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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 18, 2017
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Congressional Conservation Champions Back Efforts to Restore LWCF Funding

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressional conservation champions today continued their bipartisan efforts on behalf of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), America’s most important conservation program. Today, a key House committee met to consider a version of the Interior appropriations bill that would cut LWCF by \$125 million, a disproportionate cut of 32 percent from its current enacted level. Many of LWCF’s supporters on both sides of the aisle spoke out in favor of restoring these egregious cuts as an amendment authored by Congressman Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), specifically calling for them to be reversed, was discussed.

“A more than 30 percent cut to America’s most important conservation program would do real, irreversible damage to the parks and places Americans care about and depend on for close-to-home outdoor recreation,” said Tom Cors, Director of Government Relations for Lands at The Nature Conservancy and a spokesman for the LWCF Coalition. “The conservation of our nation’s national parks and outdoor heritage has always been an area of bipartisan agreement -- and we commend Representative Fortenberry for his leadership to maintain stable funding for this critical program, along with Representatives Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Matt Cartwright (D-PA) for their effective advocacy on the program’s behalf. In response, Subcommittee Chairman Ken Calvert (R-CA) and full Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) acknowledged the need to increase LWCF funding.”

Recently, 205 House members signed a letter urging continued LWCF funding, rejecting harmful reductions to this important program. LWCF funds have recently protected or provided additional access to Grand Teton and Rocky Mountain National Parks, Gettysburg National Military Park, and other iconic American landmarks, as well as state and local parks and working forests. Critical ‘now-or-never’ conservation projects are in the queue across the country, including key sites along the Appalachian Trail, Volcanoes National Park in Hawaii, and Montana’s Lolo National Forest.

Rolling back critical investments in America’s parks, lands and historic sites further jeopardizes irreplaceable natural and historic landmarks and landscapes while eroding outdoor recreational opportunities, access, and an \$887 billion national outdoor recreation economy, which supports 7.6 million jobs.

LWCF is overwhelmingly popular with the American people and has maintained broad bipartisan support over its half century history of successful, locally-driven conservation. Last

year, a supermajority of 85 Senators voted to permanently secure LWCF for every future generation. It was the first vote in history by either the House or the Senate to make the landmark conservation law permanent.

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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 of 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 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 that have been protected using LWCF funds, visit www.lwcfcoalition.org