

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 22, 2016

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum,

Just over fifty years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America's most successful conservation program. The bill 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 appreciate Congress's decision to reauthorize LWCF for three years in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, and look forward to working on a more permanent solution.

We are writing to express our strong support for LWCF and urge you to allocate robust funding to this valuable, time-tested program in the FY 2017 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. We thank you for funding LWCF at such a strong level in FY 2016 and urge you to continue this crucial investment in the coming fiscal year.

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 up 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.

The State and Local Grants Program and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program provide crucial support for state and local park acquisitions in cities, counties, and rural towns as well as recreational facilities and trail corridors. It is the government's primary investment tool for ensuring that children and families have access to close-to-home recreation, having funded over 42,000 projects in virtually every county in the nation.

The Cooperative Endangered Species grants program provides states and counties with essential resources for habitat conservation that in turn allows for appropriate economic development. The American Battlefield Protection Program ensures the protection of America's Civil War and Revolutionary War sites at the state and local level. And finally the Forest Legacy Program helps

maintain critical jobs in the woods while protecting outdoor resources, recreation access, and local economies.

As you know, LWCF uses no taxpayer dollars. Instead, LWCF funds are primarily derived from oil and gas receipts paid to the federal government by energy companies that extract publicly-owned resources from the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Congress created LWCF as a bipartisan promise to return precious resources back to the American public by using these funds specifically for conservation and recreation purposes. Unfortunately, over the 50-year history of LWCF, over \$18 billion of these funds have been diverted from their original conservation purpose. This chronic problem has created a substantial backlog of conservation and recreation needs; has caused state, local, and federal land management agencies to postpone or cancel many important projects; and has created undue hardship for many property owners.

Despite this history of underfunding, LWCF remains the premier federal program to conserve our nation's land, water, historic, and recreation heritage. LWCF funds support an entire suite of conservation tools to address national, state, local, and regionally-driven priorities across the country. These include working lands easements that keep farmers and ranchers as stewards of the landscape that provides their livelihoods, working forest projects that keep timberlands forested and accessible and provide jobs in our rural communities, and vital recreation access projects – making public lands public – for hunting, fishing, and other activities.

As you develop the FY 2017 legislation, the LWCF should be reliably funded to ensure that it plays the strongest possible role in revitalizing local communities. America's outdoor recreation, conservation, and preservation economies contribute \$1.06 trillion to the nation's economy each year and support 9.4 million American jobs (1 out of every 15 jobs in the U.S.). Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies in the coming months to ensure that the suite of LWCF programs receive strong and consistent support in FY 2017 in order to maintain our commitment to conservation and recreation, as well as to states and local communities. As Americans continue to visit forests, parks, historic battlefields, and wildlife areas across America, we urge you to provide the funding levels necessary to ensure these opportunities exist everywhere in our great Nation.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

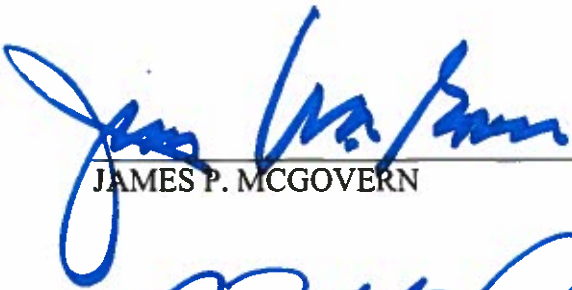
Sincerely,

  
MIKE THOMPSON

  
PATRICK MEEHAN

  
MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK

  
RAUL M. GRIJALVA



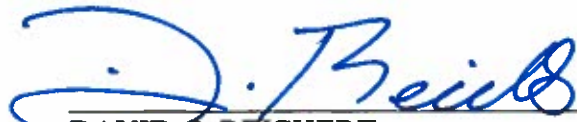
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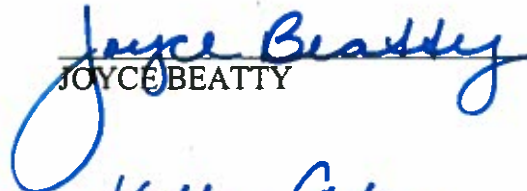
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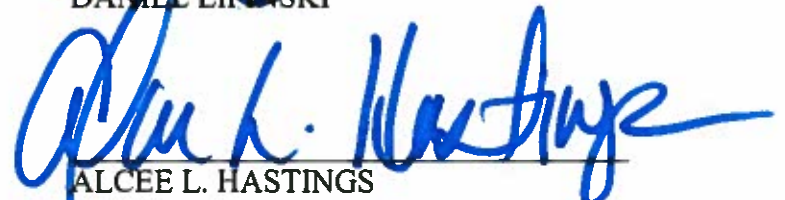
  
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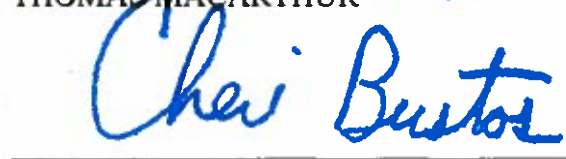
  
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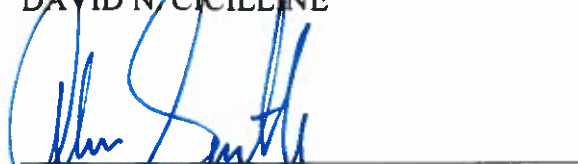
  
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