LWCF Success in Arkansas

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has provided funding to help protect some of Arkansas’ most special places and ensure recreational access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. Arkansas has received approximately $186.4 million in LWCF funding over the past five decades, protecting places such as the Ouachita and Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, and Buffalo National River.

Forest Legacy Program (FLP) grants are also funded under LWCF, to help protect working forests. The FLP cost-share funding supports timber sector jobs and sustainable forest operations while enhancing wildlife habitat, water quality and recreation. For example, the FLP contributed to places such as the Longview-Saline Forest in Ashley County, Maumelle Water Excellence in Little Rock and Pine-Flatwoods Recovery Initiative in Drew County. The FLP assists states and private forest owners to maintain working forest lands through matching grants for permanent conservation easement and fee acquisitions, and has leveraged approximately $10 million in federal funds to invest in Arkansas’ forests, while protecting air and water quality, wildlife habitat, access for recreation and other public benefits provided by forests.

LWCF state assistance grants have further supported hundreds of projects across Arkansas’ state and local parks including Tierre Noire Natural Area in Clark County and the Children’s Discovery Garden in Garland County.

Economic Benefits

Active outdoor recreation is an important part of the Arkansas economy. The Outdoor Industry Association has found that active outdoor recreation generates $9.7 billion in consumer spending in Arkansas, 96,000 jobs which generate $2.5 billion in wages and salaries, and produces $698 million annually in state and local tax revenue. Further, the U.S. Census reports that each year over 1.7 million people hunt, fish, or enjoy wildlife-watching in Arkansas, contributing over $2.1 billion in wildlife recreation spending to the state economy.
LWCF is a simple idea: that a portion of offshore drilling fees should be used to protect important land and water for all Americans. These are not taxpayer dollars. Unfortunately, the promise of LWCF has been broken. The program is authorized to receive up to $900 million each year—but most of these funds have been diverted elsewhere. Now is the time to fix this and ensure that funds retained in the LWCF account are used for their intended conservation and recreation purposes.

LWCF supports the acquisition of land and conservation easements to protect our national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, trails, and BLM sites, grants funds to the states for local and state park needs, protects critical wildlife habitat, watersheds and recreational access, and conserves working farms, ranches and forestlands that enhance local economies.

LWCF is Arkansas

Cache River National Wildlife Refuge

The Cache River NWR project area encompasses some of the largest remaining contiguous blocks of bottomland hardwood forest in the Lower Mississippi Valley and some of the largest remaining expanses of forested wetlands on any tributary within the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. It is considered the most important wintering area for mallards in North America, and one of the most important for pintail and teal ducks, Canada geese, and other migratory waterfowl. Forest and wetland restoration on these tracts would facilitate carbon sequestration, provide surrogate species habitat, and fulfill national and state conservation plan goals. LWCF funds have been used for many different purposes at the Cache River NWR, including increasing access for hunters and anglers, and protecting some of the best quality and last remaining old growth hardwood forest in the area.

Fiscal Year 2020 Agency Priority Project List for Arkansas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Delegation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FWS</td>
<td>Cache River NWR</td>
<td>$1,800,000</td>
<td>Boozman, Cotton/Crawford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLP</td>
<td>Hot Springs Forest</td>
<td>$1,460,000</td>
<td>Boozman, Cotton/Westerman</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLP</td>
<td>Pine-Flatwoods Recovery Initiative</td>
<td>$955,000</td>
<td>Boozman, Cotton/Westerman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Status of the Land and Water Conservation Fund

In 2019, permanent authorization of LWCF was secured as part of S. 47, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. Passage of the Dingell Act ensures that LWCF no longer faces the uncertainty of potential expiration, and that the unique structure and inflow of funds to LWCF is protected. The focus is now on permanent full funding for LWCF – ensuring that each year the $900 million deposited into the LWCF account actually goes towards conservation and recreation priorities. Over the 55 years of the program, over $22 billion has been diverted from LWCF to other, unknown purposes. That means that our public lands, waters, and historic sites have been put in peril. As open space continues to shrink, LWCF investments become even more critical to providing the outdoor opportunities for all future generations.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act – S. 1081 and H.R. 3195 – have passed through their respective committees and are ready for floor votes in both chambers.

LWCF Appropriations FY2000-FY2020

Note - All approximate totals derived from appropriations bills
- Forest Legacy Program & Sec. 6 funded from LWCF starting in 2004