

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

in the Oil Spill/Energy Bill Package

- Full and dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is included in the oil spill/energy package expected to come to the floor this week.
- The LWCF provision recognizes the central importance of reinvesting in one public resource – our nation’s public recreation lands and waters – as we deplete another – oil from federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere. Since it was enacted in 1965, LWCF has been the only conservation offset for offshore oil drilling.
- The Gulf oil spill vividly illustrates the wisdom underlying the LWCF. In exchange for the environmental risks inherent in developing finite offshore oil resources, Congress intended that a portion of the receipts be dedicated and reinvested in conservation assets across the nation. The Gulf oil spill tragedy provides an opportunity to fulfill the promise that Congress made to the American people in 1965 by creating the LWCF.
- Unfortunately, the balance between resource extraction and protection has been one-sided for many years now, with \$17 billion in offshore oil revenues intended for LWCF purposes diverted to other unspecified uses. The concept is sound - but it has not been implemented as Congress intended and as the public deserves.
- Despite being consistently underfunded, LWCF has had an impact in every state and in almost every county in America. National parks, forests, wildlife refuges and other federal public lands are located in every state in the nation – providing public access to recreation in urban, suburban and rural areas alike. LWCF grants to states have distributed funds to almost every single county in America for over 41,000 projects including parks, sports fields, swimming pools, playgrounds, and trails. LWCF has also funded the protection of over 1.5 million acres of working forests in over 30 states.
- LWCF – a program developed under Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson – still enjoys widespread bipartisan support. Recent polls demonstrate strong support – over 80% from across the political spectrum -- for reinvesting offshore oil revenues in conservation and recreation programs.
- Full funding of LWCF also is a priority for a broad range of constituencies across America, including 27 major sportsmen’s organizations; business leaders in the forest products and outdoor recreation industries; and over 800 national, regional and local conservation groups.

- LWCF funding also relates directly to a healthy economy. The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) reports that recreation contributes \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supports nearly 6.5 million jobs across the U.S, touches over 8 percent of America's personal consumption expenditures – more than 1 in every 12 dollars circulating in the economy, and generates \$88 billion in annual state and national tax revenue.
- The LWCF provision in the oil spill energy package will ensure that all Americans will benefit from this legislation and that the conservation offset to offshore oil and gas drilling that was promised to the American people 45 years ago will finally become real.