

Groups Across the Nation Celebrate Historic House Passage of the Great American Outdoors Act

“At a time when our country needs to create jobs and rebuild local economies while also protecting nature and places where everyone can recreate outdoors, the Great American Outdoors Act answers the call on all fronts,” **said Jennifer Morris, CEO of The Nature Conservancy.** This significant investment in nature and public lands and the resulting job creation is really an investment in our communities, our economy and our future. It is the most important U.S. conservation bill in a generation, creating a lasting path for the future of our public lands while supporting jobs and our well-being.

“Fully and permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund and caring for America’s national parks and other public lands signals a lasting commitment to nature and a recognition of all the benefits nature provides. This act provides critical support for longstanding efforts to protect public lands, restore public places to be safer and more enjoyable, and increase access to nature for all communities. This commitment to conservation will pay economic, health and societal dividends for generations to come. This victory would not have happened without the dedication of many champions, and they have our deepest gratitude. We now urge the president to quickly sign the bill into law.”

“Bipartisan approval of the Great American Outdoors Act by the House of Representatives, on the heels of Senate passage, is a sign of the tremendous public support for this landmark legislation. Congress has listened to local voices who recognize that investing in our parks and public lands has a high rate of return for communities that depend on park and recreation tourism,” **said Marcia Argust, project director of The Pew Charitable Trusts’ Restore America’s Parks campaign.** “We look forward to the bill’s quick approval by the president, so the act can begin restoring our parks, protecting landscapes, and generating much-needed jobs.”

“The Great American Outdoors Act is a huge step forward to ensuring that every community has access to nature. This victory is a testament to the power of grassroots activists and the enduring popularity of conservation”. **Said League of Conservation Voters President Gene Karpinski.** “But as a recent [report](#) from the Center for American Progress and Hispanic Access Foundation shows, there is more work to be done to ensure every community - especially low income and communities of color - has access to public lands, local parks and other outdoor opportunities. Scientists have called on the United States to preserve at least 30% of our land and ocean by 2030. Building on the success of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we can reach this critical goal and ensure all people have access to nature and its benefits; feel safe, welcome, and included in the outdoors and other public spaces; and see their communities reflected in the stories told on our public lands about our country’s history.”

Will Shafroth, President and CEO, National Park Foundation: “House passage of the Great American Outdoors Act is a triumph for America’s national parks and all those who cherish them. By providing significant resources to tackle our parks’ long overdue maintenance needs, this soon-to-be-law will ensure national parks are safe and accessible for all, continue fueling local economies, and offer education and inspiration for generations to come. As the Foundation carries out its mission to enrich national parks through philanthropic support, I look forward to the President signing this historic conservation victory into law.”

“Today, Congress set a new and improved course for America’s national parks that will leave them in better shape for the next generation,” **said Theresa Pierno, President and CEO of the National Parks Conservation Association.** “The bipartisan support for the Great American Outdoors Act is testament to our country’s ability to find common ground and work toward a better future for our public lands and communities. With the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, our parks’ crumbling roads, decaying buildings and outdated water systems will be fixed, local economies will get much-needed relief, and every American, no matter where they live, will have more access to outdoor spaces. NPCA, non-profit partners, park advocates, and champions in Congress have been working together for years to make park maintenance a priority. Today, those efforts paid off in a big way as Congress just made the largest investment in national parks and public lands our country has seen in 50 years.”

“The Great American Outdoors Act is the single greatest piece of conservation and outdoor recreation legislation passed in decades,” **said Jessica Turner, executive director of Outdoor Recreation Roundtable.** “It is proof that the outdoors crosses party lines and resonates with all Americans. We applaud House Democrats and Republicans— particularly Leader Pelosi and Representatives Cunningham and Simpson and the other Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Restore our Parks Act sponsors — for working together tirelessly to get this done. The entire outdoor recreation industry thanks every Member of Congress who supported this bill so we can finally fully fund LWCF and begin the much-needed work on rebuilding infrastructure on our public lands and waters.”

“Today’s bipartisan House passage of the ‘Great American Outdoors Act’ gets us to the very brink of fully and permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund so it can serve its full potential for our country and communities,” **said Jamie Williams, President of The Wilderness Society.** “After years of leadership and support from long-term and recent champions in both chambers of Congress, the ‘Great American Outdoors Act’ is now heading to the President’s desk with a tidal wave of momentum. Once signed, this historic bill will finally keep the 55-year-old promise of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to strengthen our communities through investment in our parks and public lands.”

“We are witnessing monumental conservation history in the making with the U.S. House of Representatives passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. Full and dedicated funding for LWCF is a pragmatic and crucial investment in America’s outdoors, as we look for both economic relief and a path forward that addresses the impacts of a changing climate. The overwhelming support for GAOA in both the House and Senate underscores the importance of our public lands and how their protection and improvement provides unmatched economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits to states, communities, and local businesses. We urge the President to expeditiously sign this bill into law.” – **Larry Selzer, President and CEO, The Conservation Fund**

Kate Van Waes, Executive Director, American Hiking Society: “Final passage of the Great American Outdoors Act is a major victory for the hiking community that will expand access to the outdoors for all. With the pandemic shining a bright light on the need for equitable access to natural spaces, securing LWCF permanent funding and tackling a substantial portion of the public lands maintenance backlog will greatly increase recreation opportunities on public lands and in neighborhoods across the country, including those that have historically lacked access.”

“Sportsmen and women who have spoken out for years in support of the LWCF and against the chronic underfunding of our public lands agencies should be very proud to be a part of this historic win for public lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and our hunting and fishing access,” **says Whit Fosburgh, president and CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.** “These issues don’t make the

front page every day, which is all the more reason to celebrate the willingness of our lawmakers to prioritize the Great American Outdoors Act with a spirit of urgency and bipartisanship. For Americans who are increasingly turning to the outdoors for solace and enjoyment during this pandemic, this vote confirms that our natural resources are worthy of robust investment, especially at a time when conservation and access improvement projects can create much-needed jobs.”

“Equitable access to the outdoors is essential,” said **Diane Regas, President and CEO of The Trust for Public Land**. “During this pandemic, we have seen that access to nature is more important than ever. But not everyone has a safe and quality place to get outside during this time. COVID-19 has shown that in far too many communities, parks and accessible natural areas are a privilege, when they should be a right. Full and permanent funding for LWCF is a huge step forward in providing the resources needed to create outdoor experiences in places they are needed most. I applaud our congressional champions who worked tirelessly over many years to get this done.”

“If you’re an RVer, or any kind of outdoor recreation enthusiast, the Great American Outdoors Act is the best thing to happen to our community in six decades,” said **Craig Kirby, RV Industry Association President**. “Thank you to those Members of Congress, especially the RV Caucus members, who voted in favor of this landmark legislation that will direct significant funds toward critical deferred maintenance and campground modernization needs on our public lands and waters. Twenty million RVers across the country depend on our iconic state and federal lands for recreation, conservation, enjoyment, and overnight camping. Enactment of this milestone legislation will mean increased recreation access for all no matter where they live, allowing more Americans to find fulfillment in living an active outdoor lifestyle.”

“Now, perhaps more than ever, Americans are showing how essential it is to be able to access public land and water for both physical and mental health,” said **John Judge, President and CEO of the Appalachian Mountain Club**. “AMC applauds the strong bipartisan support for the Great American Outdoors Act and urges swift action on the part of the President to sign this bill into law to permanently and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and address the backlog of maintenance on our public lands. Today, Congress has taken truly historic action to support our nation’s vibrant recreation economy and local communities, as well as help ensure that everyone will be able to reach a park, forest, or trail near them to enjoy time in the outdoors that is truly restorative.”

“LWCF has played a key role in shaping the public landscape of East Tennessee and Western North Carolina. Some of the most visited places in America are located in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains, from Great Smoky Mountains National Park to the Blue Ridge Parkway. No less important is the network of state and local parks, greenways, and historic and scenic trails. All of these units benefit from investments by the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The region’s economy depends on this ongoing, consistent investment in outdoor recreation and clean water, and passage of this landmark legislation is more important now than ever before.” **Jay Leutze, Past-President and Trustee, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy**

“With today’s passage of this bill, we’re one step away from putting a lock and key on funding that has always been intended for conservation projects – yet consistently diverted to other purposes. We’re closer to adopting a new consciousness for today’s world – that our lives are made richer if surrounded by more nature, rather than more extracted resources.” **Environment America’s Acting President Wendy Wendlandt**

“The Appalachian Trail Conservancy applauds Congress for passing the most important conservation bill in decades,” said **Sandra Marra, President & CEO of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy**. “By fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund and providing billions of dollars for deferred maintenance projects, the Great American Outdoors Act will enhance the safety and accessibility of public lands like the Appalachian Trail and ensure the legacy of outdoor spaces and experiences passes on to the next generation. We urge the President to sign this bill into law without delay.”

“The Great American Outdoors Act will provide the largest investment in our nation’s historic and cultural resources in more than a generation. The National Park Service is burdened by a deferred maintenance backlog of nearly \$12 billion, of which 47% is for historic assets. The legislation will make significant progress in addressing this by providing \$9.5 billion in dedicated funding over five years for much needed repairs within units of the National Park Service and other federal agencies. Additionally, permanent full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund will ensure that the source of funds used to protect such iconic places as Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, and Valley Forge National Historical Park will continue into the future,” said **Paul Edmondson, President and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation**.

“As we face new COVID-19 urges and continue confronting our national sin of racism—coming together for reconciliation and healing is more important than ever. Passage of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) in the House of Representatives does just that. For many, the best place to seek freedom, healing, and peace is amid God’s creation. GAOA restores the majestic wonder of our national parks and public lands, provides much needed resources to be better stewards of our natural resources, and creates critical jobs during this economically uncertain time. With GAOA, we also see the benefits of bipartisan action at its best. Let’s get GAOA in action to help restore our parks, ourselves, our nation, and our democratic ideals.” **The Rev. Mitchell C. Hescox, President/C.E.O., The Evangelical Environmental Network**

“The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act is a momentous occasion. We applaud the bi-partisan effort in Congress and thank all the Senators and members of the House of Representatives who supported this act. It is one more huge step forward in supporting and restoring our national parks. We urge this administration to move swiftly to advance the Great American Outdoors Act over the finish line and continue the work to ensure our national parks and public lands are protected for future generations.” - **Phil Francis, Chair of the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks**

“We commend the House for prioritizing our nation’s critical, yet underfunded public parks and lands by passing the Great American Outdoors Act,” said **K.N. Gunalan, “Guna,” Ph.D., P.E., President, American Society of Civil Engineers**. “Now more than ever, Americans need access to our public parks for physical and mental health, and we’re grateful this bill addresses the National Park System’s long-delayed \$12 billion maintenance backlog, which will help revitalize our parks. We’re also thrilled that the Land and Water Conservation Fund will be fully funded at \$900 million annually through this bill, which will revitalize the outdoor recreation economy. We look forward to getting this bill across the finish line for the President to sign so that we can move closer to raising the [“D+” parks](#) grade, and improving the quality and life for all Americans.

“Today’s vote to pass the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) and send it on to the President is a dream come true. The Partnership for the National Trails System is thrilled that the decades-long effort to fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and address the backlog of maintenance and construction on our public lands has resulted in passage of GAOA with strong

bipartisan support. In the midst of an incredibly challenging time, Congress has taken a bold step to invest in communities and special places all across the nation for the benefit of people and the protection of our natural resources in ways that will endure for generations to come. It is gratifying that this issue has brought people together rather than further divide us.

We are incredibly grateful to those who worked on this legislative effort for over 30 years and who worked so hard to get us to this day. At this moment, we especially want to acknowledge the GAOA's lead sponsors in the House – Reps. Joe Cunningham and Mike Simpson - as well as House Natural Resources Committee Chair Raul Grijalva, Rules Committee Chair Jim McGovern and House leadership for advancing the bill so quickly following Senate passage.

The Partnership and its member organizations look forward to working with our public agencies, local communities, and Congress to use GAOA funds to full effect along the length and breadth of our scenic and historic trails, ensuring that the National Trails System remains a world-class public land resource for all people now and well into the future.” - **Barney Scout Mann, Board President, Partnership for the National Trails System**

"The Great American Outdoors Act will do more to ensure the preservation, vibrancy, and accessibility of America's public lands than any legislation in recent memory. The Public Lands Alliance (PLA) is grateful to the inspired leadership displayed by Senate and House champions to permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and tackle the deferred maintenance challenges in our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and conservation lands. Now an equally important effort will begin: to efficiently, effectively, and responsibly invest these new resources. PLA and the nonprofit partners of our public lands stand ready to work closely with federal and state land management agencies to achieve the legislation's conservation goals by collaborating on construction projects and historic renovations, mobilizing conservation corps, and negotiating the acquisition of critical in-holdings." - **Dan Puskar, President and CEO, Public Lands Alliance**

“Together American sportsmen and women have raised our voices in support of our public lands and waters, and today the House of Representatives heeded our calls. The Great American Outdoors Act, which dedicates full funding to Land and Water Conservation Fund and addresses maintenance backlogs on our public lands and waters with \$9.5 billion over five years, is a once in a generation win for conservation and public access. We look forward to the president signing it into the law of the land.” - **Land Tawney, President and CEO of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers**

"The final passage of the Great American Outdoors Act represents the culmination of years of advocacy from ASLA to permanently and fully fund LWCF and address the maintenance backlog in U.S. national parks," **said Wendy Miller, FASLA, president of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).**

"ASLA is gratified that this bill, which will help landscape architects fulfill our work as responsible stewards of the environment, is just a pen stroke away from becoming the law of the (literal) land. We applaud Reps. Joe Cunningham (SC) and Mike Simpson (ID) for all their work to get this passed in the U.S. House. We're hopeful the President will sign this bill quickly, as he's promised to do."