LWCF Success in South Carolina

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has provided funding to help protect some of South Carolina’s most special places and ensure recreational access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. South Carolina has received approximately $303.5 million in LWCF funding over the past five decades, protecting places such as Fort Sumter National Monument, Cape Romain, Waccamaw and Ace Basin National Wildlife Refuges, Congaree National Park, and Francis Marion National Forest as well as sites protected under the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program.

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 Catawba-Wateree Forest in Chester County and the Savannah River Corridor in Hampton 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 $39 million in federal funds to invest in South Carolina’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 South Carolina’s state and local parks including Rifle Range Road Park in Mount Pleasant, Myrtle Beach State Park Boardwalk, Manchester Meadows Park in Rock Hill, and Jones Gap State Park.

Economic Benefits

Active outdoor recreation is an important part of the South Carolina economy. The Outdoor Industry Association has found that active outdoor recreation generates $16.3 billion annually in consumer spending in South Carolina, supports 151,000 jobs across the state which generate $4.6 billion in wages and salaries and produces $1.1 billion annually in state and local tax revenue. Further, the U.S. Census reports that over 893,000 people hunt, fish or watch wildlife in South Carolina each year, spending $2.5 billion on wildlife-related recreation.
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 South Carolina

Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area
The Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area includes 13,000 acres of mountain woodlands and multiple state parks that LWCF has made possible, including Caesar’s Head and Jones Gap State Park and protected areas, such as the Wildcat Wayside hiking trail between both parks. Caesar’s Head and Jones Gap offer 60+ miles of hiking trails and access to multiple scenic waterfalls as well as camping and trout fishing in the Middle Saluda River, South Carolina’s first designated scenic river. LWCF investments through the NPS State and Local Assistance Program helped to protect these places, including over $1 million for trail development.

Fiscal Year 2020 Agency Priority Project List for South Carolina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Delegation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>South Carolina's &quot;Promise of the Piedmont&quot;; Sumter</td>
<td>$1,600,000</td>
<td>Graham, Scott/Duncan, Norman</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLP</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Saluda Rivers Connector</td>
<td>$1,920,000</td>
<td>Graham, Scott/Timmons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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