**OPPOSE the Biggs Amendment #129 to Cut the Land and Water Conservation Fund**

* Rep. Biggs’ amendment #129 is an attack on the Land and Water Conservation Fund, America’s most important conservation and recreation program. It presents a false choice between key investments in our public lands, which have long been underfunded by shortchanging both LWCF and the parks maintenance budget. This misguided amendment would rob Peter to pay Paul, defunding key Bureau of Land Management conservation priorities to address just a tiny fraction of deferred parks maintenance needs. That is an unacceptable trade-off.
* In addition to National Parks, forests, trails, wildlife refuges, and historic sites, LWCF protects working landscapes and state and local parks, so that Americans can hunt, fish, camp, paddle, climb and otherwise recreate close to home or far afield, from backyards to the backcountry. This program has a 53-year track record of success touching every state (indeed nearly every county) and fuels the $887 billion outdoor recreation economy, which supports 7.6 million homegrown, non-exportable American jobs.
* LWCF has broad bipartisan support. More than 200 Members signed a letter supporting strong appropriations for LWCF in FY19, and 230 are now cosponsors of legislation to make this critical program permanent. HR 6147 already cuts LWCF by 15% from the enacted level, meaning that now-or-never projects all over the country will be left behind, new access to public lands denied, and special places lost forever. Additional cuts would add insult to injury, and would further frustrate already-underfunded sportsmen’s access and other needs.
* The maintenance backlog at our national parks is a serious problem that needs attention, but this amendment presents a false choice that should be rejected. Any marginal increase in maintenance spending should absolutely NOT come at the expense of hunting and fishing access and other community needs.
* Sportsmen, recreationists, outdoor business owners, ranchers, conservationists, land trusts working in their local communities, and indeed advocates for our National Parks all agree—these issues are two sides of the same coin, and cannot be pitted against each other. Now-or-never conservation and recreation access priorities, faced with imminent sale and development, cannot be put on hold or traded away.
* The unwarranted reduction in LWCF funding proposed by the amendment ignores the value of inholding acquisition to solving ongoing management problems. Nearly all LWCF-acquired lands are inholdings amid other federal lands, where consolidated ownership improves management efficiency without raising operating costs. These acquisitions often reduce management costs (including wild land-urban interface firefighting costs that have been exponentially growing), resolve conflicts, and help communities address ongoing management issues such as invasive species, wildfire, etc.
* LWCF is the only source of funding to protect the key missing pieces of our public land puzzle from being sold off. This applies as strongly to BLM-administered National Recreation Areas, National Scenic and Historic Trails, National Conservation Areas, and National Monuments as it does to NPS-administered National Parks. It makes no sense to invest in maintaining our public lands at the expense of losing pieces within them.
* This amendment is a tired replay of the same attack on LWCF led by ideological opponents of federal land, who are using the sentimental attachment of Americans to the National Parks as a wedge to prevent any further conservation of places we all love, use and enjoy. A majority of this House is already on record rejecting reductions in funding for this critical, bedrock conservation law. The Biggs amendment proposes to do just that despite the already-expressed will of the House , and so the amendment must be forcefully rejected.