Local Elected Officials From Western States Call on Congress to Reauthorize The Land and Water Conservation Fund

*Highlight The Need to Fully Fund The Program*

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Durango, Colorado (February 4, 2019) – The Mountain Pact, an organization that works with local elected officials from western mountain towns with outdoor recreation-based economies, urged the U.S. Senate to take bipartisan action and pass permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as part of a public lands package being considered this week. If the Senate passes the bill, it will be up to the House of Representatives to act and pass it as well. Full or permanent funding is likely not going to be included in the bill.

The LWCF had expired on September 30, 2018 and was in limbo for over four months at a loss of more than $300 million for conservation and recreation projects across the country. This is on top of the $22 billion that has been lost over the life of the program as LWCF funds have been diverted to other, unknown purposes.

The 52 year old LWCF program 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.

“Outdoor recreation and proximity to open spaces - many of which have been enhanced through use of the Land and Water Conservation Fund - draws residents and visitors to our town. Our community is inextricably linked to the American public land system and outdoor recreation. The health, economic success, and cultural vitality of our town has been greatly enhanced by funds from the LWCF. It’s time for Congress to fully fund and permanently reauthorize the LWCF as it is truly one of America’s best conservation programs,” said Frank Lancaster, Town Administrator from the Town Estes Park, Colorado.

Mayor William Larson of Red Lodge, Montana, said, “The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a critical piece of bipartisan legislation that significantly impacts our community and communities like ours. We urge Congress to move forward with reauthorizing the LWCF but to also fully and permanently fund the program so we may plan our community’s outdoor recreation opportunities.”

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**More about The Mountain Pact**

*Founded in 2014, The Mountain Pact is an organization that works with local elected officials in fifty mountain communities in all eleven states 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.*