



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE 2023 SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON FOREIGN ADVERSARY INVESTMENTS AND LAND PURCHASES**

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Room 112-N—Statehouse
Topeka, Kansas

Presented to
Chairman Mike Thompson and the Special Committee

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Introduction:

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to address this critical topic, and more importantly appreciate your efforts to explore sound policies that will protect Kansas citizens from foreign interests gaining control of America's land.

Craig Rucker, President and Founder of the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow was originally scheduled to testify before you today, but unfortunately had a conflict and has asked me to provide our perspective in his place.

My name is Margaret Byfield and I serve as executive director of American Stewards of Liberty. We are a 501(c)(3) non profit organization that has been working on these issues for over 30 years. Our mission is to restore property rights and the liberties they secure by defending the use of our land, and restoring local control. We educate federal, state and local officials, and property owners, on actions that erode property rights and identify responses that would bring these actions in alignment with full Constitutional protection.

We work to protect American's ability to produce our food, fiber, minerals and energy derived from our rich natural resources. This is to ensure the prosperity, well being and security of our citizens.

It is to secure our land and liberty.

Our founding fathers understood a principle that many today have forgotten. For our nation to be governed by the people as intended, American citizens must own the land.

The Constitution of the United States, and that of the State of Kansas, is only a piece of paper unless the people have the means to limit government and protect individual rights.

Whoever owns or controls the natural resource wealth of a nation controls the government and its people. Therefore, our founders had the wisdom to set our nation on a course where the citizens, not government and not foreign adversaries, were to be the rightful owners of our land and natural resources.

In so doing, they created America's middle class and the greatest nation ever established that serves as a beacon of liberty to all people.

Two-hundred and fifty three years later, the local State and federal governments combined own 40 percent of our nation. Of the 60 percent of lands that remain, the ownership of these lands is in question. Much of this is privately held by our citizens, but an ever increasing amount of these lands are controlled and restricted through devices that erode the property right and transfer these rights to government, environmental and foreign interests. A few examples of these are:

- (1) conservation easements in perpetuity where primary control of the property is conveyed to a land trust or government;
- (2) conservation programs that create a federal nexus to the private lands opening the door to unforeseen restrictions; and
- (3) increasing the regulatory burden on small landowners to the extent that only wealthy foreign entities and large corporations will have the means to own and use the lands.

We just held our 2nd national "Stop 30x30 Summit" last weekend in Irving, Texas. As a part of that program, Epoch TV held their red carpet premiere of a new film entitled, "No Farmers No Food." It documents how global polices are working to push the small landowner off the land turning production of our food over to large conglomerates and government control.

Our founders were determined to create a government where power could not be consolidated and held by a few elites. But, that is exactly what is occurring in America today. If you have not already seen the film, you should do so. It is sobering to see how our government is systematically stripping us of our rights and ability to feed our people.

The American citizen's dream of owning a piece of land is getting harder every day in this great nation. The priorities of our current administration are ushering in policies that are pushing the small landowner off the land, prioritizing foreign prosperity over our citizens well being, diluting our citizens votes through open-border policies and taxing our prosperity by insisting on transforming our economy for an unproven climate theory.

Foreign ownership of America's land is also increasing. More importantly, our adversaries, such as the communist Chinese regime are strategically purchasing properties around sensitive national security areas.

However, my focus today is to make you aware of another way, through Natural Asset Companies, that foreign adversaries are poised to take control and ownership of our land and natural resources, and offer some potential solutions for you to consider.

30x30 and Natural Asset Companies

January 27th, 2021, the President signed Executive Order 14008, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," that propelled our nation down a self destructive path. Included in the order was a directive to conserve at least 30 percent of our land and oceans by 2030. This was to implement the international agenda know as 30x30, whose objective is to permanently protect at least 30 percent of the world's land in its natural state by 2030, and 50 percent by 2050.

This is the largest federal land grab our nation has ever faced, and it is being carried out without congressional authorization or constitutional authority.

Shortly after this agenda was initiated, another international scheme was launched with the intent to control more than just our land, but also the air we breathe. A company funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Intrinsic Exchange Group (IEG), and the New York Stock Exchange partnered to create a new type of investment vehicle called "Natural Asset Companies" (NAC's) in September of 2021.

This new vehicle is based on the idea that intrinsic values in nature can be quantified and converted to become investment products. Their concept is that the air we breathe, the water we drink, and products we use that are derived from nature all have value that is not being considered by financial markets. IEG claims this value can be converted to new public investment vehicles like NAC.

At the same time, the Biden Administration is working to record the value of these natural assets on the federal balance sheet. In January of the year, the Administration issued "The National Strategy to Develop Statistics for Environmental-Economic Decisions: A U.S. System of Natural Capital Accounting and Associated Environmental-Economic Statistics." According to the report, new "Natural Capital Accounts" will be used to "quantify" nature's value and list those values as new assets of the federal government.

This would provide a basis to increase the national debt and impose new fees and taxes on the American people. It will also establish the fixed and intrinsic value for the federally protected lands, positioning them to be enrolled in the private NAC accounts for investors to invest in.

These efforts combined are intended to create an entirely new economy, virtually out of thin air. None of it should make sense to any serious investor. Investment products are based on tangible assets such as land, homes, and companies—things that have value because they can be secured and held by an owner to the exclusion of others, and that provide a benefit for which consumers are willing to pay. This new economy requires valuing things that no one has a right to own exclusively, such as breathable air.

The actual purpose of this plan seems to be to transfer the natural resource wealth held by America's landowners to wealthy foreign investors, the government, and special-interest environmental and conservation groups. From this perspective, the plan makes sense not as a wise investment for most Americans, but as a diabolical scheme to finance the growth of government while removing land from private citizens.

These NAC protected assets can be based on three types of land: Natural (protected), Working (some productive uses highly regulated) and Hybrid (a mix of Natural and Working). They state the cashflow will come from "ecotourism revenue or carbon credit sales on natural lands and commodity crop production on working lands."

Revenue is also expected to come from "ecosystem services," which they describe as the benefits derived from protecting the environment as well as the goods and services provided by entities that protect and manage the resources, such as environmental non-government organizations.

The NACs must have rights to fixed natural assets such as land, water, conservation easements, federally protected lands, and crops to offer exclusive rights to the intrinsic elements they claim are produced by protecting the area. The act of monetizing these intrinsic elements is what appears to be their basis for claiming this new economy will be four times larger than today's economy.

For example, a forest will be reserved to sequester carbon dioxide, and will be managed by an ecosystem services' provider. This way, the clean air and sequestered carbon are effectively converted from intangible assets to tangible assets, and the ecosystem services to protect them generate a new value that can also be financially quantified. These acrobatics are the basis for any returns that would be paid to investors in NACs.

Under this new plan, the value of the trees is not tied to their potential for conversion to paper or construction material, but for sequestering carbon that can be sold in the form of carbon credits. The local economic contributors will shift from timber companies, which purchase equipment, fuel and other job-producing goods and services, to environmental service providers. These are the domain of non-profit environmental organizations and consultants whose contribution will be to "protect" the resources.

The equity in natural asset companies can also include conservation easements on private land. For example, the value of a conservation easement or development right sold to a land trust by a landowner is recorded on the land trust's balance sheet. The 2022 financial

report for The Nature Conservancy lists the asset value of the easements it owns at \$2.5 billion. The examples IEG provides indicate that easements will be important tangible assets used to stand-up NACs. This can be done without a landowner's consent because easements are a property right owned solely by the land trust or government.

Land trusts will earn direct income for the "ecosystem services" they provide, as well as receive payments from the conservation easements they own after they are enrolled in the NAC. They are poised to reap billions of dollars on the backs of America's landowners.

For this to work, the government must clear title to the lands that will be conscripted into the program, hence the 30x30 agenda. The trees that sequester the carbon and the land under the trees must be owned by a willing partner in the natural asset company — either the landowner, government, an environmental land trust, or an investment backer such as the Rockefeller Foundation, Blackrock, or communist China.

This scheme poses a challenge to traditional property rights that are the foundation of America's Republic. It diminishes liberty in exchange for "solving" a manufactured climate crisis. Overall, the plan will lead to the largest transfer of land ownership and wealth in American history, if it is carried out. The transfers will flow from America's middle class citizens, to anyone with the means to invest in such a product, including international adversaries.

What may be most alarming is that this same scheme is already much further advanced in other countries, largely the third world countries who are debt ridden and compromised, making it easier for foreign adversaries to acquire rights to their natural resources through this new investment vehicle.

America is headed down this same path today as our national deficit continues to climb well beyond our ability to pay. Our adversaries are right now positioning themselves to acquire the rights to America's land and natural resource wealth through these Natural Asset Companies.

We are fooling ourselves if we believe the 30x30 agenda and natural asset scheme are for the purpose of conserving habitat for species, wildlife and humanity. The purpose of the agenda is to clear title to the land.

We are also fooling ourselves if we believe these lands targeted for conservation will be forever protected. It has never been a question of whether we will use our natural resources, we all know that eventually we must. It has always been a question of "who" will be using our resources and gaining the wealth and power derived.

Will this be the American citizens, or communist China when we are finally so indebted that we cannot fight back.

Before the government can collateralize our land and natural assets, they must first clear the title to these lands held by the citizens. This is where the agenda can be stopped, and you as the State's governing body will play a critical role.

Our land and natural resources must be owned by the people, not government, not environmental land trusts, and not foreign interests, if we are to retain our sovereignty and individual liberties.

We have moved so far away from this principle that trying today to regain this power is daunting. However, there are a few critical steps that can be taken by the State to ensure the citizens of America and Kansas will own our land.

First Recommendation:

Limit the percentage of land in any county that can be owned by government and foreign interests, or can be held in conservation easements, conservation programs or other devices that devalue the taxable value of the property, or a combination of one or all of these categories.

We have suggested that no more than 15 percent of the land in a county be so encumbered with these vehicles. This is to ensure each county has a robust local economy in order to properly fund the Schools, Hospitals, emergency services, infrastructure and public services.

It is also to ensure the local governing bodies will not be dominated by government or foreign influences.

You may determine that in Kansas this number should be smaller based on the needs of your citizens. Whatever you determine this level to be, it is vital that you establish this limit so that regardless of the scheme that is devised to take our land, you have ensured the citizens of Kansas will always hold the majority interest in the States natural resources.

Second Recommendation:

Require that foreign purchases, government land acquisitions, conservation easements and other land devaluing vehicles be approved by the County Board of Commissioners, and that these vehicles can be denied if they conflict with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

This will give the County government authority to prevent the purchase of land around a sensitive area, such as a military base.

I want to leave you with one one final point.

Every policy and action necessary to implement the 30x30 agenda and Natural Asset scheme must be implemented locally, which is why it is critical that the State provide the local governments with the authorizations they need to protect their community, their citizens and the State from foreign control of Kansas's lands.

Thank you.

Resources:

Intrinsic Exchange Group Website: <https://www.intrinsicexchange.com/>

“The National Strategy to Develop Statistics for Environmental-Economic Decisions: A U.S. System of Natural Capital Accounting and Associated Environmental-Economic Statistics.” Website: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Natural-Capital-Accounting-Strategy-final.pdf>

“Monitoring the Air We Breathe,” by Margaret Byfield, published in *Standing Ground*, August 2023. Website: <https://americanstewards.us/natural-assets-monetizing-the-air-we-breathe/>