April 1, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

More than fifty years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America’s most successful conservation program. The bill was designed to assure our growing population that outdoor recreation lands would be secured, on a pay-as-you-go basis, for future Americans’ requirements. We are thrilled that Congress has just voted overwhelmingly to reauthorize LWCF permanently in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (S.47), making a definitive statement in support of LWCF as a uniquely constructed, common-sense concept: that proceeds from public resource extraction will be dedicated to the protection of our greatest natural parks and outdoor places.

LWCF deserved to be made permanent because it’s a program that works, to the benefit of all Americans. Now that Congress has resoundingly affirmed its commitment to LWCF as originally intended by protecting its annual $900 million deposits for the long-term, we look forward to working on a bipartisan basis towards directing those funds to their intended conservation purposes.

We urge you to recognize the resounding level of support for LWCF and the compelling now-or-never needs the program addresses in communities across America by investing the increased resources needed to successfully implement this valuable, time-tested program in the FY 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. We thank you for funding LWCF at an increased level in the FY 2019 omnibus appropriations bill, and also note that there are still many time-sensitive unmet needs in our states and districts that were not addressed at this level. We therefore urge you to significantly increase this crucial investment in the coming fiscal year to address the growing unmet needs for recreation and conservation in every state and county in America.

Investments in LWCF support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for all Americans, in rural communities and cities alike. It has created outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and 98 percent of counties across the country, opening up key areas for hunting, fishing, and other recreational access; supporting working forests and ranches; and acquiring inholdings and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields, and other federal areas.
The State and Local Grants Program and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program provide crucial support for state and local park acquisitions in cities, counties, and rural towns as well as recreational facilities and trail corridors. It is the government’s primary investment tool for ensuring that children and families have access to close-to-home recreation, having funded over 42,000 projects in virtually every county in the nation.

The Cooperative Endangered Species grants program provides states and counties with essential resources for habitat conservation that in turn allows for appropriate economic development. The American Battlefield Protection Program ensures the protection of America’s Civil War and Revolutionary War sites at the state and local level. And finally, the Forest Legacy Program helps maintain critical jobs in the woods while protecting outdoor resources, recreation access, and local economies.

As you know, LWCF uses no taxpayer dollars. Congress created LWCF as a bipartisan promise to return precious resources back to the American public by using federal energy revenues specifically for conservation and recreation purposes. Unfortunately, over the 50-year history of LWCF, over $20 billion of the funds designated for LWCF have been diverted from their original conservation and recreation purpose. This chronic problem has created substantial unmet conservation and recreation needs; has caused state, local, and federal land management agencies to postpone or cancel many important priority projects; and has created undue hardship for many property owners.

Despite this history of underfunding, LWCF remains the premier federal program to conserve our nation’s land, water, historic, and recreation heritage. LWCF funds support an entire suite of conservation tools to address national, state, local, and regionally-driven priorities across the country. These include working lands easements that keep farmers and ranchers as stewards of the landscape that provides their livelihoods, working forest projects that keep timberlands forested and accessible and provide jobs in our rural communities, and vital recreation access projects—making public lands public—for hunting, fishing, and other activities.

LWCF is essential to America’s outdoor recreation, conservation, and preservation economies, which together contribute $1.06 trillion to the nation’s economy each year and support 9.4 million American jobs (one out of every 15 jobs in the U.S.). Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies in the coming months to ensure that the suite of LWCF programs receive the high priority and significantly increased funding they need in FY 2020 to maintain our commitment to conservation and recreation, as well as to states and local communities. As Americans continue to visit forests, parks, historic battlefields, and wildlife areas in increasing numbers across America, we urge you to provide the funding levels necessary to ensure these opportunities exist everywhere in our great nation. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

MIKE THOMPSON  
Member of Congress

JOHN KATKO  
Member of Congress

JAMES P. MCGOVERN  
Member of Congress

BRIAN FITZPATRICK  
Member of Congress
Member of Congress

STEVEN F. LYNCH

DEBBIE WASSERMANN SCHULTZ

JIMMY G. DEMETTA

VAL DEMINGS

CINDY AXNE

GILBERT R. CISNEROS

RUBEN GALLEGO

BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER

MAX ROSE

KERRY MCNERNEY

ROBIN L. KELLY

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

BRENDAN F. BOYLE

RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHI

TOM O'HALLERAN

MARK TAKANO

KIM SCHRIER

JARED F. GOLDEN

TULSI GABBARD

LORI TRAHAN

SCOTT PETERS

DINA TITUS
DEBBIE MUCARSEL-POWELL  
Member of Congress

BEN McADAMS  
Member of Congress

TED W. LIEU  
Member of Congress

DONALD S. BEYER, JR.  
Member of Congress

DAVID LOESBACK  
Member of Congress

DARIN LAHOOD  
Member of Congress

JENNIFER GONZALEZ-COLON  
Member of Congress

STEPHANIE MURPHY  
Member of Congress

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON  
Member of Congress

DANIEL V. LIPINSKI  
Member of Congress

WILLIAM LACY CLAY  
Member of Congress

MADELEINE DEAN  
Member of Congress

RO KHANNA  
Member of Congress

JACK BERGMAN  
Member of Congress

KATIE HILL  
Member of Congress

DEB HAALAND  
Member of Congress

JEFF FORTENBERRY  
Member of Congress

ADRIANO ESPILLAT  
Member of Congress

GREGORY MEEKS  
Member of Congress

BEN RAY LUJAN  
Member of Congress

JOHN GARAMENDI  
Member of Congress

TONY CARDEÑAS  
Member of Congress
DAVID SCOTT  
Member of Congress

ERIC Swalwell  
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress

Abigail D. Spanberger  
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress

Terri Sewell  
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

Albio Sires  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

David Rouzer  
Member of Congress

Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress

Cedric Richmond  
Member of Congress

Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin  
Member of Congress

Michael R. Turner  
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

Raúl Ruiz  
Member of Congress

Kurt Schrader  
Member of Congress

Bennie Thompson  
Member of Congress
BRADLEY BYRNE  
Member of Congress

FRANCIS ROONEY  
Member of Congress

ABBY FINKENAUER  
Member of Congress

GREG STANTON  
Member of Congress

ANNA G. ESHOO  
Member of Congress

DANIEL T. KILDEE  
Member of Congress

JOSH GOTTHEIMER  
Member of Congress

ANDY LEVIN  
Member of Congress

JOHN LEWIS  
Member of Congress

PETER T. KING  
Member of Congress

MIKE DOYLE  
Member of Congress

FELIX VELA  
Member of Congress

ROGER MARSHALL, M.D.  
Member of Congress

A. DONALD MCEACHIN  
Member of Congress

COLIN ALLRED  
Member of Congress

JOE CUNNINGHAM  
Member of Congress

TOM MALINOWSKI  
Member of Congress

SEAN CASTEN  
Member of Congress

SUSIE LEE  
Member of Congress

ELAINE LURIA  
Member of Congress

DON BACON  
Member of Congress

DWIGHT EVANS  
Member of Congress