The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has provided funding to help protect some of Oklahoma’s most special places and ensure recreational access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. Oklahoma has received approximately $70.1 million over the past five decades, protecting places such as the Ozark Plateau and Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuges, Fort Smith National Historic Site and Chickasaw National Recreation 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. The FLP assists states and private forest owners to maintain working forest lands through matching grants for permanent conservation easement and fee acquisitions. Oklahoma received its first FLP grant in FY2012, which was used to protect 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 Oklahoma’s state and local parks including Black Mesa State Park Campground in Cimarron County and Liberty Park Recreational Trail in Sapulpa.

**Economic Benefits**

Active outdoor recreation is an important part of the Oklahoma economy. The Outdoor Industry Association has found that active outdoor recreation generates $10.6 billion in consumer spending in Oklahoma, 97,000 jobs which generate $3.1 billion in wages and salaries, and produces $663 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 Oklahoma, contributing $1.4 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 in Oklahoma

Chickasaw National Recreation Area

Located on almost 10,000 acres of land in south central Oklahoma, the Chickasaw National Recreation Area hosts roughly 1.3 million visitors per year. Chickasaw protects the areas natural resources, including animal and plant habitat, while providing visitors with exceptional recreational and cultural opportunities. The area is divided into two parts: the Platt Historic District and the Lake of the Arbuckles. The Platt Historic District housed a Civilian Conservation Corps camp which focused on masonry, forestry, and landscaping work. Today, guests can visit many remodeled houses from this camp. Lake of the Arbuckles provides many great recreational opportunities, including boating, swimming, fishing, hunting, hiking, and bicycling. LWCF funds were instrumental in providing the balance between conservation and recreation found in Chickasaw National Recreation Area.

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

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