

# From... Climate Connections

## How protecting public lands can help the climate.

*Conservation preserves forests, provides wildlife corridors, and protects water sources.*



by **YCC TEAM** AUGUST 24, 2022

**LINK:** <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2022/08/how-protecting-public-lands-can-help-the-climate/>

**From CT.org...**Small cities and towns have properties called parks, school grounds, conservation areas, surplus properties, brownfield sites and vacant lands that may be leverageable into climate change assets. Small gestures help make progress and inspire others to follow suit.



(Photo credit: Rennett Stowe / [CC BY-NC 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/))

Here the 1:30 audio at:

<https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2022/08/how-protecting-public-lands-can-help-the-climate/>

About two-thirds of Utah is public land owned by the federal government. Some of that land includes national parks, like Zion and Arches.

Olivia Juarez of the nonprofit Green Latinos has worked as an organizer with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

“When I think of public land the first thing that comes to my mind is nature — mountains, desert valleys, canyon country,” Juarez says.

But not all public land is undisturbed. Millions of acres are used for cattle grazing, timber harvesting, and oil and gas drilling.

So environmental groups are pushing the federal government to designate more of Utah’s public land as wilderness, where drilling, road-building, and other invasive uses would be prohibited.

Juarez says that preserving public land as wilderness doesn’t just minimize harmful activities.

Forests can absorb and store carbon. Large unbroken areas of wilderness can allow animals to migrate to new habitats as the climate warms. And conservation can protect water sources as droughts worsen.

“I really see public land as an essential lifeline for not just the Southwest but for the world in being able to be resilient and adapt and thrive in the face of climate change,” she says.

*Reporting credit: Sarah Kennedy/ChavoBart Digital Media*