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UMaine professors contribute to report advising how governments can tackle biodiversity loss through COVID-19 recovery

October 16, 2020

Two University of Maine professors contributed to a report that explores how governments can help mitigate ecosystem and species loss through their COVID-19 stimulus and recovery plans.

While many countries hope to implement regulatory and funding measures to help "return to normal," the authors of a Rutgers University-led [paper](#), including Michael Howard and Cynthia Isenhour from UMaine, urge officials to take measures that would help halt decades of biodiversity degradation exacerbated by previous policy decisions. Their recommendations include incentives, regulations, fiscal policy and employment programs that would support ecosystem resilience and prohibit actions that threaten various animals, plants and other wildlife.

"A widely recognized policy that would reduce carbon emissions and put us on a more sustainable path is a carbon tax," Howard says. "One way to address the impact of such a tax on low-income households would be to distribute the revenue as a dividend."

Howard, a professor of philosophy, Isenhour, an associate professor of anthropology and climate change, and their colleagues from institutions worldwide also found that most countries have not implemented environmental preservation-related economic reforms or investments during the pandemic. Some, including the U.S., Brazil and Australia, have relaxed laws created to protect nature. The [2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), however, found that about 1 million species face extinction, some in decades, unless policy changes are enacted.

"As disastrous as the pandemic has been, the disruption does provide an opportunity to reconsider our path and to design economic systems that are more sustainable, healthy and resilient," Isenhour says.

Pamela McElwee, an associate professor in the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences at Rutgers University–New Brunswick, served as lead author of the report, which was published in the journal [One Earth](#).

Read the full release on the Rutgers University [website](#).

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