President Trump defunds Land and Water Conservation Fund by 95 percent despite approving permanent reauthorization

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A cyclist bikes the Dillon Reservoir recpath Thursday, May 10, in Frisco. The Dillon Dam rec path was one of many Summit County projects at least partially funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was nearly completely defunded by President Trump's proposed 2020 federal budget.

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Despite overwhelming bipartisan support for the permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund by Congress and signage into law as part of the massive John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act by President Trump, the president went on to nearly completely defund the program in his 2020 budget. The LWCF has helped fund outdoor and recreation projects in every county in the United States and is funded mainly by offshore oil and gas leases.

Rep. Joe Neguse (D-Boulder) initially praised the passage of the massive National Environmental Management Act and its permanent reauthorization of the LWCF, but rebuked the president for attempting to defund it after signing it into law.
“The Department of Interior’s 2020 budget, released yesterday cuts federal funding for LWCF by 95 percent and would devastate the National Park Service by eliminating hundreds of jobs from park operations and cutting major funds from maintenance and park management,” Neguse wrote in a statement to the Summit Daily. “The president’s budget does not represent the interests of Coloradans and would have a detrimental impact on our economy, our public lands and the American people.”

The Mountain Pact, an advocacy organization that supports the outdoor economies of mountain communities, also condemned the elimination of LWCF funds.

“Unfortunately, President Trump and Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt proposed to eliminate funding for LWCF in their proposed 2020 budget,” wrote Mountain Pact executive director Anna Peterson in a statement to the media. “Now, every member of Congress who supported LWCF needs to stand up against the Trump administration’s cuts and support full and dedicated funding, otherwise the promise of LWCF will continue to be unfulfilled.”