

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 2010

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Feinstein and Ranking Member Alexander:

We are writing to express our strong support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Forest Legacy Program in FY 2011, ensuring that critical park protection, recreational development opportunities and working forests are not lost forever. As you begin the process of drafting the FY 2011 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to provide substantial and meaningful funding for these critical programs. Specifically, we ask you fully fund the President's request at \$384 million for the federal LWCF program, \$50 million for the LWCF stateside program, and \$100 million for Forest Legacy.

Congress faces very difficult challenges in making fiscal priorities this year, and we believe that investing in LWCF and Forest Legacy is important for our economy. Public lands are important for local communities and the jobs created LWCF through tourism and outdoor recreation contribute billions to the economy. Federal, state and local parks are important economic generators that provide the type of quality jobs our nation desperately needs. Our parks, forests, refuges and other open spaces also create jobs and contribute billions of dollars annually to local economies while support the quality of life factors that can make the difference for communities seeking to attract quality employers and a strong work force. The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that outdoor recreation – hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, and similar activities – contributes \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy and supports 6.5 million jobs across the country.

In addition to boosting economic opportunity in local communities, land conservation also brings long term cost-savings to federal agencies. Programs like LWCF and Forest Legacy provide protection at the interface of conservation lands and development to lessen fire management costs and helps to protect water supplies through watershed, forest, and wetland conservation – the most cost efficient way to ensure clean and adequate water supplies for communities. The value of water flowing through our national forests alone is \$4.3 billion annually.

The federal LWCF program has helped to ensure the permanent protection of critical lands in our national forests, recreation areas, parks, wildlife refuges, Civil War battlefields, and historic sites. Most of the nation's largest intact landscapes, historically important sites, and recreational access points are found on these public lands. Equally important, this program has helped to provide the matching funds needed to support countless state park and recreation projects in thousands of communities in every state in the nation. The stateside LWCF grants program supports the protection of recreation lands and the

development of parks at the state and local level through matching grants that enable communities, counties, and states to acquire land and to build recreational facilities. The program has distributed funds to every state in the nation, totaling over 41,000 projects including sports fields, swimming pools, playgrounds, and trails.

The Forest Legacy Program, created in the 1990 Farm Bill, works with states to target funding in a way that complements ongoing federal, state and local forest protection efforts and the demand is great. Over the past 20 years, Forest Legacy has prevented the loss of almost 2 million acres of forestland in 42 states and Puerto Rico and leveraged an equal amount of state, local, and private funding for every federal dollar spent.

In every state in the nation, LWCF and Forest Legacy have ensured that all Americans have access to lands where they can hunt, fish, play ball, hike, bird watch, paddle a canoe, or ride a bike. Working only with land owners who are willing sellers, federal, state, and local agencies are protecting the best of what remains so that future generations can also reap the benefits of access to outdoor recreation, America's unique historic cultural sites, water quality protection, and protected wildlife. LWCF grants to states and localities for development of additional parks, campgrounds, and ball fields are also essential to ensuring access to recreation close to home.


Through the efforts of this Subcommittee, LWCF and Forest Legacy funding have received increases in the past two fiscal years, and the President's budget takes another step toward meaningful funding for these important national programs. However, the demand for these programs well exceeds even these improved levels and without serious investment in recreation and natural resource protection at the local, state and federal levels we will not secure a healthy future for our children and grandchildren.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee in the coming months to ensure that these critical programs are adequately funded in Fiscal Year 2011 so that the federal government can maintain its commitment to conservation and job creation through outdoor recreation. 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.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.


Sincerely,

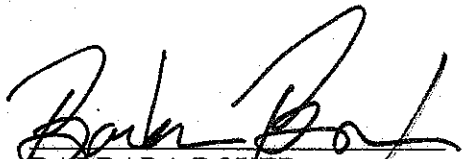

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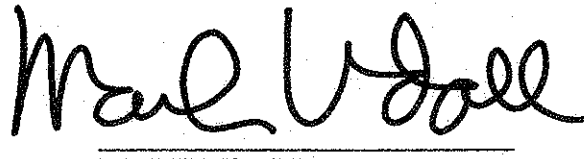

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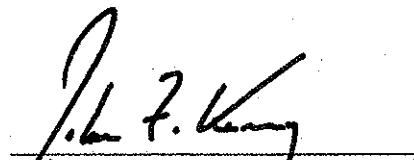

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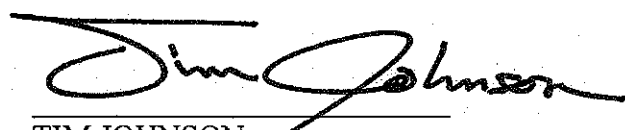

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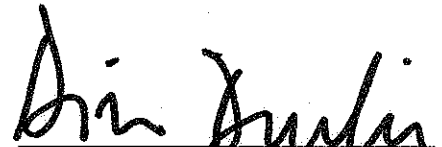
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