

April 28, 2016

The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
304 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
304 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the committee:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, the undersigned organizations write to express strong opposition to the LOCAL Management Act being heard on April 28. The bill preempts federal oversight of our nation's public lands by adding unnecessary and burdensome bureaucracy to management decisions while rolling back 50 years of successful community conservation by imposing arbitrary and capricious limits on important community-supported land protection.

The LOCAL Management Act proposes numerous unnecessary demands on public land managers to coordinate with local communities when they are already doing so, including:

- Counterproductive changes to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (and other conservation programs) as a thinly disguised effort to undercut the success of LWCF
- Elimination or significant alteration of 95% of land acquisitions on National Wildlife Refuges while inhibiting the creation of new refuges, with similar impacts felt on all public lands
- Putting local land managers under considerable pressure to share management responsibilities, even in situations where that would be inappropriate
- Changing the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act by requiring the land management agencies, before establishing or increasing fees, to submit their proposal to the local government and request their comments on the merits of the fee change before approval
- Requiring the Forest Service and BLM to attend regular county commissioner or other local government meetings, report on agency activities, and respond to concerns raised by the commissioners or meeting attendees
- Requiring the Forest Service and BLM to offer NEPA cooperating agency status to a county or other affected local community for any forest, travel, or other management activity with significant impact on the community.
- Requiring the Forest Service to obtain concurrence of a county or local community before it can make any decision regarding a Forest Service road, which could entirely prevent or unnecessarily delay vital closures of little-used or poor condition roads that contribute to sediment runoff, polluting the rivers and streams that provide drinking water to millions of Americans and critical habitat for fish and wildlife
- Many other similarly burdensome requirements on public lands managers.

On the Land and Water Conservation Fund, this proposal prohibits further meaningful protection of our public lands at the federal level in the West by imposing an arbitrary and capricious administrative restriction on lands west of the 100th Meridian to only 15% of total project acreage. Looking at the current list of projects proposed in the FY17 President's Budget, this requirement would prevent completion of even top-ranked projects like the one at Grand Teton NP (a community-supported project decades in the making) and foreclose all other projects in western states that fall lower in the rankings.

The bill similarly imposes unreasonable and arbitrary restrictions that would undermine efforts to protect national trails, Civil War battlefields, historic areas, wildlife habitat and other important lands. It would block private property owners from concluding free market agreements that have been reached on the use of that property on a willing seller/willing buyer basis, as well as discriminate against inholders who happen to abut some state or other private land.

We urge the House Natural Resources Committee to reject the call for counterproductive changes to the LWCF and support the program as an efficient and effective toolbox for every state and county in America to tap into when in order to address their community-based conservation, recreation and historic preservation needs. The Committee should support the Murkowski-Cantwell provisions to LWCF from the Energy Policy Modernization Act, which the Senate just approved by a vote of 85-12.

Our nation's public lands are managed for all Americans to use in concert with local communities, and land managers are already working effectively with those communities across the country to support good conservation decisions. They need to be supported in doing so with increased funding rather than having to navigate significant additional red tape and management uncertainty. We urge you to oppose the LOCAL Management Act and instead work to support our nation's public lands and the land managers who protect and steward them for the benefit of all Americans.

Sincerely,

Alan Rowsome
Senior Director of Government Relations
The Wilderness Society

Ani Kame'enui
Director, Legislative & Government Relations
National Parks Conservation Association

Mary Beth Beetham
Director of Legislative Affairs
Defenders of Wildlife

Rebecca Judd
Senior Legislative Counsel
Earthjustice

Jen Beasley Ujifusa
Legislative Director
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

David Jenkins
President
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship

Desirée Sorenson-Groves
Vice President, Government Affairs
National Wildlife Refuge Association

Kristen Miller
Conservation Director
Alaska Wilderness League

Nat Mund
Legislative Director
Southern Environmental Law Center

Sara Chieffo
Vice President, Government Affairs
League of Conservation Voters

Gary Werner
Executive Director
Partnership for the National Trails System

Scott Slesinger
Legislative Director
Natural Resources Defense Council

Randi Spivak
Director Public Lands Program
Center for Biological diversity

Athan Manuel
Director, Lands Protection Program
Sierra Club