

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

March 20, 2012

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Moran,

We are writing to express our strong support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in FY 2013, and urge you to allocate robust funding to this valuable program in the FY 2013 Interior and the Environment Appropriations bill. The entire suite of LWCF programs protects natural resource lands, outdoor recreation opportunities and working forests at the local, state and federal levels, ensuring that critical wildlife habitat, hunting and fishing access, state and local parks, Civil War battlefields, productive forests and other important lands are protected for current and future generations. As you begin the process of drafting the FY 13 budget, we request \$450 million in funding for LWCF. These investments will support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for Americans, in rural communities and cities alike.

As you know, LWCF receipts are not revenues for general purposes - they are payments to the government specifically intended for conservation spending. More than \$17.5 billion has been siphoned from the LWCF trust fund since the program's inception in 1965; these funds have been diverted from their original conservation purpose with no accountability. This chronic redirection of funding has created a large backlog of conservation needs, including already-negotiated acquisitions from willing sellers, and has led states and federal land management agencies to postpone or cancel many important projects.

Despite this history of underfunding, LWCF remains the premier federal program to conserve our nation's land, water, historic, and recreation heritage. Inadequate LWCF funding jeopardizes access to public lands for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. This, in turn, has an adverse impact on America's outdoor recreation, conservation and preservation economy, which contributes \$1.06 *trillion* to the nation's economy each year and supports 9.4 million American jobs (1 out of every 15 jobs in the U.S.).

In these very difficult economic times, investing in LWCF is an important way to grow our economy. LWCF is a driver for jobs and the revitalization of local communities. LWCF does more than simply add more acreage to our public lands-it provides an entire suite of conservation tools to address national, state, local and regionally-driven priorities across the country. These include working lands easements that keep farmers and ranchers doing what they do best-acting as stewards of the landscape that provides their livelihoods-rather than being forced to subdivide and sell off portions of their land to developers. Working forest projects are also funded by LWCF through the Forest Legacy Program, keeping timberlands forested and accessible and providing jobs in rural communities.

LWCF is a critical tool to acquire inholdings, expand public lands, and protect national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, wild and scenic river corridors, national scenic and historic trails, the Bureau of Land Management lands and other federal areas. LWCF protects some of America's most special outdoor places, and further investments are needed to ensure that these places are not lost forever. Investments in important wildlife and recreational habitat ensure that public lands stay public for hunters, anglers, and other outdoor recreationists for generations to come. In addition, protecting historic places such as Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields connect communities to their cultural heritage and attract visitors from across the country.

The companion LWCF state grants program provides crucial support for state and local park acquisitions, recreational facilities, and trail corridors. The Stateside program is the government's primary investment tool for ensuring that children and families have access to close-to-home recreation. The LWCF stateside program has funded over 41,000 projects including sports fields, outdoor recreation facilities and trails touching all fifty states.

Access to urban parks and community green spaces are vital for engaging inner city youth and their families with the outdoors. These outdoor spaces provide needed economic support for communities by offering protection for fish and wildlife habitat, filtering water and air, managing storm runoff and protecting easements on privately owned land. Increasing access to public outdoor recreation for underserved communities is vital to a healthy lifestyle and creating a lifelong bond with nature.

Support for LWCF among the American public persists at an incredibly strong and consistent level. A bipartisan poll conducted in July 2011 found that an overwhelming majority - 88% - of voters support continuing to deposit fees from offshore oil and gas drilling into the LWCF. This broad support extends from every geographic region of the country and every political persuasion. Americans are extremely invested in protecting their local landscapes-- on Election Day 2010, voters approved 30 of 36, or 83%, of new land protection initiatives on their ballots. These initiatives were approved in states and districts that voted both Republican and

Democratic, and generated \$2 billion in new state and local conservation funding. LWCF funding leverages and complements these state and local conservation dollars.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee in the coming months to ensure that these critical programs are adequately funded in Fiscal Year 2013 so that the federal government can maintain its commitment to conservation. This funding will help to ensure that critical park protection and recreational development opportunities throughout the nation are not lost forever. As Americans continue to visit our nation's forests, parks, and wildlife refuges, and participate in recreation close to home, we urge you to provide the funding levels necessary to ensure these opportunities exist everywhere in our great Nation. As you begin drafting the FY 2013 budget, please include strong funding for LWCF at \$450 million.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Mike Simpson

Charles F. Bass

Butterfield

Di Coee

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Nh Hayward

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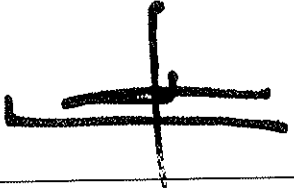
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