



NEWS RELEASE

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CONSERVATION, BUSINESS & SPORTSMEN'S GROUPS APPLAUD CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS TO PROTECT LWCF FUNDING IN FY12 BUDGET *Spending Bill Reflects Broad Support for LWCF Across Demographic and Political Spectrum*

Washington, DC—A broad coalition of conservation, recreation, business and sportsmen's groups praised House and Senate leaders for providing a much-needed boost to funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in the omnibus spending bill passed today.

LWCF is the nation's most important tool for protecting parks, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas at the federal, state and local level. Since 1965, a small portion of revenues from offshore oil and gas leases have been set aside by Congress under LWCF to protect federal, state and local lands for conservation and recreation. LWCF is an unusual government program because it accomplishes great things without spending a single taxpayer dollar. The fund uses money from the depletion of one publicly owned resource to preserve other resources that might otherwise be lost.

"We are pleased that Congress will increase the Land and Water Conservation Fund to \$322.9 million. In a time of difficult budget choices, this level of funding shows the bipartisan and widespread support for this program, which is not paid for with taxpayer dollars," said Will Rogers, President of The Trust for Public Land. "This program protects lands and jobs across the nation, from local parks and trails, to Civil War battlefields and local forestry jobs in New England and Montana, to the Sierra Nevada in California."

The LWCF Coalition praised Congress for listening to constituents from across the nation who called for robust, consistent funding for LWCF. The tangible, on-the-ground benefits that LWCF has provided to American communities has led to an outpouring of support for the fund from Americans across the demographic and political spectrum, and from members of Congress on both sides of the aisle.

Outdoor recreation, conservation and historic preservation contribute \$1.06 trillion annually to the U.S. economy, and support 9.4 million American jobs. That's one out of every 15 jobs in the U.S. "Outdoor recreation is an American growth industry," said Frank Hugelmeyer, president & CEO of the Outdoor Industry Association. "This show of strong, bipartisan support for LWCF will pay dividends through access to federal lands and waters, wildlife habitat, and the close-to-home parks and trails that get Americans outdoors."

The coalition highlighted a bipartisan group of congressional leaders for championing an increase in LWCF funding in an appropriations bill that saw cuts to many other conservation programs. These LWCF champions include:

- Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
- Key Senate LWCF supporters including Sens. Max Baucus (D-MT), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Richard Burr (R-NC), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mark Udall (D-CO), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and others who worked tirelessly in support of a robust LWCF.

- Reps. Charlie Bass (R-NH), Jay Inslee (D-WA), Jim Gerlach (R-PA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Dave Reichert (R-WA), Mike Thompson (D-CA) GK Butterfield (D-NC), Heath Shuler (D-NC), Scott Tipton (R-CO), and other House members whose effective bipartisan support and floor amendments in the House increased LWCF funding significantly.
- House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) ,Interior and Environment Subcommittee Chairman Mike Simpson (R-ID), Full Committee Ranking Member Norm Dicks (D-WA) and Interior and Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Jim Moran (D-VA), whose dedicated work with these and other House leaders and with their Senate counterparts ensured that LWCF received robust and strong funding in FY 12.

The LWCF Coalition will continue to work to ensure that the non-taxpayer funds specifically set aside for this program from offshore oil and gas leasing revenues are used as they were intended: for protection of our national parks, forests, refuges and other public lands, as well as state and local parks. Governors, mayors, sportsmen, industry leaders, conservationists, Civil War battlefield supporters and small business owners alike recognize the tangible on-the-ground benefits that investing in this program has had on their communities.

“Despite this strong show of support in the FY12 budget bill, the Land and Water Conservation Fund continues to be funded well below the \$900 million that is deposited each year into the trust fund from offshore oil and gas royalties,” said William H. Meadows, President of The Wilderness Society. “President Obama’s budget recommended full funding for LWCF at that \$900 million level, and we urge Congress to work toward that goal in FY13 and beyond.”

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The LWCF Coalition comprises conservation, recreation, business, and sportsmen’s groups working together to support the LWCF program in order to meet America’s conservation and recreation needs in the 21st century. For more information on LWCF and the places in each state that have been protected using LWCF funds, visit www.lwcfcoalition.org.