Local Elected Officials from Western Mountain Communities Respond to Secretary Zinke’s Comments on the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

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Durango, CO (May 10, 2018) Today, during a hearing in the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke said he’s always been a supporter of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) but then proposes to cut funding by more than 90%. Secretary Zinke also touted his past support for permanent reauthorization of the fund, but failed to take that position in advance of LWCF’s expiration at the end of September.

Anna Peterson, Executive Director of The Mountain Pact, said, “The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has conserved and increased the health of land and water in America’s extensive public land system in every state and nearly every county in the United States. Outdoor recreation and proximity to open spaces and public lands - many of which have been enhanced through use of the LWCF - draw residents and tourists to mountain communities which provides significant economic support and a distinct way of life. Without Secretary Zinke’s support for funding and reauthorization of LWCF, the economic success and cultural vitality of mountain communities may be at risk.”

Richard Hildner, Whitefish, Montana City Council member said, “Our community has seen the benefits of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as recently as last week with $2 million coming into our community via a LWCF grant to complete the next phase of the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project in northwest Montana. Reauthorizing and fully funding LWCF should be a priority for this administration and congress."

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More about Land and Water Conservation Fund: The bipartisan Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is one of our country’s most successful conservation programs responsible for protecting parks, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas at the federal, state, and local levels, ensuring that all Americans have access to recreate and enjoy our lands and parks across America. Unfortunately, funding for this more than 50 year program runs out at the end of September 2018. LWCF has protected more than 7.6 million acres of land, and supported more than 41,000 parks, ballfields, and other recreation projects that meet state and local priorities.

The Mountain Pact is an organization that works with mountain communities across the American West to empower them to build resilience in the face of economic and environmental stresses through a shared voice on federal policy related to climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation.