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Bipartisan Conservation Leaders Pledge to Save America's Most Important Conservation Program

Washington, D.C. – LWCF champions Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and other bipartisan conservation leaders in the Senate and House today sounded the alarm about the looming expiration of America's most important conservation and recreation program, and vowed to save the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The conservation champions hailed the launch of the [Save LWCF campaign](#), a new yearlong effort that will highlight parks and conservation success stories in 52 states and territories. The countdown is on. LWCF will expire in 52 weeks unless Congress acts to #SaveLWCF.

Bipartisan LWCF conservation champions in the House and Senate spoke at a kickoff event at the U.S. Capitol vowing to save America's most important conservation program and make it permanent.

"Thursday, we heard from a wide variety of perspectives from both sides of the aisle, as well as both houses of Congress, about the need for a permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of the nation's oldest and most successful conservation programs, which operates with no taxpayer funding and helps local communities maintain significant landmarks as well as local ballparks and playgrounds. This conservation fund is a great example of good government and I look forward to working with my colleagues to make this well-loved program permanent," said **Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC)**.

"In Washington state, we are hikers, bikers, anglers, climbers, skiers and so much more. The LWCF lets us continue to explore our beautiful state by setting aside some of its most precious lands, while helping keep our economy humming and providing 227,000 Washingtonians with good jobs. For decades, the LWCF has brought together public and private resources to open access to trails, create wildlife corridors, and preserve our clean air and water. We wouldn't have some of the best outdoor recreation opportunities, like Olympic National Park and Riverside State Park, without the LWCF," **Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA)** said.

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund is our nation's single most successful conservation program," said **Congressman Patrick Meehan (R-PA)**. "Just a few short weeks ago, I joined conservation advocates in my own community to celebrate an LWCF-supported grant that will help preserve the historic Brandywine Battlefield in Pennsylvania. Yet if Congress does not act, the fund and its ongoing preservation projects like this one will be in danger. This could lead to the end of

conservation projects and damage to our land and heritage sites that can never be undone. Protecting the outdoors is a smart investment. It's one of those rare issues that can earn support from both sides of the aisle, and it's why I'm an original co-sponsor of legislation that makes the LWCF permanent. It's time for Congress to act to extend the LWCF."

"LWCF has had incredible bipartisan success over its near half-century of existence, touching all 50 states and nearly every county in America," **Senator Steve Daines (R-MT)** stated. "As an avid backpacker, hunter and fisherman, I know how important LWCF is to our way of life out West. Our outdoors and tourism economy supports 6.1 million jobs and we need to permanently reauthorize this important conservation program."

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of our nation's most important and successful conservation programs. Over the last half century, the LWCF has protected some of our most treasured public lands in New Mexico like the Valles Caldera and the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge," said **Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM)**. "LWCF also expands opportunities for outdoor traditions like hunting, camping, and fishing that are among the pillars of Western culture and a thriving outdoor recreation economy. Permanently and fully funding LWCF will ensure that our outdoor heritage and public lands will be protected for future generations to enjoy."

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a commonsense program that is used to protect our public lands for future generations of Americans to enjoy," said **Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO)**. "I was proud to stand with both Democrats and Republicans today and call for a permanent reauthorization of this vital program. Colorado has a booming outdoor recreation industry and LWCF is an important component of that economic sector. Colorado's sportsmen, hunters, and many others support this program and I'll do everything I can to work toward a solution."

"The LWCF is a smart investment that costs taxpayers nothing, creates jobs and pays dividends – for every \$1 invested, local communities see a \$4 return. That success shows why we can't afford to leave the program in limbo," said **Senator Tom Udall (D-NM)**. "In its 52 years, the LWCF has created urban parks like Valle de Oro and Petroglyph National Monument and conserved wild backcountry across New Mexico. There's no question that the LWCF has become one of our nation's most successful conservation programs and enjoys broad bipartisan support - yet year after year, Congress has left its future in doubt. That doesn't make any sense, and we don't have to let it happen. For the economy, sportsmen, veterans, wildlife, and our kids and grandkids, we need to fully fund and permanently reauthorize the LWCF."

"LWCF is one of our nation's most successful conservation programs. Its mission to enhance outdoor recreation supports tens of thousands of jobs across the country, and enjoys remarkable bipartisan support," said Congressman **Mike Thompson (D-CA)**. "LWCF funding has been critical to the maintenance our country's natural infrastructure, and the preservation of our most treasured outdoor places. I'm proud to join my colleagues in calling for permanent authorization of this program before its expiration in 2018."

"Susan and I raised our family hunting, fishing, backpacking, and enjoying the natural wonders in the Treasure State. Access to public lands is fundamental to our Montana way of life and must be preserved. I will continue to advocate the permanent reauthorization of the LWCF to help protect

and expand access for Montanans to hunt, fish, and recreate on public lands,” said Congressman **Greg Gianforte (R-MT)**.

“The Land and Water Conservation Fund is probably the most important conservation program you’ve never heard of. But without congressional action now, it’s at risk of disappearing,” said **Jamie Williams, President of The Wilderness Society**. “From our most iconic national parks to local parks and rec centers in nearly every county in the nation, LWCF has improved lives, communities and economies.”

About the Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is America’s most important conservation program, responsible for protecting parks, trails, 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, access to recreation including hunting and fishing, 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 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 the permanent 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, 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.