The Mountain Pact, an organization that works with mountain towns who have outdoor recreation-based economies in the American West, released a letter today, signed by western state conservation districts and organizations who work with local elected officials.

The letter asked Congress to permanently reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund before it expires on Sunday. The LWCF provides financial support through grants dedicated to expansion, development, and improvement of national parks, forests, monuments, rivers, lakes, wildlife refuges, community parks, trails, and ball fields. The funds are used for recreation infrastructure, conservation, preservation, access, and restoration of natural ecosystems. The LWCF was reauthorized in 2015, but the 52-year-old bipartisan program is set to expire on Sept. 30.

On Sept. 13, the House Committee on Natural Resources moved forward a bill to permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Senate's Environment and Natural Resources Committee is expected to vote on LWCF funding on Tuesday.

Karen Buhr, Executive Director of the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts said, "The Land and Water Conservation Fund is America's most successful conservation and outdoor recreation program and is vital to our state and communities. We need LWCF to be permanently reauthorized at its full funding level so that we can plan for our future infrastructure investments and ensure our communities' outdoor recreation opportunities."

Kathy Chandler-Henry, Commissioner, Eagle County Board of County Commissioners said, "Public lands are crucial to the economic prosperity and cultural vitality of our community. We can thank the Land and Water Conservation Fund for helping to fund most of our state's community parks, ballparks, and trails. The LWCF is a critical piece of legislation that significantly impacts our communities recreation opportunities; it needs to be permanently reauthorized and fully funded."

— Deepan Dutta