

THE FORENSICS FILES

FREE SAMPLE

Lincoln-Douglas

De-Extinction

Nov/Dec 2026

Resolved: De-extinction is unethical.

Eight representative evidence cards from the complete topic file. The full product contains substantially more research, cases, blocks, extensions, weighing, and round strategy.

Affirmative Evidence Sample

AFF-02-C01

Protection is usually prioritized because intact habitat can provide superior conservation outcomes at lower cost and without restoration delay.

Possingham et al. 15, Hugh P. Possingham, Michael Bode, and Carissa J. Klein, Conservation scientists specializing in decision science, restoration, and biodiversity planning; qualifications verified through article affiliations. "Optimal Conservation Outcomes Require Both Restoration and Protection," PLOS Biology, 2015-01-27, DOI 10.1371/journal.pbio.1002052, <https://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.1002052>. Accessed 2026-07-24.

Conservation outcomes are principally achieved through the protection of intact habitat or the restoration of degraded habitat. Restoration is generally considered a lower priority action than protection because protection is thought to provide superior outcomes, at lower costs, without the time delay required for restoration.

Yet while it is broadly accepted that protected intact habitat safeguards more biodiversity and generates greater ecosystem services per unit area than restored habitat, conservation lacks a theory that can coherently compare the relative outcomes of the two actions.

AFF-02-C02

Habitat loss drives extinction, so protecting existing habitat directly addresses a principal cause of biodiversity loss.

Possingham et al. 15, Hugh P. Possingham, Michael Bode, and Carissa J. Klein, Conservation scientists specializing in decision science, restoration, and biodiversity planning; qualifications verified through article affiliations. "Optimal Conservation Outcomes Require Both Restoration and Protection," PLOS Biology, 2015-01-27, DOI 10.1371/journal.pbio.1002052, <https://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.1002052>. Accessed 2026-07-24.

Most species go extinct because humans have cleared their habitat. Habitat loss can also cause people to lose some of the services provided by ecosystems, such as the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere or the protection of coastal communities from storm damage. There are two broad strategies for stopping and reversing habitat loss: we can either protect habitat that is currently intact, or we can restore habitat that has already been cleared.

Superficially, we might imagine that, as with human health, "prevention is better than cure," and that therefore habitat protection should be given priority over habitat restoration. However, there is currently no scientific theory to justify this belief.

AFF-03-C01

Rewilding can provide ecosystem services and resilience, but it introduces organisms to complex ecological systems.

Thulin and Röcklinsberg 20, Carl-Gustaf Thulin and Helena Röcklinsberg, Wildlife and animal-ethics scholars at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences; qualifications verified through article affiliations. "Ethical Considerations for Wildlife Reintroductions and Rewilding," Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 2020-04-03, DOI 10.3389/fvets.2020.00163, <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/veterinary-science/articles/10.3389/fvets.2020.00163/full>. Accessed 2026-07-24.

The recovery of many populations of large carnivores and herbivores in major parts of Europe and North America offers ecosystem services and opportunities for sustainable utilization of wildlife.

An increasing number of studies also point out the ecosystem function, landscape engineering, and cascading effects of wildlife as values for human existence, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem resilience. Within this framework, the concept of rewilding has emerged as a means to add to the wilderness through either supplementary release of wildlife species already present or reintroduction of species formerly present in a certain area.

AFF-07-C01

Responsible operators must demonstrate resources for closure and emergency response before creating long-term hazards.

EPA 26, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Federal environmental agency administering hazardous-waste financial-assurance requirements. "Financial Assurance Requirements for Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facilities," US EPA, Current page accessed 2026-07-24, <https://www.epa.gov/hwpermitting/financial-assurance-requirements-hazardous-waste-treatment-storage-and-disposal>. Accessed 2026-07-24.

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) requires all treatment, storage and disposal facilities (TSDFs) to demonstrate that they will have the financial resources to properly close the facility or unit when its operational life is over, or provide the appropriate emergency response in the case of an accidental release. The financial assurance requirements establish several mechanisms for TSDF owners to demonstrate these resources will be available when needed.

These requirements place the costs of cleanups on owner/operators rather than taxpayers.

Negative Evidence Sample

NEG-01-C01

Material beneficiaries of a human-caused extinction may owe restitution even when they did not personally perform the original killing.

Odenbaugh 23 — Jay Odenbaugh, professor of philosophy whose scholarship includes philosophy of biology, ecology, science, and environmental ethics. "Philosophy and Ethics of De-Extinction," Cambridge Prisms: Extinction, Cambridge University Press, January 30, 2023, DOI 10.1017/ext.2023.4, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/cambridge-prisms-extinction/article/philosophy-and-ethics-of-deextinction/8486EF7E9B0E7A4AB5A16CC40DC00049>. Accessed July 24, 2026.

We thus do not owe them anything (Campbell and Whittle, Reference Campbell and Whittle 2017). This argument has force when we consider woolly mammoths, but it might have less force when we consider the passenger pigeon. After all, Americans killed passenger pigeons for their own material benefit. Thus, Americans who benefited from their extinction (even if they did not drive them extinct) might owe them restitution through de-extinction.

NEG-02-C01

De-extinction can pursue ecological replacement through back-breeding, cloning, or genetic engineering without requiring exact resurrection of the extinct species.

Odenbaugh 23 — Jay Odenbaugh, professor of philosophy whose scholarship includes philosophy of biology, ecology, science, and environmental ethics. "Philosophy and Ethics of De-Extinction," Cambridge Prisms: Extinction, Cambridge University Press, January 30, 2023, DOI 10.1017/ext.2023.4, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/cambridge-prisms-extinction/article/philosophy-and-ethics-of-deextinction/8486EF7E9B0E7A4AB5A16CC40DC00049>. Accessed July 24, 2026.

Let us characterize what de-extinction is. De-extinction is the process of creating living organisms that are similar (often genetically similar) to members of extinct species (Sandler, Reference Sandler 2017, p. 1). Some authors augment this definition with notions of ecological function. For example, Ben Novak writes,

[D]e-extinction is the ecological replacement of an extinct species by means of purposefully adapting a living organism to serve the ecological function of the extinct species by altering phenotypes through means of various breeding techniques, including artificial selection, back-breeding and precise hybridization facilitated by genome editing. (Novak, Reference Novak 2018, p. 5)

These definitions of de-extinction are inclusive. The reason they are inclusive is that the techniques associated with de-extinction do not require that a species be resurrected but also may be recreated. To see why, let us consider these three techniques (Shapiro, Reference Shapiro 2015, Reference Shapiro 2017). There is back-breeding, cloning through somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT), and genetic engineering. This also allows us to explore examples of current or future de-extinction.

NEG-03-C01

Cloning can add previously unrepresented genes to a recovery population founded by only seven black-footed ferrets.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 24 — United States Fish and Wildlife Service, federal wildlife agency responsible for endangered-species recovery and the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Program. “Q&As: Black-footed Ferret Cloning Research Update,” U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, April 17, 2024, <https://www.fws.gov/project/qas-black-footed-ferret-cloning-research-update>. Accessed July 24, 2026.

The successful cloning of previously unrepresented genes is a significant step forward for our black-footed ferret recovery efforts. The foundation of present recovery efforts has been made possible by the captive population lineage that is descended from seven distinct genetic founders. These seven founders were among those captured from the remaining black-footed ferrets in Meeteetse, Wyoming, in the late 1980s. Extant populations, both captive and reintroduced, descend from these founder animals.

With only seven genetic founders, the genetic diversity of the black-footed ferret has been a concern in the captive breeding program. The introduction of novel, currently unrepresented genetic material may provide a significant boost to the genetics of the current black-footed ferret population.

NEG-05-C01

FDA uses graduated regulatory categories that scale consultation, approval, and data requirements to product-specific risk while reviewing animal, food, effectiveness, and environmental consequences.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration 25 — United States Food and Drug Administration, Center for Veterinary Medicine, federal agency component regulating intentional genomic alterations in animals under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. “Q&A on FDA Regulation of Intentional Genomic Alterations in Animals,” U.S. Food and Drug Administration, February 27, 2025, <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/intentional-genomic-alterations-igas-animals/qa-fda-regulation-intentional-genomic-alterations-animals>. Accessed July 24, 2026.

FDA uses a risk-based approach to regulation of IGAs in animals that ranges from; Category 1 products for which we do not expect developers to consult with us prior to marketing an animal containing an IGA; to Category 2 products for which we may not expect developers to submit an application for approval of the IGA if, after looking at data submitted about that product’s risk, we find that we understand the product’s risks for the specified intended use, any identified risks are appropriately mitigated, and we have no further questions for which we would need to see additional data to address; to Category 3 products for which FDA will review and, where the data supports it, approve a product using data requirements that are proportionate to the risk associated with the particular product.

FDA’s approval of IGAs in animals ensures that the IGA is safe for the animal, safe for anyone that may consume food from the animal, and that it is effective, i.e. it does what the developer claims it will do. For IGAs that we approve, we also assess the environmental impacts of approving the application and determine if any potential impacts are significant.

What the Complete File Adds

- Complete affirmative and negative topic research
- Six complete affirmative and six complete negative case paths
- Framework and philosophy support
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- Judge adaptation and tournament strategy
- Quick-use materials and source navigation

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