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Trump Budget Cuts Will Decimate National Parks, Public Lands

Conservation Leaders Denounce Extreme Cuts to “America’s Best Idea”; Land and Water Conservation Fund Slashed by 84% Cut

WASHINGTON, DC – President Trump’s budget proposal, released today, will do real and lasting harm to America’s national parks, wildlife refuges, national forests and public lands. The budget slashes funding for America’s most important conservation and outdoor recreation program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), by nearly 85 percent from current spending levels. The budget proposal would eviscerate LWCF as we know it.

The Trump Administration’s budget is an unprecedented attack on a program with a 50-year track record of success, enormous bipartisan support in Congress, and its own steady, dedicated funding source that does not rely on taxpayer dollars. Among the many controversial recommendations in the President’s budget, the suggested slashing of LWCF is all the more extreme, since it would block funding specifically set aside already at the U.S. Treasury solely for this program and its benefits to communities across America. Conservation leaders from across the nation reacted harshly to the budget proposal, which jeopardizes our national parks and puts all of America’s public lands at risk.

“The President’s harmful proposal to wipe out the funding that protects our national parks and public lands is completely out of step with America’s values and ignores the broad bipartisan support in Congress for the Land and Water Conservation Fund,” said **Will Rogers, President of the Trust for Public Land**. “The conservation of our national parks and outdoor heritage has always been an area of bipartisan agreement and overwhelming public support. That’s because our public lands are a defining aspect of our national character – providing access for people to hunt, fish, hike, camp, experience the incomparable American landscape, and participate in our robust outdoor recreation economy, which supports 7.6 million jobs and contributes \$887 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Conservationists, outdoor enthusiasts and leaders in Congress must speak out and oppose this attack on America’s greatest places.”

The Trump Administration budget targets essential investments in conservation and recreational access for elimination, which would have irreversible consequences. The proposed cuts to LWCF would essentially eliminate funding to protect national, state, and local parks and other natural, historic, and recreation areas, and would severely threaten public access for sportsmen and recreationists to public lands. The budget also targets state and local grants for huge funding reductions, pulling the rug out from under community-led conservation and recreation efforts.

For more than 50 years, LWCF has delivered on-the-ground conservation achievements to every state in the union. These cuts would disproportionately impact rural America and the small towns and businesses that depend upon the hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation economy for tourism and economic development.

“This budget would do real, irreversible damage to the national parks and public lands that are beloved by the American people,” said **Jamie Williams, the President of the Wilderness Society**. “Moreover, these cuts would not save taxpayers any money. LWCF is not funded by taxpayer dollars but from fees collected from offshore oil and gas drillers. The budget would siphon off nearly all of those dedicated conservation dollars for unrelated spending, breaking a 50-year-old promise to the American people that the royalties generated from offshore oil and gas drilling are reinvested into protecting our national parks, providing hunting and fishing access, trails and open spaces. We hope and expect that Congress will reject this outrageous and damaging recommendation.”

“The president’s budget falls far short of meeting the nation’s need for conservation efforts that ensure the health of lands and waters that benefit everyone,” said **Mark Tercek, President and CEO of The Nature Conservancy**. “The dramatic proposed cut to the Land and Water Conservation Fund would halt most of the on-the-ground work that communities in every state across the nation depend upon for everything from local ballfields to national parks. These outdoor spaces are often critical to local economies and family livelihoods. The long, successful history of LWCF has more than demonstrated that its investments pay off. We hope Congress will reject this proposed cut and continue to invest in nature through LWCF and many other conservation programs.”

Despite the deep and lasting cuts contained in the President’s budget, LWCF continues to enjoy broad bipartisan support in Congress. Last week, a bipartisan group of 48 Senators urged strong funding for LWCF in the Fiscal Year 2018 Interior and Environment appropriations bill. In the House, 205 bipartisan Members of Congress – including 36 Republicans – similarly signed on in support of American’s most important conservation program.

The LWCF Coalition will continue to work with lawmakers that understand the critical importance of continuing to reinvest royalties from offshore energy development into lasting natural infrastructure: our land, outdoor recreation economy, access to hunting and angling opportunities, water resources, and the history and culture of our great nation.

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About the Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is America’s most important conservation program, responsible for protecting parks, wildlife refuges and recreation areas at the federal, state and local level. For 50 years, it has provided critical funding for land and water conservation projects, recreational construction and activities and the continued historic preservation of our nation’s iconic landmarks from coast-to-coast.

LWCF does not use any taxpayer dollars – it is funded using a small portion of revenues from offshore oil and gas royalty payments. Outdoor recreation, conservation and historic preservation activities contribute more than a trillion dollars annually to the U.S. economy, supporting 9.4 million jobs.

About the LWCF Coalition

The LWCF Coalition is the umbrella group of more than 1,000 state and local land owners, small businesses, ranchers, sportsmen, veterans, outdoor recreationists and conservation organizations working to protect America's public lands and safeguard our shared outdoor heritage for future generations.

The Coalition is united in its advocacy for the reauthorization and full 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, as well as state and local parks.

For more information on LWCF and the places in each state that have been protected using LWCF funds, visit www.lwcfcoalition.org