LWCF Success in Washington, D.C.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has provided funding to help protect some of Washington, D.C.’s most special places and ensure recreational access for hiking, cycling, fishing and other outdoor activities. Washington, D.C. has received approximately $18.7 million in LWCF funding over the past five decades, protecting places such as the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Mary McLeod Bethune NHS, and National Capital Parks-East.

LWCF state assistance grants have further supported hundreds of projects across Washington, D.C.’s local parks including Mitchell Park Playground, Randall Recreation Center, and the East Potomac Park Swimming Pool.

Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens

Visitors and residents of Washington, D.C. experience the natural habitat of the area at the beautifully preserved Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. This wetland helps mitigate pollution, reduces flood damage, and alleviates risks from climate change. As part of the National Capital Parks East, this park which has hiking trails, boardwalks, and comprehensive environmental education resources, has received a portion of the $2.5 million of LWCF awarded to the District’s network of parks. In addition to many events over the year, members of the D.C. Garden Club plant thousands of lotus each spring, a one-of-a-kind spectacle that draws visitors from across town and around the world.
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.

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

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