

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 8, 2011

## SUPPORT LWCF AND FOREST LEGACY FUNDING FOR OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join us in signing the attached bi-partisan letter to the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, urging the Subcommittee to support the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Forest Legacy programs with the much-needed funding to protect our lands and working forests.

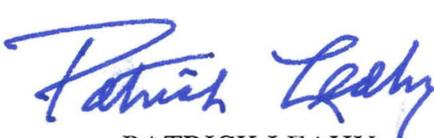
LWCF has helped to ensure the permanent protection and maintenance of critical lands in our national forests, recreation areas, parks, wildlife refuges, Civil War battlefields, and historic sites. Equally important, this program has provided the matching funds to support countless state park and recreational projects in thousands of communities in every state across the nation. The Forest Legacy Program assists states in conserving important working forestlands that are threatened by development and conversion to non-forest uses by leveraging state and private funds.

In every state, LWCF and Forest Legacy funds have ensured that all Americans can reap the benefits of access to outdoor recreation, America's unique historic and cultural sites, water quality, and protected wildlife. In just the last 20 years, Forest legacy has permanently protected over 2 million acres of private forestland, while leveraging equal amounts of state, local, and private funding for every federal dollar spent.

In addition, our parks, forests, refuges, and other open spaces support the quality of life factors that help communities to attract businesses and a strong high quality work force. LWCF funds park development activities through the stateside program and increased public recreation through the federal side as new lands are opened to public recreation.

This funding will help to ensure that critical park protection and recreation development opportunities throughout the nation are not lost forever. If you would like to join us in signing this letter or if you have any questions, please contact Adrienne Wojciechowski (Senator Leahy) at [adrienne.w@judiciary-dem.senate.gov](mailto:adrienne.w@judiciary-dem.senate.gov), Trent Bauserman (Senator Shaheen) at [trent\\_bauserman@shaheen.senate.gov](mailto:trent_bauserman@shaheen.senate.gov), or Kara Weishaar (Senator Burr) at [kara\\_weishaar@burr.senate.gov](mailto:kara_weishaar@burr.senate.gov) by **Tuesday, June 14**.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY



JEANNE SHAHEEN



RICHARD BURR

June XX, 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and  
Related Agencies  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and  
Related Agencies  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski,

We are writing to express our strong support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Forest Legacy Program in fiscal year (FY) 2012, ensuring that despite these difficult economic times, critical natural resource lands, park protection, working forests, and recreational development opportunities are not lost forever. As you begin drafting the FY12 Interior and Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we hope that you will continue to support these programs with the much-needed funding to protect our lands and working forests.

For 46 years, LWCF has invested in the permanent protection of important historical, ecological, and recreational sites. This program has also provided the critical matching funds to support numerous state park and recreation projects in communities across the nation. The Forest Legacy Program was created in the 1990 Farm Bill and helps states to conserve forestland threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. Over the past 21 years, the Forest Legacy Program has permanently conserved 2 million acres of private forestland and has leveraged an equal amount of state, local, and private funding for every federal dollar.

We appreciate that the Subcommittee faces difficult choices in this challenging budget year, and we hope that you fully recognize the importance of these funds to our nation's health and quality of life. In addition, it is worth noting that these funds will have a direct and meaningful impact on local economies throughout the country. These LWCF and Forest Legacy funds leverage state, local, and private funds that will stretch federal funding even further. It is also important to note that LWCF is a unique program as it is budget neutral and paid for with oil and gas leasing revenues. The program was established this way to offset the impact of depleting natural resources and to reinvest those proceeds to conserve important natural resources, working forests, and outdoor recreation areas at the federal, state, and local level.

In these difficult times, our parks and recreation areas are important economic generators and places where people can get much needed physical activity, regardless of their means. Public spaces are particularly important to our cities, and strong, well maintained urban park systems provide an opportunity to address our nation's deteriorating child health and fitness problems. The development and maintenance of this infrastructure – the recreational facilities, roads, and public welcome facilities provide quality jobs that our nation desperately needs. In addition, parks, refuges, forests, and other open spaces support quality of life factors that can make the difference for communities hoping to attract new employers and a high quality work force.

We believe that LWCF and Forest Legacy investments yield important economic benefits to communities both now and far into the future. These programs support outdoor recreation so that all Americans have access to lands where they can hunt, fish, play ball, hike, paddle, bird watch, or bike. The Outdoor Industry Foundation reports these active, outdoor recreation activities contribute \$730 billion annually to the US economy and supports nearly 6.5 million jobs across the country. Over 13 million Americans hunt and 33 million fish in our nation's parks and forests, collectively supporting almost a million American jobs and over \$6 billion in state and federal taxes. The 2009 National Parks Second Century commission estimated that for every \$1 in taxpayer money spent on National Parks returned a \$4 economic benefit through tourism and private spending.

In addition, LWCF and Forest Legacy expenditures create savings for federal agencies and the public in the long term because they secure land that provides valuable water resources, guard against incompatible development, support private working lands, and reduce fire risk.

As you draft the FY12 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to consider the many public benefits that communities across the country receive from access to green, outdoor recreation space, and the importance of protecting these historical and recreational lands for future generations. As Americans continue to visit our nation's forests, parks, and wildlife refuges, and participate in outdoor recreation closer to home, we encourage you to provide the funding necessary to ensure that these opportunities exist across our great nation.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,