**Please Support Full, Dedicated Funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund**

* It is a travesty that the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been allowed to expire, despite the overwhelming bipartisan support for this critical program to be made permanent. We appreciate cosponsors of HR 502 calling on Leadership to move forward with this important legislation. Beyond simple authorization, however, there is an urgent need for dedicated full funding into the future for LWCF, which continues to see much of its annual Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) energy revenue diverted away from LWCF authorized purposes. There is a new bipartisan bill in the House to address this need (HR 6759) and we urge you to sign on as a cosponsor as soon as possible.
* As you know, the $900 million deposited each year directly into the LWCF account at Treasury represents an absolutely essential conservation tool for our communities and a longstanding conservation offset for offshore oil and gas production. And every year, even as a portion of the deposits are used for their intended and vital purposes, the majority of that funding is spent elsewhere. In fact, more than $22 billion has been diverted from the LWCF account over the past 54 years to other, unknown purposes. This is more than the amount that has actually been spent on LWCF’s conservation and recreation access mission!
* Such chronic diversion has created a backlog of unmet conservation and recreation needs and a long line of willing-seller landowners and community stakeholders clamoring for access to these funds. Landowners who wish to see their land conserved should have that option without having to wait on pins and needles for years through an uncertain process, and deserve viable options for keeping working lands in production through easement sales.  Likewise, all communities that have lined up matching funds from state, local and private sources deserve a reliable federal partner.
* And yet this year the Administration proposed to ZERO OUT LWCF and to divert ALL its OCS revenue, with Secretary Zinke and others citing “the LWCF model” as the basis for using OCS revenues for the parks backlog – even as the Administration proposes to pit parks maintenance against conservation needs and to bleed LWCF itself dry.
* In truth, the OCS spending legislation (HR 6510) that passed the House Natural Resources Committee in September ignores the LWCF pre-existing commitment by actually guaranteeing dedicated annual OCS funding for deferred maintenance needs. Meanwhile, because dedicated funding for LWCF was not addressed, LWCF funding remains subject to the vagaries of the budget, constraints on annual appropriations, and attacks from the Administration. The compromise language on LWCF permanent reauthorization that passed the House Natural Resources Committee was a major step forward; still if OCS funds are dedicated to other purposes, LWCF must not be left in the lurch.
* Our parks and other public lands are unfinished, and are threatened by the development of homes or the closure of lands within their borders.   LWCF is the solution to this challenge. LWCF also enhances access to outdoor recreation from local park to national park in a way no other funding source can do. It is a critical underpinning of this country’s $887 BILLION outdoor recreation economy. Dedicating LWCF’s OCS revenues will address conservation and outdoor recreation needs at the local, state, and federal levels as it will provide the certainty and consistency for planning that communities, landowners and states need.
* America cannot get its fiscal house in order without honest budgeting. Legislation codifying permanent and dedicated allocations for LWCF would finally stop the diversion of LWCF funds that have been specifically put aside from offshore royalties, and use them only for their intended purpose instead of allowing them to vanish into the general revenue stream with no accountability. The LWCF dedicated-funding bills in both chambers (S. 569, H.R. 6759) ensure Congressional oversight and control through the appropriations process, including the assessment of annual needs and adjustment of allocations according to changing opportunities and submissions from state and community partners. This framework ensures an important layer of protection and accountability across changing Administrations.
* Please stand up for LWCF and make sure its half-century claim to OCS funding is honored now.  Any proposal that sets aside dedicated OCS revenues for new commitments, however worthy, MUST provide the same level of certainty to LWCF and the communities that depend on it. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee wisely chose to advance dedicated funding for both of these key priorities in early October, passing LWCF full dedicated funding legislation (S. 569) by a wide bipartisan margin while also discharging a parks maintenance bill.
* As the House moves forward on consideration of HR 6510, we therefore urge you to ensure that LWCF full and dedicated funding is advanced on an identical trajectory. A new bipartisan bill has been introduced to achieve this, HR 6759, and we urge you to join as a cosponsor TODAY.