LWCF Success in Nevada

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has provided funding to help protect some of Nevada’s most special places and ensure recreational access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. Nevada has received approximately $106.2 million in LWCF funding over the past five decades, protecting places such as the Toiyabe National Forest, Stillwater and Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuges, Lake Mead National Recreation Area and Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

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 Ash Canyon Gateway in Carson City. 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 $438,000 in federal funds to invest in Nevada’s 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 Nevada’s state and local parks including Sunset Park, Lorenzi Park and Springs Preserve in Las Vegas, Valley of Fire State Park and Washoe Lake State Park.

Economic Benefits

Active outdoor recreation is an important part of the Nevada economy. The Outdoor Industry Association has found that active outdoor recreation generates $12.6 billion in consumer spending in Nevada, 87,000 jobs which generate $4 billion in wages and salaries, and produces $1.1 billion annually in state and local tax revenue. Further, the U.S. Census reports that each year over 788,000 people hunt, fish, or enjoy wildlife-watching in Nevada, contributing $917 million 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 in Nevada

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area

Nevada’s first National Conservation Area, Red Rock Canyon is 195,819 acres of Mojave Desert located 17 miles west of the Las Vegas Strip. Though it is desert, Red Rock Canyon contains a wide array of animals, including over 100 species of birds, 45 species of mammals and nine major types of vegetation. Among the reptiles and amphibians living in Red Rock Canyon are the Desert Tortoise, which is listed by the Fish and Wildlife Service as Threatened species. Red Rock Canyon provides a different outdoor recreational option than nearby Las Vegas, including camping, hiking, scenic drives, mountain and road biking, horseback riding and rock-climbing.

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