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LETTERS

Marine Biodiversity Budget

Ecosystem protection is a crucial strategy for conserving biological diversity (1), but the Clinton Administration's fiscal year 1998 budget proposal reveals a striking disparity between U.S. spending on protected areas on land and in the sea. It asks Congress for \$1.6 billion for the National Park Service to manage 374 units totaling 344,000 square kilometers of land and \$3.1 billion for the Forest Service to manage 159 units totaling 772,000 square kilometers of land. But its budget request for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Sanctuaries Program is only \$13.2 million—two orders of magnitude less—for 12 units totaling 47,000 square kilometers of sea.

Funding for terrestrial protected areas is inadequate, but resources dedicated to marine protected areas are so meager that the commitment of the United States to protecting marine biodiversity deserves a fundamental reevaluation before the next federal budget goes to Congress.

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