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Conservation Leaders React to Trump Administration Plan to Slash America's Most Important Conservation and Recreation Program

WASHINGTON, DC – The Trump Administration's budget framework released today proposed a drastic reduction in funding for America's irreplaceable natural resources, specifically targeting America's most important conservation and outdoor recreation program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Conservation leaders from the LWCF Coalition reacted to the Trump administration's reckless budget proposal, which jeopardizes our national parks and puts all of America's public lands at risk.

"The Administration's extreme proposal to wipe out the funding that protects our national parks and other national lands is completely out of step with America's values," said **Will Rogers, President of the Trust for Public Land**. "The conservation of our national parks and outdoor heritage has always been an area of bipartisan agreement and overwhelming public support. Our public lands are a defining aspect of our national character – providing access for people to hunt, fish, hike, camp, experience the incomparable American landscape, and participate in our robust outdoor recreation economy. This harmful budget proposal will pull the rug out from under landowners and communities alike. Conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts across the country must speak out and oppose this attack on America's public lands."

The Administration's budget proposes an unsustainable twelve percent cut to already-underfunded public land management and protection budgets. Moreover, it makes clear that some essential programs would be hit with far bigger reductions that would have devastating, irreversible consequences. The proposed cuts to LWCF would virtually eliminate funding to protect national parks, battlefields, and other national lands, and would frustrate efforts to secure public access for sportsmen and recreationists. For more than 50 years, these programs have delivered on-the-ground conservation achievements to every state in the union and have provided particularly necessary benefits to rural America and the small communities that depend upon the hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation economy for economic development.

Recent LWCF funding has secured vital protections and access for Grand Teton and Rocky Mountain National Parks, Gettysburg National Military Park, and other iconic American places. Critical now-or-never needs remain all across the country, including key sites along the Appalachian Trail, Volcanoes National Park in Hawaii, and Montana's Lolo National Forest.

“Cuts of this magnitude to LWCF would do real, irreversible damage to the national parks and public lands that Americans care so deeply about and depend on for close-to-home outdoor recreation,” said **Jamie Williams, the President of the Wilderness Society**. “Moreover, LWCF is not funded by taxpayer dollars but from fees collected from offshore oil and gas extraction. These cuts would siphon off dedicated conservation dollars for unrelated spending, breaking a 50-year-old promise to the American people that the royalties generated from offshore oil and gas drilling are reinvested into protecting our National Parks, providing hunting and fishing access, trails and open spaces.”

“LWCF cuts would hit rural America, sportsmen, anglers and the outdoor recreation economy especially hard,” said **Mark Tercek, President of The Nature Conservancy**. “LWCF leverages four dollars in private capital for every conservation dollar invested. Hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, conservation and historic preservation activities support 9.4 million jobs and contribute more than a trillion dollars annually to the U.S. economy.”

It is important to remember that budget proposals are only that: proposals. The LWCF Coalition will continue to work with policymakers in Congress and the administration who grasp the importance of continuing to reinvest royalties from offshore energy development into lasting natural infrastructure: our land, outdoor recreation economy, access to hunting and angling opportunities, water resources, and the history and culture of our great nation.

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. In September of 2015, Congress temporarily allowed the program’s authorization to expire. After a massive outcry, it was reauthorized for three additional years at the end of 2015.

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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