

Historic Senate Passage of the Great American Outdoors Act is Celebrated by Groups Across the Nation

“Today the Senate delivered a historic win for the conservation of America’s natural landscapes,” said **Jennifer Morris, chief executive officer at The Nature Conservancy**. “This bill would make major investments in the landscapes and landmarks vital to our economic, emotional and societal well-being. By protecting important natural spaces and investing in their care, this bill will help create jobs, rebuild local economies and expand access to the outdoors that everyone has a right to enjoy. Today’s vote puts us one step closer to fulfilling a vision set out by President Kennedy over 50 years ago, to conserve the natural resources that belong to everyone. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has helped preserve forests, open spaces, watersheds and other landscapes in every state at no cost to the taxpayer. Today’s large, bipartisan vote is an affirmation of the broad support for common-sense, effective investments in America’s outdoors. We thank our many conservation champions for making today’s vote a reality, and we urge the House to quickly follow suit.”

“It’s not often that lawmakers can say they helped pass legislation that will have an impact decades into the future, but today’s vote on the Great American Outdoors Act is one they can tell their grandchildren about,” said **Marcia Argust, project director of The Pew Charitable Trusts’ Restore America’s Parks campaign**. “The House of Representatives must step up and act next, so that our national parks and public lands can be repaired, restored, and protected for future generations.”

“People across the country need healthier, safer and better access to public lands, parks and outdoor spaces where we can build community and care for ourselves physically and emotionally. The need to safeguard the funding that goes towards our public lands, ensure they are protected and maintained, and guarantee we are providing safe, welcoming opportunities for all people to benefit from them is more urgent than ever,” said **Jamie Williams, President of The Wilderness Society**. “Today’s Senate passage of the Great American Outdoors Act gets us a step closer to Congress keeping a promise to the people it serves to invest in the natural, cultural and recreational resources that anchor our communities. We now call on the House to keep up this energy and quickly get the Great American Outdoors Act to the President’s desk, and with it, finally get full, permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund over the finish line.”

Will Shafroth, President and CEO, National Park Foundation: “Senate passage of the Great American Outdoors Act is a tremendous step forward in securing a bright future for our national parks. A product of years of bipartisan collaboration, this landmark conservation bill would make significant investments to tackle our parks’ deferred maintenance needs. As the National Park Foundation works to enrich our special places with philanthropic support, we welcome much needed federal funding to repair and enhance national park roads, water systems, trails, campgrounds, and other vital resources that serve millions of visitors every year. With momentum from Senate passage, the Foundation calls on the House of Representatives to take up the Great American Outdoors Act and send this major win for our nation’s natural and cultural legacy to the President’s desk.”

“The Great American Outdoors Act is the single greatest piece of conservation and outdoor recreation legislation passed in decades,” said **Jessica Turner, executive director of Outdoor Recreation Roundtable**. “It is proof that the outdoors crosses party lines and resonates with all Americans. We applaud Senate Republicans and Democrats — particularly Senators Cory Gardner (R-CO), Joe Manchin (D-WV) and the

other Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Restore our Parks Act sponsors — for working together tirelessly to get this done. The entire outdoor recreation industry thanks every Senator who supported this bill and looks forward to the House moving quickly to pass this measure so we can finally fully fund LWCF and begin the much-needed work on rebuilding infrastructure on our public lands and waters.”

“National parks protect some of our most iconic natural wonders and preserve the stories that unite and inspire us, from Half Dome at Yosemite to the battlefields at Gettysburg. Unfortunately, years of underfunding, decreases in staffing, record visitation and nearly \$12 billion dollars in critical repairs have put the future of these places and all they protect at risk,” **said Theresa Pierno, President and CEO of the National Parks Conservation Association.** “Park advocates have been working alongside NPCA and park champions in Congress for years to make park maintenance a priority. Today, those efforts paid off as Senators from across the aisle stood together and voted in support of our parks, public lands and communities. The Great American Outdoors Act not only provides an opportunity to better care for our national parks, it will help conserve and increase access to public lands across the country and provide jobs in communities that desperately need them. Members of Congress must work together to get this bill over the finish line in the House and ensure our children and grandchildren can experience and enjoy these treasured places now, and for years to come.”

“The Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation applauds Senate passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. Today’s vote demonstrates the bipartisan support for advancing conservation and increasing access for hunters and anglers,” **said Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation President Jeff Crane.** “When signed into law, this bill will provide much needed support for public lands and waters and boost the already formidable outdoor economy. CSF extends our sincere thanks to the Senate Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus members that voted to support these priorities.”

“As national parks and forests across the country look to safely reopen, it’s encouraging to see the overwhelming support of Senators recognizing the need to direct significant funds toward critical deferred maintenance and campground modernization needs on our public lands and waters. Twenty million RVers across the country depend on our iconic state and federal lands for recreation, conservation, enjoyment, and overnight camping,” **said Craig Kirby, RV Industry Association President.** “We are grateful to the Senators who voted today to pass the Great American Outdoors Act and address these issues through this landmark legislation that supports outdoor recreation and conservation in our most treasured lands for generations to come. Enactment of this milestone legislation will mean increased recreation access for all no matter where they live, allowing more Americans to find fulfillment in living an active outdoor lifestyle.”

“Now, perhaps more than ever, Americans are showing how essential it is to be able to access public land and water for both physical and mental health,” **said John Judge, President and CEO of the Appalachian Mountain Club.** “AMC applauds the support of Senators who helped pass the Great American Outdoors Act to permanently and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and address the backlog of maintenance on our public lands. Now we urge swift passage in the House to support our nation’s vibrant recreation economy and local communities, and help ensure that everyone will be able to reach a park, forest, or trail near them.”

“The Lyme Timber Company has been fortunate to partner with State and Federal agencies to achieve lasting conservation of working forests in more than a dozen states comprising more than a million forestland acres that deliver jobs, clean water, carbon sequestration and public recreation,” **said Peter**

Stein, Managing Director, Lyme Timber Company. “The LWCF was a critical public funding source for these actions, and permanent full funding will allow for essential increases in the pace and scale of land conservation, especially in these difficult times.”

“The Great American Outdoors Act will provide the largest investment in our nation’s historic and cultural resources in more than a generation. The nearly \$12 billion National Park Service deferred maintenance backlog, of which 47% is for historic assets, puts historic buildings and other infrastructure at risk of permanent damage or loss. This legislation would provide \$9.5 billion in dedicated funding over five years for much needed repairs of the National Park Service and other federal agencies. And permanent full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund will ensure that the source of funds used to protect such iconic places as Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, and Valley Forge National Historical Park will continue into the future,” **said Tom Cassidy, Vice President for Government Relations and Policy at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.**

It is time to come together, seek reconciliation, and find healing as we face the COVID-19 pandemic while once again confronting our greatest national sin—racism. For many, the best place to seek freedom, healing, and peace is amid God’s creation. The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) will help to restore the majestic wonder of our national parks and public lands. The GAOA will provide the much needed resources to be better stewards of our natural resources while also creating jobs during this economically uncertain time. We are especially grateful for the leadership of Senators Gardner, Daines, Portman, Manchin, Alexander, Warner, King, Burr, and the other original cosponsors of this important bill. We are thankful for their grace-filled bipartisan efforts that led to the successful passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. It is time to rekindle hope for all Americans, and the GAOA provides the perfect vehicle to do so. Let’s bring the GAOA to the finish line so we can start working for America’s healing, renewal, and transformation. - **The Rev. Mitchell Hescox, President/C.E.O., The Evangelical Environmental Network.**

“America’s forests are gifts that keep on giving for our economy and our environment: clean air and water, natural climate solutions, wood products, and some of the world’s most spectacular outdoor recreation,” **said American Forests President and CEO Jad Daley.** “This historic legislation, now one step closer to reality, will permanently conserve millions more acres of forests, from public land to private working forests, so we can sustain this natural legacy for current and future generations. American Forests thanks the tireless forest champions in the U.S. Senate who have worked literally around the clock to make this possible.”

“This legislation will ensure that the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and other public lands agencies continue to preserve our nation’s historic and recreation assets and drive the visitation that gateway communities depend on for their economic vitality. At a time of economic crisis, the U.S. Senate is ensuring that local communities will be able to leverage their parks and outdoor recreation assets to rebound in the short-term and provide exceptional experiences for decades to come.” - **Halle Czechowski, Southeast Tourism Society**

"Our National Parks and public lands are part of our heritage as Americans. By protecting and investing in them, we ensure that generations to come will benefit from America's best idea. The American Conservation Coalition is proud to support the Great American Outdoors Act because it protects this heritage and supports the hundreds of thousands of Americans whose livelihoods are connected to our National Parks and public lands. Our members on over 200 college campuses across the country congratulate the Senate leaders who worked hard to pass this historic piece of legislation." - **Benji Backer, President and Founder, American Conservation Coalition**

"Equitable access to the outdoors is essential," said **Diane Regas, President and CEO of The Trust for Public Land**. "Full and permanent funding for LWCF is a huge step forward in providing the resources needed to create outdoor experiences in places they are needed most. I applaud our congressional champions who worked tirelessly over many years to get this done. During this pandemic, we have seen that access to nature is more important than ever. But not everyone has a safe and quality place to get outside during this time. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that in far too many communities, parks and accessible natural areas are a privilege, when they should be a right. Nationwide, **100 million people—including 28 million kids**—don't have a park within a 10-minute walk of home. Additionally **state governments report needing \$27 billion** for local parks and recreation projects to expand access. The health benefits that parks, trails and public lands provide will be essential to our recovery from this crisis, and the long-term sustainability of our communities."

Hunters and anglers spoke loudly from the mountain tops to the marshes and have been rewarded by a historic vote with the Senate passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. Dedicating full funding to Land and Water Conservation Fund and addressing the maintenance backlogs of our public lands and waters with \$1.9 billion annually over the next five years will provide more access to our public lands and waters and increased outdoor opportunities for generations to come. BHA thanks Sens. Gardner, Manchin, Daines, Heinrich and many others who made this passage a reality. On to the House! We urge BHA members and others to implore our representatives to do the same and pass a clean bill in a timely fashion. - **Land Tawney, President and CEO of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers**

"Great parks and public spaces are the heart of our cities, and investing in them will help us emerge stronger, economically and socially, from the coronavirus pandemic. During this health crisis, we have experienced a renewed understanding of the important role parks and greenspace play in our physical and mental health," said **Catherine Nagel, Executive Director of City Parks Alliance**. "Mayors see the crucial role that parks play in their cities firsthand, which is why the bipartisan Mayors for Parks Coalition has advocated for full and dedicated funding for LWCF for years. Final Senate passage and full funding of LWCF will help stimulate other investments in parks and greenspace in cities helping them recover and provide more equitable access to nature."

"The U.S. Senate's passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, which includes full, dedicated funding for the LWCF, is a historic step toward ensuring this critical funding source that provides unmatched economic, environmental, social, cultural and historical value to Americans through the protection and enhancement of our public lands. In the midst of the many challenges facing our country, Americans are reminded more than ever of the healing and unifying power of our public lands. We call on the U.S. House of Representatives to quickly pass it and for the President to sign the Act." – **Larry Selzer, President & CEO, The Conservation Fund**

"The maintenance bill for our nation's parks is overdue," said **K.N. Gunalan "Guna", Ph.D., P.E., President, American Society of Civil Engineers**. "At a time (before the global pandemic) when Americans were spending more time in our parks—spending nearly \$900 billion in annual outdoor recreation, the National Park Service had a deferred maintenance backlog of nearly \$12 billion. Today's historic Senate passage of the bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act brings us one step closer to improving the "D+" parks grade and the quality of life for all Americans. I urge the House to follow suit and keep the momentum going so it can be enacted into law and we can finally get permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation fund."

"Due in large part to the ongoing pandemic, people are rediscovering the true value of our national, state, and local parks and open spaces—and how important it is to maintain them properly. As the designers and planners of these spaces, landscape architects know exactly how damaging the chronic underfunding of maintenance programs is," **said Roxanne Blackwell, Hon. ASLA, Co-Interim Executive Vice President/CEO of the American Society of Landscape Architects.** "ASLA has worked hard to permanently and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Act (LWCF) and address the maintenance backlog in our parks—and with the Great American Outdoors Act, we can finally accomplish both of those goals. We fully support this critical piece of legislation and will not stop working until it finally becomes law."

Kate Van Waes, Executive Director, American Hiking Society: "The Senate passage of the Great American Outdoors Act is a major victory for the hiking community that will expand access to the outdoors for all. With the pandemic shining a bright light on the need for equitable access to natural spaces, securing LWCF permanent funding and tackling a substantial portion of the public lands maintenance backlog will greatly increase recreation opportunities on public lands and in neighborhoods across the country, including those that have historically lacked access. The House of Representatives must quickly take up and pass this legislation and send it to the President to be signed into law."

"Public lands like the Appalachian Trail provide millions of visitors each year with much needed respite and rejuvenation, and it is essential that our public lands are given the funds they need to ensure opportunities for everyone to safely enjoy the benefits nature provides," **said Sandra Marra, President & CEO of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.** "The Appalachian Trail Conservancy applauds our Senators supporting the Great American Outdoors Act, which will provide millions in much-needed deferred maintenance funding and, at long last, fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We urge Congress to pass this important bill quickly, for the sake of our public lands, the recreation economies that depend on them, and the next generation of adventurers and conservationists."

"The Senate's passage of the Great American Outdoors Act is a huge step forward in supporting and restoring our national parks," **says Phil Francis, Chair of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks.** "The maintenance backlog in our national parks must be addressed, and full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund is long overdue. With over 40,000 years of collective experience working in national parks, we know what a difference this funding can make on the ground. We urge the House to move swiftly to advance the Great American Outdoors Act closer to the finish line."

"The Great American Outdoors Act brings much needed funding to our public lands and waters, but it also does much more. Investing in the maintenance of our shared outdoor spaces will create jobs and enhance the parks, forests, and refuges that bolster our multi-billion-dollar outdoor economy and facilitate opportunities for safe and accessible outdoor recreation. In providing support to our lands and waters, the Great American Outdoors Act, provides relief to a nation eager to work and eager to get outside," **said Mary Ellen Sprenkel, President & CEO of The Corps Network.** "We extend our appreciation for the bipartisan effort that led this bill in the Senate and look forward to seeing this historic legislation advance in the House. America's Service and Conservation Corps community stands ready to help our resource management agencies address the maintenance backlog and strengthen our outdoor infrastructure for generations to come."

"The Great American Outdoors Act is an important step in securing our parks and public lands for the next generation," **said Joel Pannell, deputy director of Sierra Club's Outdoors for All campaign.** "By addressing the multibillion-dollar park maintenance backlog and investing in park projects at all levels, this act will provide an economic boost to the communities that need it most and help rectify the unequal access that has for too long made the outdoors almost exclusively a place for the wealthy and white. When Congress first passed the Land and Water Conservation Fund 55 years ago, it made a promise to preserve and care for these precious outdoor spaces for all people to enjoy. That promise has been repeatedly broken. Today's vote moves us closer to fulfilling the promise that was made nearly six decades ago."

"The Public Lands Alliance supports the Great American Outdoors Act for its commitment to a simple promise: our national parks and public lands will be there for the American people when they are needed most. The COVID-19 pandemic has reaffirmed the American people's desire to experience the great outdoors in their neighborhoods and municipalities, but also in the grand, inspiring wide open spaces like Grand Canyon and Yosemite. And citizens should be able to expect safe facilities, trails, and roads when they go to these parks and public lands, engaging in tourism and recreation that is so important to local economies. PLA and our member organizations are incredibly grateful to the Senate for its leadership and urge the House to take up this legislation." - **Dan Puskar, President and CEO, Public Lands Alliance**