LWCF Success in New Mexico

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has provided funding to help protect some of New Mexico’s most special places and ensure recreational access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. New Mexico has received approximately $322.4 million in LWCF funding over the past five decades, protecting places such as the Petroglyph, El Malpais, and Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rock National Monuments, the Gila, Cibola, Santa Fe and Carson National Forests, and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic 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 High Country Ranch in Rio Arriba Country and Horse Springs Ranch in Catron County. The Forest Legacy Program 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 $11 million in federal funds to invest in New Mexico’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 New Mexico’s state and local parks including Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park in Dona Ana County and the Eagle Nest Lake Park in Colfax County.

Economic Benefits

Active outdoor recreation is an important part of the New Mexico economy. The Outdoor Industry Association has found that active outdoor recreation contributes $9.9 billion annually in consumer spending to New Mexico’s economy, supports 99,000 jobs which generate $2.8 billion in wages and salaries and produces $623 million annually in state and local tax revenue. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that each year 947,000 people participate in hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching in New Mexico contributing $823 million 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.

Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River/Taos Gorge
The canyonlands of the upper reaches of the Rio Grande comprise one of the most spectacular landscapes in New Mexico. Within New Mexico, the Rio Grande is not only an important natural and ecological resource, it is also critical to water supplies and the economy. About 1.3 million people, or nearly 70% of the state’s population, live in the ten counties along the river. The Rio Grande provides vital drinking water to these residents and irrigation water for agricultural purposes. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has provided funds to protect the wild and scenic river, consolidate holdings to prevent fragmentation, ensure recreational access, and prevent development from marring the canyon.

Fiscal Year 2020 Agency Priority Project List for New Mexico

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Delegation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NPS</td>
<td>El Malpais National Monument</td>
<td>$5,182,189</td>
<td>Udall, Heinrich/Torres Small</td>
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<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>Mimbres River Parcels; Gila</td>
<td>$2,906,000</td>
<td>Heinrich, Udall/Torres Small</td>
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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