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New United Nations Report Highlights Importance of Land Conservation in Addressing Climate Change

“Full, permanent, dedicated LWCF funding is critical” says Coalition

WASHINGTON – In response to a new report from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stressing the critical role lands play in addressing the climate change crisis, the LWCF Coalition is calling on Congress to pass full, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). LWCF was permanently reauthorized earlier this year by wide bipartisan margins and legislation is currently being considered in the U.S. House and Senate to fund the program.

“The message of this report is clear: enhanced land uses – and land conservation – are critical in addressing climate change. Enacting full and stable funding for LWCF is a practical response Congress can take right now to heed that call,” said Jonathan Asher, Director of Government Relations for Conservation Funding at The Wilderness Society and a spokesperson for the LWCF Coalition. “Conserving strategic landscapes is critical for the well-being of our wildlife, our natural systems and our communities’ health as we work to avoid and prepare for the impacts of climate change. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is our nation’s most prominent conservation program and is already actively helping us in this effort, but this critical program must be given full, permanent and dedicated funding to ensure we reap the benefits it can offer. We urge Congress to recognize this sensible approach and provide America’s most important conservation program with the funding it needs.”

LWCF is already doing important work to mitigate climate change, increase natural resilience, and safeguard communities from the worst of its effects. Specifically, LWCF:

- **Keeps forests as forests to sequester carbon and protect watershed ecosystem services.** Forest cover is being lost to development at an alarmingly rapid rate. One study documenting New England losing 65 acres of forest to development each day led the author to conclude that **“land is our biggest asset in fighting climate change.”** LWCF is the premier source of federal funds for protecting forested landscapes whether on federal, state, local or private land.
- **Protects water supplies and natural water storage to assure clean drinking water, mitigate flooding and drought, and prevent and respond to wildfire.** More than half the American population relies on forested lands to capture and filter their drinking water. Cost-effective, resource-protective LWCF projects have protected community water supplies in countless states. Natural water storage projects like these also provide associated benefits for wildfire risk reduction not available through gray infrastructure investments.
- **Buffers communities with natural infrastructure against climatic extremes and catastrophic weather events.** LWCF contributes to risk reduction, resilience and recovery from natural

disasters with strategic conservation of coastal and riverine wetlands and forested areas in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), which protects homes or reduces the amount of property in harm's way during floods, hurricanes and wildfires. Such green infrastructure and strategic risk reduction comes at a staggeringly lower cost than seawalls, levees, and other flood control structures.

- **Provides strongholds for resilience in natural systems.** Plants and wildlife need room to migrate and adapt to climatic shifts, and large unfragmented reservoirs of biodiversity to resist/recover from pests, invasive species, fire, sea level rise, etc. Only LWCF has the tools to conserve large landscapes across jurisdictions and provide respite for species along migration routes with connected pockets and corridors of protected green space.

About the LWCF Coalition

The LWCF Coalition is comprised of more than 1,000 state and regional conservation and recreation organizations of all sizes, land owners, small businesses, ranchers, sportsmen, veterans, the outdoor recreation industry and conservationists working together to protect America's public lands and safeguard our shared outdoor heritage for future generations.

The Coalition is united in its advocacy for full, dedicated funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will ensure the continued conservation of our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, wilderness, civil war battlefields, working lands and state and local parks. For more information on LWCF and the places in each state that LWCF funds have protected, visit www.lwcfcoalition.org.