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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**OVER ONE-THIRD OF U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SIGN LETTER  
SUPPORTING FUNDING FOR LWCF**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A bipartisan group of 150 members of the U.S. House of Representatives sent a letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies expressing their strong support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund in fiscal year 2012. The letter was lead by Representatives Charlie Bass (R-NH), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Jim Gerlach (R-PA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), GK Butterfield (D-NC), and Heath Shuler (D-NC).

“As you begin drafting the FY12 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill, we request robust and consistent funding of LWCF,” the letter states. “This much-needed funding will support public land conservation across our communities that increase access to outdoor recreation while revitalizing urban parks and open space.”

The members cited the importance of ensuring that critical natural resource lands, outdoor recreation opportunities and working forests are not lost forever. They also emphasized that LWCF dollars are specifically authorized for conservation spending and are the only conservation offset from offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters.

“The strong support from this bipartisan group of House members shows how important our nation’s conservation and recreation priorities are to them even during tight budget times – this is the strongest letter supporting LWCF that has ever been delivered by members of Congress,” said Bill Meadows, President of The Wilderness Society. “We thank them for their leadership and urge the Interior and Environment Subcommittee to heed the request for strong and consistent funding for LWCF.”

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) invests a small portion of oil

and gas revenues in important wildlife habitat and recreational lands, protecting local parks and open space as well as providing public access to forests, refuges and parks so that all Americans have places to hunt, fish and hike. LWCF also ensures permanent protection of historic places such as Civil War battlefields and Revolutionary War sites. In addition, LWCF funds that go towards the purchase of conservation easements are a double win – keeping ranchers and farmers on their land while maintaining wildlife habitat and open space.

Most importantly, LWCF is already paid for through a small percentage of revenues from offshore oil and gas development - \$900 million a year from revenues that typically exceed \$6 billion annually. Because of all of these factors, LWCF has significant local support and is a common sense way to protect Americans' clean water and healthy land.

The letter goes on to state that “In these very difficult economic times, we believe these LWCF investments are essential investments that will yield important economic benefits to local communities now and into the future. Consider the following:

- The Outdoor Industry Foundation reports that active, outdoor recreation contributes \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy and supports nearly 6.5 million jobs across the U.S.
- Over 13 million Americans hunt and 33 million fish, collectively supporting over 900,000 American jobs and over \$6 billion in federal and state taxes.
- The 2009 National Parks Second Century Commission estimated that every \$1 in taxpayer money spent on National Parks returned a \$4 economic benefit through tourism and private sector spending. Annual tourist spending in communities near national parks totals over \$13 billion and supports over 250,000 jobs.
- Recreational use on national wildlife refuges generated almost \$1.7 billion in total economic activity during fiscal year 2006, according to a report released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”