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Conservation Leaders Hail Bipartisan Agreement for Land and Water Conservation Funding

*Murkowski-Cantwell Agreement Provides a Permanent Authorization for America's Most
Important Conservation Program; Establishes Fund for Park Maintenance*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Conservation leaders from across the country today celebrated a major breakthrough for conservation as Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Lisa Murkowski and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell announced a bipartisan agreement to permanently authorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Unless Congress acts, LWCF's current authorization will expire in less than 70 days.

The deal reaffirms LWCF's 50-year-old promise to the American people that a small portion of the revenues derived from offshore oil and gas development are dedicated to make strategic investments to protect America's irreplaceable natural, historic and recreational outdoor areas. The bipartisan proposal, included in a proposed energy bill unveiled today, represents a significant opportunity for the conservation of America's shared outdoor heritage. Senator Cantwell, a lead sponsor of pending legislation to secure permanence and dedicated full funding for LWCF, is a longtime champion of this cornerstone conservation program.

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition is proud to endorse this historic bipartisan proposal to make America's most important conservation program permanent," said Alan Rowsome, Senior Director of Government Relations for Lands at the Wilderness Society and Co-Chair of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition. "We congratulate Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell for their exemplary conservation leadership. LWCF is a 50-year old bipartisan success story and this agreement continues that tradition of bipartisan conservation leadership for the 21st Century and beyond.

"Our work is not done. With only 70 days until LWCF expires, we will be working with Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell and bipartisan outdoor conservation champions to get this breakthrough agreement through the House and Senate and to the President for his signature.

"The Murkowski-Cantwell agreement recognizes the importance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to jobs, economic prosperity and growth. It is a win for communities across

the country that benefit from the economic, cultural and recreational value of America's public lands and close-to-home recreation. With its commitment to meet our nation's conservation and recreation needs at the local, state and federal levels through LWCF, as well as addressing the maintenance and upkeep of our National Parks through a separate fund, the agreement sends a strong message to the nation about importance of our shared outdoor heritage. The LWCF Coalition is committed to working with the Chairman and Ranking Member in the coming months to see this historic breakthrough signed into law.

"At the beginning of this year, a bipartisan group of 59 senators, led by Senators Burr, Ayotte and Bennet, voted on the Senate floor to permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This welcome proposal from Senators Murkowski and Cantwell revives that effort in this critical moment in LWCF's history, and we look forward to working with them to secure the future of this vital program."

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About the Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is America's most important conservation program, responsible for protecting parks, wildlife refuges and recreation areas at the federal, state and local level. For 50 years, it has provided critical funding for land and water conservation projects, recreational construction and activities and the continued historic preservation our nation's iconic landmarks from coast-to-coast.

LWCF does not use any taxpayer dollars – it is funded using a small portion of revenues from offshore oil and gas royalty payments. Outdoor recreation, conservation and historic preservation activities contribute more than a trillion dollars annually to the U.S. economy, supporting 9.4 million jobs.

About the LWCF Coalition

The LWCF Coalition is the umbrella group of more than 1,000 state and local land owners, small businesses, ranchers, sportsmen, veterans, outdoor recreationists, historical preservationists and conservation organizations working to protect America's public lands and safeguard our shared outdoor heritage for future generations.

The Coalition is united in its advocacy for the reauthorization and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will ensure the continued conservation of our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, wilderness, civil war battlefields, as well as state and local parks

For more information on LWCF and the places in each state conserved using LWCF funds, visit www.lwcfcoalition.org.