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# NEWS RELEASE

**News for Immediate Release**

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## **SENATE URGED TO JOIN HOUSE AND PASS BILL WITH FULL FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

WASHINGTON DC-- Following a historic energy bill vote last week in the US House of Representatives, the Senate should also approve legislation providing dedicated full funding for one of the nation's most effective programs for land conservation and outdoor recreation, a coalition of local, state, and national organizations said today.

"Now is the time for Congress to step up and guarantee the future of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)," said Will Rogers, President of The Trust for Public Land, a coalition member. "Since it was created in 1964, LWCF has preserved land and provided recreation opportunity for tens of millions of Americans in every state. It has been one of the best programs ever devised by Congress."

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund has helped protect many of America's most famous and popular parks, forests and seashores, and has helped conserve working farms and ranches that are so important to our country's way of life," said Mark Tercek, president and CEO of The Nature Conservancy. "Despite its success, however, the LWCF has never been given the full funding envisioned by its creators. In the coming weeks, Congress is poised to take a historic step forward in our nation's conservation history by fully funding the LWCF. We urge Congress to fulfill the hope of the great majority of the American people that they will be able to pass along our most valued natural places for the benefit of future generations."

Last Friday, just before adjourning for the summer, the House passed H.R. 3534, the Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources (CLEAR) Act of 2010, sponsored by Natural Resources Committee Chairman Nick Rahall (D-WV). The bill dedicates LWCF funds into the future at the program's fully authorized level of \$900 million each year while also addressing oil spill, offshore drilling, and other related issues. President

Obama has announced his strong support for the bill and specifically for the LWCF funding it guarantees.

“It has been decades since LWCF was fully funded and we feel it is an important investment in local communities to protect the environment and health and fitness of our citizens through access to open spaces and community parks,” said Pat O’Brien, General Manager of the East Bay Regional Park District in California. “We are delighted that the House passed this historic measure and look forward to swift passage by the Senate.”

Meanwhile, the Senate will consider similar legislation in September when it returns from the August district work period. A draft of the Senate energy package, titled the Clean Energy Jobs and Oil Company Accountability Act (S. 3663), was introduced last week by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV).

Thanks to the conservation commitment of Sen. Reid, Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and other senators, the bill includes guaranteed LWCF funding through 2015, with additional dedicated funding in future years. These funds would allow the program to meet a variety of conservation and recreation needs at the local, state, and federal level.

LWCF was intended to receive \$900 million per year from the annual revenues paid to the federal government for offshore oil and gas leases, a total that typically exceeds \$6 billion annually. But in the annual budget and appropriations process, much of the LWCF money typically is diverted for other purposes. Only once since 1964 was LWCF fully funded, and the fund dropped to a modern-day low of just \$138 million in 2007.

“As the devastating effects of the BP oil spill show, offshore oil production can itself be a major threat to our nation’s already-limited inventory of natural resources,” said the Wilderness Society’s President William H. Meadows, whose organization has long fought for full funding for LWCF. “It’s only fair to make oil companies pay for the damage they do to our natural resources and provide a fair environmental return to the public.”

“This is landmark legislation for our national parks and other precious natural and cultural treasures,” said Tom Kiernan, President of the National Parks Conservation Association. “It finally begins keeping the full promise that has been broken for more than four decades, to protect our national parks and other lands and waters using receipts from offshore oil and gas drilling. Now we need the Senate to act, to guarantee that the places Americans most cherish are protected for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.”

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition is an informal partnership of national, state and local conservation and recreation organizations working together to support full and dedicated funding for LWCF. For more information, go to: [www.lwcfcoalition.org](http://www.lwcfcoalition.org)

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