

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Chellie Pingree  
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce,

More than fifty-five years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America's most successful conservation program. The bill was designed to assure our growing population that outdoor recreation lands would be secured, on a pay-as-you-go basis, for future Americans' requirements. We are thrilled that Congress voted overwhelmingly to pass two major bills making LWCF permanent with the Dingell Act of 2019 and the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020. The two acts provided permanent reauthorization and full permanent funding, respectively, making a definitive statement in support of LWCF as a uniquely constructed, common-sense concept that proceeds from public resource extraction will be dedicated to the protection of our greatest natural parks and outdoor places.

Now that Congress has resoundingly affirmed its commitment to LWCF as originally intended by protecting its annual \$900 million deposits for the long-term, and ensuring the direction of those funds to their intended conservation purposes, we look forward to working on a bipartisan basis toward efficient implementation and strong continuing oversight of our nation's most important conservation and recreation program. GAOA reinforces the critical decision-making role of Congress in determining LWCF funding for its multiple authorized federal agency programs and state grant programs through the annual appropriations process. With passage of GAOA, Congress has finally, permanently ended the history of underfunding which has limited LWCF from the outset.

We urge that you recognize the resounding level of support for LWCF and the compelling now-or-never needs the program addresses in communities across America by investing the increased resources needed to successfully implement this valuable, time-tested program in the FY 2022 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. We thank the Subcommittee for its vital work in FY21 to produce a bill that fully assumed that important role while providing a balanced allocation among LWCF subprograms according to the formula set down by the Dingell Act: at least 40% for federal agency conservation priorities, at least 40% for the suite of LWCF state and local grant programs, and the remaining 20% divided between those two sides based on need.

Investments in LWCF support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for all Americans, in rural communities and cities alike. It has created outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and 98 percent of counties across the country, opening up key areas for hunting, fishing, and other recreational access; supporting working forests and ranches; and acquiring inholdings and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields, and other federal areas.

On the federal side, there are four agencies that rely on LWCF to protect our nation's most iconic places. The National Park Service (NPS) utilizes LWCF funding to protect against development at our national parks, seashores and lakeshores, and recreation areas; national historical parks and historic sites; national battlefields and military parks; and the national trails system. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) utilizes LWCF funding to conserve land within its system of national conservation lands, while the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) utilizes LWCF funding for conservation within national wildlife refuges, hatcheries, and other FWS areas, and increasingly to acquire easements for the purpose of protecting wildlife habitat on privately owned lands in designated conservation areas. Lastly, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) utilizes LWCF funding to protect land within our national forests and national grasslands.

The State and Local Grants Program and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program provide crucial support for state and local park acquisitions in cities, counties, and rural towns as well as recreational facilities and trail corridors. It is the government's primary investment tool for ensuring that children and families have access to close-to-home recreation, having funded over 42,000 projects in virtually every county in the nation.

The Cooperative Endangered Species grants program provides states and counties with essential resources for habitat conservation that in turn allows for appropriate economic development. The American Battlefield Protection Program ensures the protection of America's Civil War and Revolutionary War sites at the state and local level. The Highlands Conservation Act protects critical forested watersheds that provide drinking water for urban residents in the Northeast. And finally, the Forest Legacy Program helps maintain critical jobs in the woods while protecting outdoor resources, recreation access, and local economies.

We urge that unobligated previous-year discretionary LWCF be retained within appropriated programs rather than being subjected to rescissions. The programs under the LWCF umbrella are oversubscribed, and full funding of LWCF has not eliminated the backlog of time-sensitive conservation priorities. We ask that you recognize these needs by keeping funds in place for viable funded projects within these accounts, and for reinvestment of them through reprogrammings in the event specified project needs have changed.

LWCF is essential to America's outdoor recreation, conservation, and preservation economies, which together contribute \$1.06 trillion to the nation's economy each year and support 9.4 million American jobs (1 out of every 15 jobs in the U.S.). Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies in the coming months to ensure that the suite of LWCF programs receive the high priority they need in FY 2022 to maintain our commitment to conservation and recreation, as well as to states and local communities. We urge you to provide balanced allocations for LWCF in FY22, retain unobligated funds with LWCF programs, and include the full project priority lists in the report. As our nation continues to see rapid loss of natural areas to development, and unprecedented use of parks, trails and other outdoor spaces during the pandemic, the need for investment in equitable access to the outdoors, natural infrastructure, and resilient landscapes to support both people and wildlife has never been more urgent.

Sincerely,



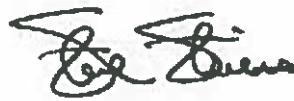
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### Additional Signatories

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