## ****Environmental Remediation and Habitat Restoration: Repairing Land, Restoring Justice****

The environmental legacy of industrial pollution, extractive industries, and ecosystem destruction has left vast areas of the United States contaminated, degraded, and fragmented. Superfund sites, brownfields, drained wetlands, polluted rivers, and eroded coastlines are not scattered randomly—they are disproportionately concentrated in communities of color, Indigenous territories, and low-income neighborhoods. This pattern reflects a long history of environmental racism and disinvestment.

A sustainable and just transition must address these past harms. Cleaning up contaminated land and restoring degraded ecosystems is not only an ecological necessity—it is an act of environmental justice, public health protection, and economic revitalization.

This plan proposes an integrated strategy that combines site remediation, ecological restoration, conservation protections, and nature-based solutions to rebuild both natural systems and community well-being.

### Core Strategies and Actions

Accelerate cleanup of Superfund, brownfield, and contaminated sites, with a focus on environmental justice communities.  
We will expand funding for EPA Superfund and brownfield programs to expedite assessment, cleanup, and safe reuse of polluted sites. Cleanup efforts will prioritize communities historically burdened by toxic facilities and hazardous waste. Community members will have a formal role in planning and oversight to ensure that remediation outcomes protect health and support equitable redevelopment.

Restore wetlands, riparian corridors, prairies, and coastal ecosystems.  
We will invest in large-scale restoration of ecosystems critical for carbon sequestration, flood protection, water purification, and biodiversity. Restoration efforts will focus on priority areas identified in the National Wetlands Inventory, state natural heritage programs, and regional conservation plans. Projects will reconnect floodplains, restore hydrology, and reestablish native vegetation to strengthen ecosystem function.

Remove obsolete dams and barriers to restore fish passage and river connectivity.  
Thousands of obsolete dams, culverts, and barriers fragment rivers, block migratory fish, and degrade aquatic ecosystems. We will expand funding for dam removal and stream restoration to reconnect aquatic habitats, restore sediment flows, and reduce safety risks from aging infrastructure.

Scale up phytoremediation and bioremediation for soil and water cleanup.  
We will deploy nature-based remediation methods—including plants, fungi, and microbes—to stabilize, extract, or break down pollutants in soil and water. Phytoremediation offers a lower-cost, less disruptive alternative to excavation, while delivering co-benefits such as urban greening, erosion control, and wildlife habitat. Research, technical assistance, and incentives will help apply these techniques at scale.

Expand conservation easements and habitat zoning to protect ecological corridors.  
Conservation easements, habitat zoning overlays, and targeted land acquisition will secure permanent protections for wildlife corridors, floodplains, riparian buffers, and coastal habitats. These protections will prioritize ecological connectivity, support species migration in a changing climate, and buffer developed areas from flood and erosion risks.

Integrate nature-based solutions for flood management, erosion control, and water quality.  
Wherever feasible, we will prioritize nature-based approaches—living shorelines, wetland restoration, floodplain reconnection, green infrastructure, and vegetated buffers—over hard infrastructure. These solutions reduce downstream flood risks, filter pollutants, recharge aquifers, and provide habitat, while offering long-term cost savings.

### Why This Matters: Climate, Public Health, and Equity

Investing in environmental remediation and habitat restoration delivers multiple, intersecting benefits.

First, it improves public health by reducing exposure to hazardous substances like heavy metals, PCBs, PFAS, and industrial solvents—chemicals linked to cancer, developmental harm, and respiratory disease. Studies show that over 70 percent of hazardous waste facilities are located within three miles of Black and brown communities, making remediation a critical environmental justice intervention.

Second, restoration projects rebuild biodiversity, reconnect fragmented habitats, and strengthen ecological resilience. Restored wetlands, prairies, and riparian buffers sequester carbon, reduce flood peaks, and protect coastal areas from storm surge—offering both climate mitigation and adaptation benefits.

Third, remediation unlocks economic opportunity. Cleaning up brownfields increases surrounding property values by 5 to 15 percent, reduces blight, and catalyzes redevelopment into affordable housing, greenspace, food production, or commercial uses.

Finally, restoration is a form of cultural and ethical repair. It honors Indigenous land stewardship, reconnects people to nature, and ensures future generations inherit healthier, more resilient environments.

### Integrated with Broader Policy Goals

Environmental remediation and habitat restoration intersect with many other components of this plan:

* Urban greenspace and forestry initiatives that reclaim degraded urban lands
* Green jobs programs that employ workers in restoration and ecological monitoring
* Climate mitigation efforts that rely on restored ecosystems for carbon sequestration
* Public health strategies that reduce pollution burdens in overexposed communities

Together, these strategies heal both ecosystems and the social fabric of communities harmed by environmental injustice.

### Key References

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