



Gary Herbert
Governor of Utah
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Vice Chair

Dan Crippen
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September 29, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell, Chairman Bishop, and Ranking Member Grijalva:

The nation's governors urge Congress to reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) before it expires on September 30th. We encourage you to quickly reach an agreement on reauthorization because any lapse would create budgetary uncertainties for states that rely on the LWCF to support recreation and conservation initiatives.

Governors have used LWCF matching grants through the state assistance program for decades to fund parks and other outdoor recreation initiatives, and this program has been an instrumental tool for states to address their conservation needs. Attached are governors' recommendations for reauthorizing LWCF to benefit both federal and state programs that receive funding.

We look forward to continuing to work with Congress to reauthorize the program and provide quality public recreation and conservation opportunities.

Sincerely,

Governor Matthew H. Mead, Wyoming
Chair, Natural Resources Committee

Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., California
Vice Chair, Natural Resources Committee



Governors' Recommendations for Reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

A robust outdoor recreation economy creates jobs, promotes health and wellness, and facilitates economic growth in the states. Since 1965, state and local governments have matched over \$4 billion in LWCF state grants, generating \$8 billion in capital investment to ensure that citizens and future generations have access to world-class outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and territory. These investments demonstrate the tremendous value of effective state-federal collaboration, which has helped propel the outdoor recreation economy to become a major contributor to the U.S. economy, supporting millions of direct jobs and generating billions in annual tax revenue at the federal, state, and local level.

Given the diversity of our states and the unique understanding of local needs and resources, state and local governments are best positioned to address statewide recreational opportunities and deficiencies, while managing these resources in the most efficient, sustainable, and cost-effective manner. Governors submit to Congress the following principles to assist in bipartisan reauthorization of LWCF:

PRINCIPLES:

- **Full, Guaranteed, Long-Term Funding** – Re-authorize and provide funding for the program at or exceeding a permanent baseline of the authorized \$900 million FY15 level and ensure long-term predictability for LWCF formula-based state-side annual appropriations. Protect against the diversion of federal revenues that are dedicated for the LWCF trust account and avoid displacing federal funds intended to be shared with states.
- **Certainty & Stability** – Recognize the role that existing federal programs play in accomplishing state conservation goals, but increase the allocation to the LWCF State Assistance program, in recognition of the original allocation where 60 percent of total funds were allocated to states and the remaining 40 percent went towards federal-agency-led programs. Ensure sufficient funding for federal programs from which states derive direct benefit, which include but are not limited to the Forest Legacy Program and the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (Section 6), as well as other investments in National Parks, forests, wildlife refuges and other public lands.
- **Public/Private Partnerships** – Authorize states to leverage private resources to develop, acquire and manage outdoor recreation resources on public lands.
- **Innovation & Strategic Partnerships** – Modernize federal outdoor recreation efforts by developing a new innovation fund to reward state innovations that create modern outdoor recreational opportunities for the 21st Century. The innovation fund should supplement traditional LWCF state-side funding.
- **Formula Funding for State-Side Appropriations** – Preserve the formula funding method to distribute state-side appropriations, as opposed to a competitive grant program.
- **Farmland & Conservation Easements** – Authorize states to use LWCF funds to purchase farmland conservation easements and long-term conservation easements that allow public access for outdoor recreational purposes.
- **State-Federal Collaboration & Planning** – Leverage state resources and local knowledge to ensure that state needs and plans are considered throughout the entire project development process for federal land acquisition, and protect state budget capacity where federal land holdings limit state and local tax bases by fully funding federal programs that are intended to mitigate budget shortfalls. Ensure that states that are active participants in the state-federal partnership have access to LWCF funds.