

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 29, 2022

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chair
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

Nearly sixty years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America's most successful conservation program. This landmark law was designed to assure our growing population that outdoor recreation lands would be secured, on a pay-as-you-go basis, for future Americans' requirements. We are thrilled that the 116th Congress voted overwhelmingly to pass two major bills making LWCF permanent with the Dingell Act of 2019 and the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020. The two acts secured permanent reauthorization and full permanent funding, respectively, making a definitive statement in support of LWCF as a uniquely constructed, common-sense concept of dedicating the proceeds from public resource extraction for the protection of our greatest natural parks and outdoor places.

Now that Congress has resoundingly affirmed its commitment to LWCF as originally intended by protecting the program's annual \$900 million deposits for the long-term and ensuring the direction of those funds to their intended conservation and recreation purposes, we look forward to working on a bipartisan basis toward efficient implementation and strong continuing oversight of our nation's most important conservation and recreation program. GAOA reinforced the critical decision-making role of Congress in determining LWCF funding for its multiple authorized federal agency programs and state grant programs through the annual appropriations process. With passage of GAOA, Congress finally and permanently ended the history of underfunding, which has limited LWCF from the outset, and provided a solid floor for future investment in conservation and recreation.

We greatly appreciate that the FY 2022 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies bill fully invests in LWCF and urge that in the FY 2023 bill you recognize the resounding level of support for LWCF and the backlog of compelling now-or-never conservation and recreation needs in communities across America by investing the increased resources needed to successfully implement this valuable, time-tested program. We thank the Subcommittee for its vital work in FY22 to produce a bill with strong project oversight and balanced allocations among LWCF subprograms according to the formula set down by the Dingell Act: at least 40% for federal agency conservation and recreation priorities (USFS, BLM, USFWS, NPS), at least 40% for the suite of LWCF state and local grant programs (State and Local Assistance Program, Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership program, Forest Legacy Program, American Battlefield Protection Program, Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Grants, and Highlands Grant Program), and the remaining 20% allocated among the suite of 10 programs based on need.

Importantly, by retaining unobligated, prior-year discretionary LWCF funds within appropriated programs rather than allowing them to be rescinded, the FY22 bill also recognizes that the programs under the LWCF umbrella are oversubscribed and that full funding of LWCF has not eliminated the backlog of time-sensitive conservation and recreation priorities. We appreciate the Subcommittee's commitment to addressing unmet needs by keeping funds in place for viable funded projects within these accounts, and for reinvesting them in LWCF program needs through reprogramming in the event specified project needs have changed. Additionally, with demand continuing to outstrip available LWCF funding, we urge you to retain this approach in FY23.

Investments in LWCF support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for all Americans, in rural communities and cities alike. It has created outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and 98 percent of counties across the country, opening key areas for hunting, fishing, and other recreational access; supporting working forests and ranches; and acquiring inholdings and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields, and other federal areas.

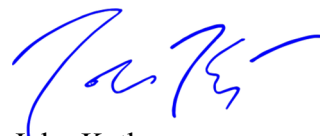
LWCF is essential to America's outdoor recreation economy, which contributes \$689 billion to the nation's economy each year and supports 4.3 million American jobs (more than utilities or construction). Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

We look forward to working with you and other members of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies in the coming months to ensure that the suite of LWCF programs receive the high priority they need in FY23 to maintain our commitment to conservation and recreation, as well as to states and local communities. We urge you to provide balanced allocations for LWCF in FY23, retain unobligated funds with LWCF programs, and include the full project priority lists in the Subcommittee report accompanying the bill. As our nation continues to see rapid loss of natural areas to development, and unprecedented use of parks, trails and other outdoor spaces during the pandemic, the need for increased investment in equitable access to the outdoors, natural infrastructure, and resilient landscapes to support both people and wildlife has never been more urgent


Sincerely,



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Member of Congress




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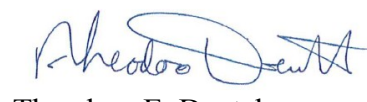
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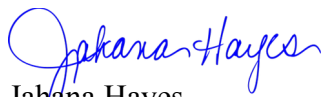
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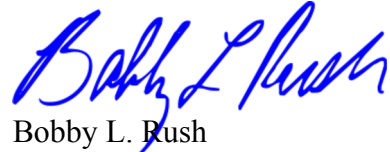
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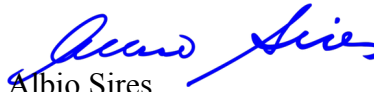
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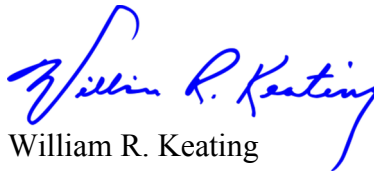
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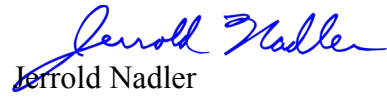
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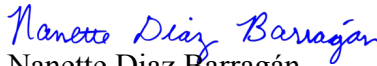
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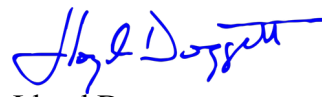
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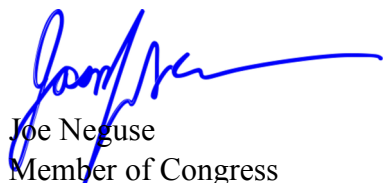
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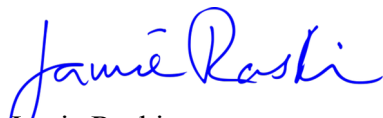
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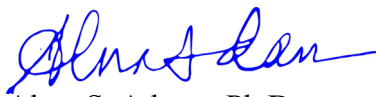
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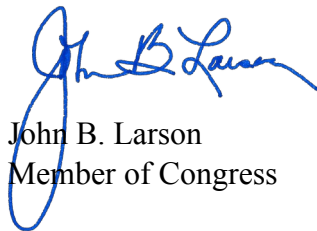
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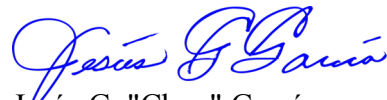
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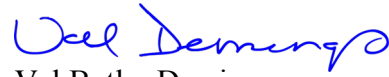
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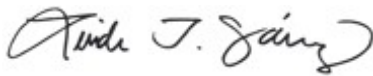
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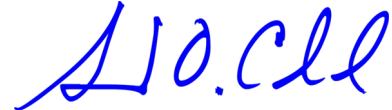
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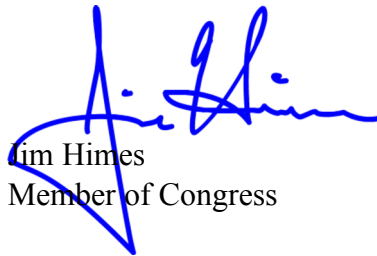
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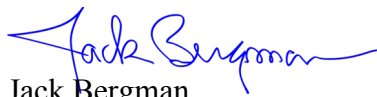
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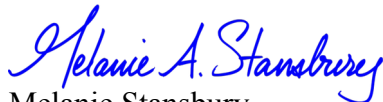
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