

Land and Water Conservation Fund

Our Land, Our Water, Our Heritage

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is the nation's premier land conservation program that provides funds for:

- Recreational areas, trails, and waterways for paddling, hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching
- Enhancing access to national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and other public lands
- Preserving historic battlefields and cultural sites
- Safeguarding rivers, watershed, water supplies, and clean water
- Conserving working forests, farms, and ranches
- Preserving natural areas and wildlife habitat
- Creating and improving state and local parks
- Supporting local economies and jobs through increased outdoor recreation



AMERICA DEPENDS ON LWCF

From the Grand Canyon National Park to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail to our favorite neighborhood park or playground, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has helped protect America's most treasured places. Over the past five decades, it has touched every state, conserving national parks and forests, land by rivers, lakes and oceans, working forests, farms and ranches, fish and wildlife refuges, trails, and state and local parks.

LWCF is a simple idea: to invest a small portion of federal offshore drilling fees towards protecting important land, water and recreation areas for all Americans. These are not taxpayer dollars. Unfortunately, for 55 years the promise of LWCF was broken as \$22 billion was diverted from the program. Enactment of the Great American Outdoors Act in August 2020 ended the diversion and ensures that LWCF's permanently authorized \$900 million is used for conservation and recreation projects each year.

LWCF protects watersheds and drinking water supplies, preserves our national heritage, and conserves natural areas and open space for wildlife and recreation – all while providing sustainable, domestic jobs in urban and rural communities across America. Outdoor recreation, natural resource preservation, and historic preservation activities provide a powerful building block in our national economy that supports 5 million jobs and contributes a total of \$1.1 trillion annually, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Whether it is close to home parks and trails or vacation destinations, LWCF provides places for all Americans to enjoy hunting, fishing camping, picnicking, climbing, hiking, paddling, backcountry skiing, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor activities.





Benefits of LWCF Investments:

- Conserves natural areas, wildlife habitat and open space from urban parks to large landscapes
- Improves access for sportsmen and recreationists on federal, state, local, and private lands and waters
- Stimulates local economies and jobs supporting tourism and outdoor recreation-sectors
- Preserves wetlands, forests and watersheds ensuring clean and adequate water supplies in the most cost-effective manner
- Streamlines federal land management by improving access, consolidating ownership, and reducing management and firefighting costs
- Builds rural partnerships to keep ranchers and farmers on the land, and promotes sustainable, working forests, while maintaining wildlife habitat and open space
- Protects treasured cultural and historical sites such as civil war battlefields commemorating our national heritage
- Provides state and local grants to support community parks, trails, recreational access sites and open spaces – increasing outdoor recreation opportunities for all

Status of the Land and Water Conservation Fund

In August 2020, permanent, dedicated funding for LWCF was secured through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) – ensuring that each year the \$900 million deposited into the LWCF account is directed to conservation and recreation priorities; however, in FY24 Congress backtracked on that promise when they rescinded \$94 million of unobligated LWCF funding (\$89M from the NPS State & Local Assistance Program & \$5M from BLM). GAOA has not eliminated the backlog of LWCF priorities that are waiting in line as nearly all LWCF programs remain oversubscribed - each year the LWCF supplemental project list includes about \$200 million in urgent needs that are authorized to use this funding. To support these critical projects, unspent LWCF funding should be reallocated to the states by the Secretary of the Interior (per the LWCF Act) or reprogrammed by Congress to LWCF sub-programs with outstanding funding need. If funding is rescinded rather than reallocated or reprogrammed, landowners and communities miss out on LWCF funding, and these critical priorities could be lost forever.

FY25 Budget Update: The Biden Administration’s FY25 budget proposal included detailed LWCF priority project lists and balanced program allocations, as well supplemental project lists over and above LWCF’s current \$900 million funding level. [Click here to view a map of past LWCF projects.](#)



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