplishment.

Can pledges for amounts more or less than one million acres be made?

MAP permits pledges of one-quarter million and one-half million acres and will publicize these pledges. Pledgers may also pledge in amounts over 1 million acres, and pledgers with higher pledge levels will be featured more prominently within the MAP website and other media.

Can the pledge be taken anonymously?

Pledgers may take the pledge anonymously and avoid mention within the MAP website and other media, but still receive the benefit of consulting with other willing pledgers regarding methods of fulfilling the pledge.

How much impact results from saving one million acres?

One million acres is over 1500 square miles and larger than either Luxembourg or Rhode Island.

One million acres of tropical rainforest contains trillions of individual plants and animals and tens of thousands of different species of plants and animals, many of which have not yet been discovered. These undiscovered or insufficiently studied plants and animals may have medicinal value for humans, as a great many drugs are derived from natural sources, especially from tropical rainforest plants and animals.

One million acres of forest can protect and fully contain an entire, unique indigenous tribe that lives sustainably within the forest.

One million acres of mature tropical rainforest or coastal redwood forest (including the underlying soil or peat), safely stores an amount of carbon, which, if converted to carbon dioxide upon forest destruction, would result in over 200,000,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions. This amount is greater than the annual carbon dioxide emissions of 40,000,000 gasoline-powered cars, which is more than the number of cars in either Great Britain or California.

One million acres of forest with deep peat beneath it can contain as much as 10 times the carbon described above.

Were 1,000 pledgers each to pledge to save 1 million acres, fulfillment of these pledges could protect much of the world's threatened tropical rainforest.

Can multiple individuals or organizations join together to make the pledge collectively?

Yes. At the discretion of MAP, groups of individuals or organizations with a reasonable connection can work together to fulfill the Million Acre Pledge.

Can companies and other organizations make the pledge?

Yes. For-profit companies and charities that are not largely devoted to conservation are encouraged to take the pledge. In the future, MAP may choose to recognize conservation charities, governments, and for-profit conservation companies that have saved, or are saving, millions of acres. Currently, MAP wishes to focus on encouraging individual, foundation, and corporate donors and investors to facilitate conservation and restoration.

How long does a pledger have to complete the commitment?

A pledger is generally expected to have made all financial contributions to achieve the acreage pledge within a period of several years, subject to the availability of conservation projects to fund. Completion of the funded conservation projects may take several more years. Pledgers generally opt to complete their pledges rapidly in order to combat promptly tremendous current deforestation and other ecosystems loss worldwide. The pledge **form** requires each pledger to continue to make reasonable and timely pledge progress to remain part of MAP.

Can a pledger change or terminate a pledge?

A pledger may modify the number of acres pledged at any time. A pledger may also terminate a pledge at any time. Once MAP has received notice of a pledge change, MAP will make appropriate changes to its website and other media.

Are the pledges legally binding?

The good-faith pledges are not legal binding. If a pledger does not continue to make reasonable and timely progress towards the pledged acres and provide reasonable evidence of such progress, MAP may remove such pledger from the MAP website and other media.

Are pledgers solely responsible for protecting or restoring the acres they pledge?

No. As set forth in these [acknowledgements](#), the people, communities and governments, laws, and legal institutions of the jurisdictions containing the areas conserved are critically important factors in conservation. Local non-governmental organizations and individuals are also essential. The support of non-governmental organizations from other countries play an important, often crucial, supporting role, as do their financial supporters, such as the pledgers. And multiple non-governmental organizations (and their donors or investors) may contribute to safeguarding each particular area conserved.

Who operates the Million Acre Pledge (MAP)?

MAP is a charitable organization devoted to promoting forest and other ecosystem conservation and restoration. MAP is supported by individuals, including its pledgers, and conservation organizations.

Do past efforts count towards pledge goals?

Yes. Past financial contributions count towards achievement of pledger commitments.