

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 22, 2015

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Fifty years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America's most successful conservation and recreation program. The bill was designed to assure our growing population that outdoor recreation lands would be secured, on a pay-as-you-go basis, for future Americans' requirements. As we mark this anniversary and count down to the deadline on expiration of this critical investment tool on September 30, we are writing to express our strong support for LWCF; to note a recent bipartisan agreement in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee; to ask for your help in ensuring that the program does not lapse in the coming month; and to urge that its permanent reauthorization be enacted this session.

Investments in LWCF support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for all Americans, in rural communities and cities alike. It has created outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and 98 percent of counties across the country, opening up key areas for hunting, fishing, and other recreational access; supporting working forests and ranches; and acquiring inholdings and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields, and other federal areas. The State and Local Grants Program provides crucial support for state and local park acquisitions in cities, counties, and rural towns as well as recreational facilities and trail corridors. It is the government's primary investment tool for ensuring that children and families have access to close-to-home recreation, having funded over 42,000 projects including sports fields, outdoor recreation facilities, and trails. The Section 6 grants program provides states and counties with essential resources for habitat conservation that in turn allows for appropriate economic development. The Forest Legacy Program provides matching grants to state that help maintain critical forestry jobs while protecting outdoor resources, recreational access, and local economies. And the American Battlefield Protection Program provides grants to assist state, local and private partners who are working to protect the sacred ground of our history.

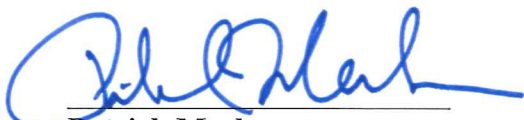
As our nation continues down the path towards economic recovery, the LWCF should be permanently reauthorized. Additionally, honest budgeting is needed to ensure robust and consistent funding for LWCF, so it can continue to play a strong role in revitalizing local communities. America's outdoor recreation, conservation, and preservation economies contribute \$1.06 trillion to the nation's economy each year and support 9.4 million American jobs (1 out of every 15 jobs in the U.S.). Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

As you know, LWCF uses no taxpayer dollars. Instead, LWCF funds are primarily derived from oil and gas receipts paid to the federal government by energy companies that extract publicly-owned resources from the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Congress created LWCF as a bipartisan promise to return precious resources back to the American public by using these funds specifically for conservation and recreation purposes. LWCF remains the premier federal program to conserve our nation's land, water, historic, and recreation heritage. We must act to retain the program's authorization as soon as possible.

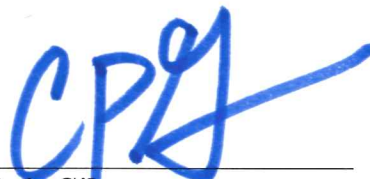
We respectfully ask your help in identifying and securing a legislative path forward for LWCF. Just before the August recess, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee approved a bipartisan agreement to permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund as part of broader energy legislation. Included was the 1.5% sportsmen's access provision that has been included in all proposed LWCF legislation for the last several years and is critical to making public land truly public, since changing land use and ownership patterns has blocked historic and much-needed access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation. Also included was an additional focus on prioritization, cost efficiency, and other program transparency and accountability features designed to ensure that this highly successful program continues to meet communities' conservation needs while helping to protect and maintain our shared heritage. With this clear evidence of the other chamber's interest in moving LWCF forward, we hope the House can lead the way and ensure that permanent LWCF reauthorization along similar lines is included in legislation enacted this year.

As supporters of America's most important conservation program, we support the LWCF language adopted by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and urge its inclusion, in the coming days before the program expires, in any legislation likely to become law this year. We must act quickly to renew this program, and we look forward to working with you toward that end.

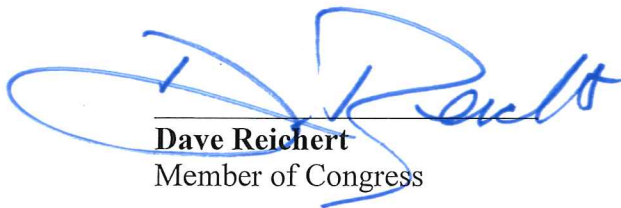
Sincerely,



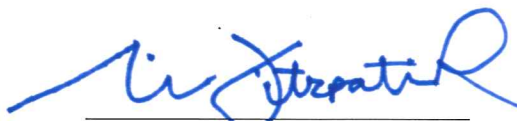
Patrick Meehan
Member of Congress



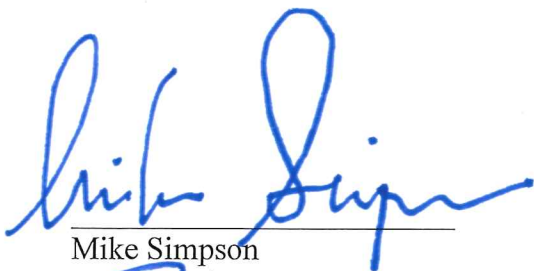
Chris Gibson
Member of Congress



Dave Reichert
Member of Congress



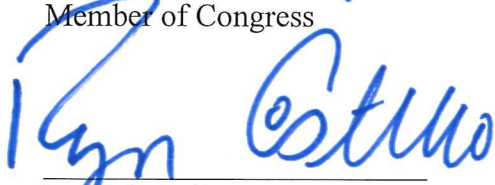
Mike Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Mike Simpson
Member of Congress



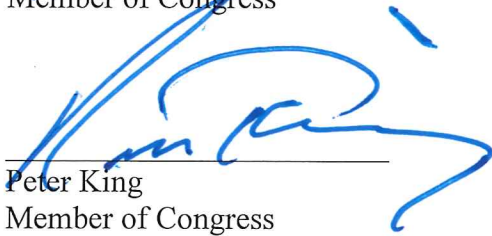
Dan Benishek M.D.
Member of Congress



Ryan Costello
Member of Congress



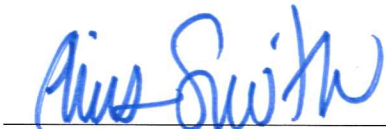
Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress



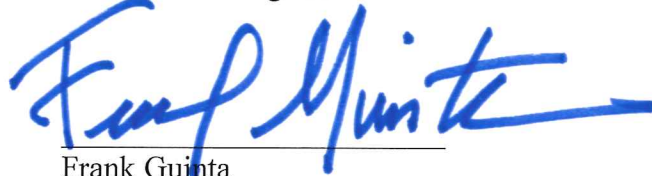
Peter King
Member of Congress



Robert Dold
Member of Congress



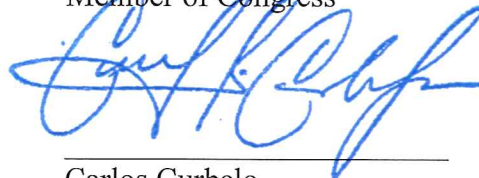
Chris Smith
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Frank Guinta
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Charles Dent
Member of Congress



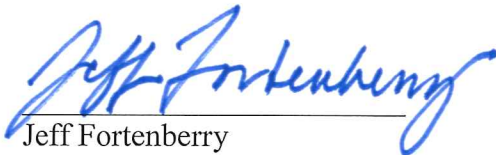
Carlos Curbelo
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Richard Hanna
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Tim Murphy
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Jeff Fortenberry
Member of Congress



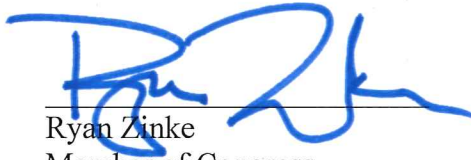
Frank LoBiondo
Member of Congress



Leonard Lance
Member of Congress



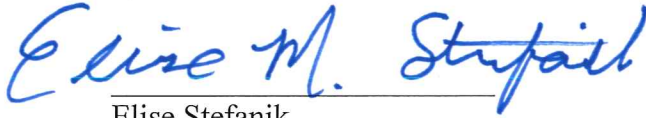
David Joyce
Member of Congress



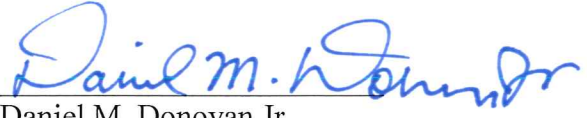
Ryan Zinke
Member of Congress



Adam Kinzinger
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Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress



Daniel M. Donovan Jr.
Member of Congress



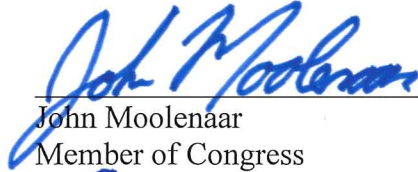
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John Katko
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Martha McSally
Member of Congress



John Moolenaar
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Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



Ander Crenshaw
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