



Local Elected Officials from Western Mountain Communities Met with Congressional Members in Washington DC

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Durango, CO (September 19, 2019) - Local elected officials from five Western mountain communities joined [The Mountain Pact](#) Executive Director in Washington, D.C. last week. The group met with almost 20 members of the Colorado, California, Montana, Arizona, and Washington Congressional delegations to advocate for public lands that supports the recreational benefits, culture, economic vitality and climate resiliency of mountain communities. Meetings included in-person meetings with Representatives Neguse and Tipton as well as Senator Gardner. The mayors, mayor pro tems, and council members from Frisco, Avon, Steamboat Springs, and Aspen, Colorado as well as South Lake Tahoe, California traveled to Washington to discuss public lands; fully and permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); and concerns with transparency and ethics violations at the Department of Interior.

“The Trump administration is harming Western mountain communities by destroying our country’s bedrock environmental laws, slashing funding for critical community programs, and pushing for rampant extraction through ‘energy dominance,’” said Mountain Pact Executive Director, Anna Peterson. “It was uplifting to meet with some members of the Western congressional delegation who care about and are working to protect our public health, strong economies, outdoor recreation, wildlife conservation, clean air, and clean water. For others, we used this opportunity to share our [recent report](#) that details grave impacts to Western public lands due to Trump administration regressive policies as well as to remind members that fully funding LWCF and protecting public lands are important to mountain communities in their districts and across the West.”

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of our country’s most important 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. At its launch in 1965, Congress authorized that the fund would receive up to \$900 million annually in royalties paid by oil and gas companies drilling offshore; no taxpayer dollars have ever been used to fund LWCF. Since its launch, the program has enjoyed wide bipartisan support through more than 10 administrations, protected more than 7.6 million acres of land, and supported more than 41,000 parks, ball fields, and other recreation projects that meet state and local priorities.

Sonja Macys, Councilmember, Steamboat Springs, Colorado – “Funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund supports projects that create jobs and draw visitors for recreation, sporting, and other activities as well as protecting our environment. In Steamboat Springs, the Fund helped build the popular Yampa River Core Trail and the Howelsen Hill Ski Jumping complex; a complex that has helped our community gain the prestigious distinction of having sent more athletes to the Winter Olympics than any other North American city.”

Mayor Pro Tem of Frisco, Colorado, Hunter Mortensen – “The Trump administration and Department of Interior are prioritizing the oil and gas industry over mountain communities through the poor management of our public lands. Our snowpack, spring run-off, as well as our community’s economic sustainability and cultural vitality, are at risk if the voices of mountain communities continue to be ignored. It was refreshing to spend time in Washington D.C. to thank and encourage members of the Western congressional delegation to work for our best interests and protect our public lands, and in turn, our economies.”

Councilmember, South Lake Tahoe, California, Devin Middlebrook – “The agencies tasked with managing public lands for multiple uses are instead managing public lands solely for extractive purposes. This is often illegal, degrades the environmental health of large swaths of lands, closes off areas that could otherwise be used for recreation or sightseeing, and further expands greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change and increases in wildfire, drought, and reduced snowpack. This sole focus on “energy dominance” is harming the economies of our Western communities.”

Mayor of Avon, Colorado, Sarah Smith Hymes – “From expanding and streamlining oil and gas leasing to reducing the size of national monuments, the Trump administration’s priorities are clear. The President and his top officials at the Department of Interior (DOI) have time and time again proved that they are interested in furthering the destruction and exploitation of our public lands and putting western mountain communities at risk. It was important for us to spend time in our nation’s capital last week to both thank and remind our Western Congressional delegation that we need to prioritize the care and protection of our public lands.”

Mayor Pro Tem of Aspen, Colorado Ward Hauenstein– “Mountain communities depend on public lands and water for their sustainable outdoor recreation economy. We are concerned with the unrelenting attack on environmental protections by the executive branch. The current administration’s myopic focus on energy extraction on American public lands; appointing scandal-ridden former extractive industry and anti-public lands leaders to head key environmental agencies; limiting public input; destroying some of our country’s bedrock environmental laws; and refusing to adequately fund our public lands endangers the very land we depend upon.

It is vitally important that we protect our public lands and water for future generations. Once the lands and water are degraded, they will be lost forever.”

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Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) is an effort to educate, mobilize, and empower mountain towns with outdoor recreation-based economies in the American West around federal policy. We work with local elected officials in over 50 mountain communities from all 11 western states to build resilience in the face of environmental stresses and their economic impacts through a shared voice on policies related to climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation.

SEE BELOW FOR PHOTOS

Mayor Pro Tem of Aspen, Colorado Ward Hauenstein meets with Representative Scott Tipton



Meeting with Representative Scott Tipton



Meeting with Representative Joe Neguse



Meeting with Senator Cory Gardner





