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Bipartisan Conservation Champions Rally to Save LWCF by Year's End

Washington, D.C. – Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) champions in the House and Senate rallied on the steps of the U.S. Capitol with conservation leaders and outdoor recreation advocates today calling on Congress to reauthorize and fully fund America's most important conservation and recreation program before the end of the year.

"Two months ago, America lost one of its best conservation tools," said **Lynn Scarlett, Former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior and head of External Affairs at The Nature Conservancy**. "The Land and Water Conservation Fund helps protect national parks, expand outdoor recreation opportunities and bolster local economies, all at no cost to the American taxpayer. It's too important to continue leaving its future in doubt. Now more than ever, we have the bipartisan momentum to get LWCF the permanent reauthorization and full funding it deserves. For the protection of our lands, waters and the benefits their conservation bring to communities and our economy, now is the time to save LWCF."

"Since it was enacted 54 years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has helped protect many of the nation's most popular national parks, forests, and public lands. It has provided millions of Americans the opportunity to hunt, fish, hike, vacation and enjoy the beauty of nature and our great American landscapes," said **Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)**. "It has pumped billions of dollars into the outdoor economy and provided millions of good jobs."

"Protecting our public lands is good for the environment, it's good for the economy and it's good for the health and welfare of our people. Money made available through the Land and Water Conservation Fund is money well spent," **Senator Cantwell** added.

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund remains the single most successful conservation program in American history," said **Senator Richard Burr (R-NC)**. "Nearly every congressional district in the country benefits from its funding – at no cost to the taxpayer – and millions enjoy the parks, ballfields, and landscapes it maintains every day. My colleagues and I will continue to push for a permanent reauthorization of this important program."

“Colorado’s beautiful public lands rely on the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Congress needs to ensure it remains in place for years to come,” said **Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO)**. “I’ll continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure that we do what is right and permanently reauthorize and fully fund this vital outdoors conservation program.”

“LWCF is the best tool we have to increase public access to our public lands and power our outdoor economy,” said **Senator Jon Tester (D-MT)**. “It’s long past time to permanently reauthorize and fully fund this successful initiative so that we can create more jobs, protect our streams and landscapes, and increase outdoor recreation opportunities.”

“As a fifth generation Montanan, and as someone who has raised four kids in the state, I cherish all of our time spent hiking, fishing, and hunting on our public lands,” said **Senator Steve Daines (R-MT)**. “We must always protect and expand access to those public lands, and that’s why I will continue to fight until we get permanent reauthorization and full funding for LWCF signed into law.”

“The Land and Water Conservation Fund is America’s most successful conservation program. LWCF expands opportunities for outdoor traditions like hunting, camping, and fishing that are among the pillars of Western culture,” said **Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM)**. “In New Mexico, LWCF has helped preserve many treasured places—including the Valles Caldera, Ute Mountain, and Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge—that power our thriving outdoor recreation economy. It also protects our drinking water, provides public land access, and ensures there are neighborhood parks, soccer fields, and baseball diamonds for our children. I will continue to do everything in my power to permanently and fully fund LWCF to ensure that the outdoor places we all treasure will be protected for future generations to enjoy.”

“LWCF is our country’s most important and successful conservation and outdoor recreation program,” said **Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)**. “This program has created outdoor recreation opportunities in every county across the country. Over the last five decades, nearly \$188 million in LWCF funding has been provided to Maine to preserve public spaces from Acadia National Park to local parks. It is critical that we reauthorize LWCF, as it ensures both current and future generations can enjoy the beauty of our natural resources.”

“The expiration of a widely popular program like LWCF demonstrates just how broken Washington is. If we don’t want to find ourselves in this exact position again down the road, we must permanently reauthorize LWCF. And if we want to grow our outdoor recreation economy and protect treasured landscapes, we must fully fund it. I’ll keep working across the aisle to find a solution that gives this conservation tool the longevity and funding it deserves,” said **Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO)**.

“Not only has the LWCF been used to protect iconic landscapes across the nation, it also helps to build playgrounds and swimming pools in urban districts like my own. In the House Natural Resources Committee, I was proud to be part of a bipartisan compromise to move this issue forward. With support from both chambers and on both sides of the aisle, permanent reauthorization of the LWCF should be a no-brainer,” said **Representative Ruben Gallego (D-AZ)**.

“In my district alone, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has provided funding for over 65 parks, supporting public access, fishing, hunting, recreation and our environment without taking a dime of

taxpayer money,” said **Representative Lee Zeldin (R-NY)**. “On Long Island, our coastal economy is a vital component of our overall economy, and clean water, land and air are essential priorities all protected by the LWCF. I’ve been proud to lead the fight to permanently reauthorize this important fund in the House, and I will continue to do so on behalf of my district and communities across our country.”

“Since its establishment over 50 years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has promoted recreational activity and contributed to our nation’s robust economy, along with conserving our national parks, forests, and critical wildlife areas,” said **Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)**. “Today, we are demanding that Congressional leadership permanently reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The time is now to act.”

“We all know that the protection of our nation’s public lands, the health of our local communities and the continued growth of the \$887 billion outdoor recreation economy are uniquely intertwined and bolstered by the Land and Water Conservation Fund,” said **Amy Roberts, Executive Director of the Outdoor Industry Association**. “Given all this, the fact we have a motivated and bipartisan group of lawmakers here today – it is well past time for Congress to reaffirm its commitment to our public lands, community health, and the surging outdoor recreation economy by permanently reauthorizing LWCF before Congress adjourns in December.”

About the Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is America’s most important conservation program, responsible for protecting parks, trails, wildlife refuges and recreation areas at the federal, state and local level. For more than 50 years, it has provided critical funding for land and water conservation projects, access to recreation including hunting and fishing, 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 \$887 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supporting 7.6 million jobs.

About the LWCF Coalition

The LWCF Coalition is comprised of more than 1,000 state and regional conservation and recreation organizations of all sizes, land owners, small businesses, ranchers, sportsmen, veterans, the outdoor recreation industry and conservationists working together to protect America’s public lands and safeguard our shared outdoor heritage for future generations.

The Coalition is united in its advocacy for the permanent 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, working lands and state and local parks. For more information on LWCF and the places in each state that LWCF funds have protected, visit www.lwcfcoalition.org.