THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

PROTECTING AMERICA’S HUNTING AND FISHING HERITAGE

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Hunting and fishing in America is the envy of the world. Our public lands and waters mean that you don’t need to be wealthy or a private landowner to access incredible sporting opportunities on magnificent landscapes. Our shared outdoor heritage is nothing less than a representation of our democratic ideals.

America’s lands and waters have been there for sportsmen and women in the past, but the future of these shared resources depends on our actions now. The imminent expiration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund on September 30, 2018 means that Congress must vote now for this critical program to endure.

Since 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been one of the most effective sources of funding for expanding access for hunters and anglers, acquiring and protecting important wildlife habitat, and providing a line of defense for wildlife against the increasing pressures of urbanization, development, droughts, and wildfires. It’s a fund that has reached all 50 states, and it doesn’t cost the American taxpayer a single penny.

Sportsmen and women have been among the most ardent supporters of the Land and Water Conservation Fund because of the responsibility they feel to protect our outdoor heritage for future generations. It’s the right thing to do to ensure that America’s sporting legacy lives on.

Now it’s time for Congress to share some responsibility. The future of hunting and fishing in America depends upon their commitment to reauthorizing and fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
Hunting and fishing in America is part of the booming outdoor recreation economy. According to a report from the Outdoor Industry Association:

- Outdoor recreation in America generates $887 billion in consumer spending and provides 7.6 million jobs.

- More Americans are directly employed by hunting and fishing than by oil and gas extraction.

- Americans participating in outdoor recreation annually spend $27,378,300,082 on hunting and $35,775,827,140 on fishing.

The outdoor recreation economy shows no signs of slowing down, but it depends on having healthy and accessible lands and waters for people to enjoy. That’s a challenging and important responsibility, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund is there to help. For over 50 years, this fund has proven to be an effective tool for making sure that Americans can access places to pursue the activities they love, whether it’s hunting, fishing, hiking, paddling, climbing, cycling, or just getting outdoors to relax with family and friends.
In 2017, the National Wildlife Federation started Artemis, a group of bold, impassioned sportswomen who are out to change the face of conservation.

Artemis is developing a dynamic sportswoman’s community, representative of all walks of life that comes together around a shared conservation vision that promotes camaraderie and a dedication to working, playing, and fighting for wildlife and wild lands together.

Full-funding and permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund is central to Artemis’ vision of a healthy and connected habitat, thriving wildlife, accessible wild places, and the future of our hunting and angling traditions. Here’s one angler’s story.

The Greek goddess Artemis is the protector of the hunt and of nature. She knew it as her duty to protect wildlife and the sanctity of the hunt. Artemis co-founder Jessi Johnson is pictured here on a hunt in Idaho. Photo by Kenton Carruth
WHY THIS ARTEMIS SPORTSWOMAN LOVES LWCF

My name is Danielle Bailey. I am an angler, a mom, and a preschool teacher living in Missoula, Montana. I grew up fly fishing with my family on the forks of Oregon’s Rogue River, and now take pleasure in Montana’s many rivers and streams.

As an angler, I value the quiet waterways where I can get lost in the rhythm of the current. As a conservationist, I care deeply about the health of our waters and wildlife. As a mother and an educator, it is profoundly important to me that we have places that are secluded, adventurous, and wild, but that are safe and accessible for kids at the same time. I want my daughter and my students to have access to nature, fishing, and wildlife. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a cornerstone for all of these priorities.

In Montana, 70% of our fishing access sites have benefitted from LWCF. Thanks to LWCF, I can fish at Johnsrud, a state fishing and boating access site on the spectacular Blackfoot River just 15 miles outside of Missoula. Thanks to LWCF, I can take my students to Pineview Park to toddle along a trail, flip rocks to look for bugs, and ignite a love of the natural world. LWCF helps me introduce my daughter to the innumerable joys of angling, and that, in my mind, makes it indispensable.

I am committed to stewardship of our lands and waters for future generations of anglers, and that is just one reason why we must reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund now.
Outdoor recreationists of all types agree that the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a program that works. It has supported conservation across America from national parks and wildlife refuges to funding countless projects like trails, parks, playgrounds, national forests, baseball fields, and cultural and historic sites.

For sportsmen and women, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is especially meaningful since it addresses a range of critical concerns for anyone who loves to hunt or fish on public lands: access, wildlife habitat, and opportunities to restore natural systems.

If you have ever heard an elk bugle in the Rocky Mountains, caught a native cutthroat trout in a high mountain stream, camped in a national forest, admired the beauty of America’s national parks, enjoyed the estuaries, wetlands and wildlife habitat of America’s coastlines, or marveled at the abundance of migrating ducks, geese, and shorebirds at a wildlife refuge, then you are the likely beneficiary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Access for hunting and fishing can sometimes be tricky, especially in places where ownership follows a checkerboard pattern of public and private lands. This pattern is especially common in the West as a result of frontier development laws passed in the late 1800s. Today, prime public lands and waters can be blocked in by private lands, making public access impossible. The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership recently reported that a total of 9.52 million acres of federal public land across 13 western states are surrounded by private lands and thus inaccessible to the public.
“There was a time, perhaps, when we could afford to not understand all the nuts and bolts of how our government works, of how our opportunities are won for us. But the attack on the LWCF has proven that such a time is definitively ended. To continue to have the same or a better quality of life than we have enjoyed for the past half century, and to have an improving, rather than declining, environment, to maintain our beautiful public lands, and our access to them, will take action, now. The LWCF must be a part of that, and only an engaged and tenacious—even furious—citizenry can make sure that it does not expire.”

-Hal Herring, lifelong sportsman, 30-year sporting conservation journalist, and contributing editor to Field and Stream.
By supporting our public lands, enhancing wildlife habitat, and creating greater sporting access and opportunities, LWCF has been crucial to protecting America’s hunting and fishing heritage. Photo: Nick Dobric

Understanding the various components of LWCF helps explains its broad reach across America, from habitat to ballfields. Every year, all of the funding is split into federal or stateside dollars. The federal dollars support four agencies—the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service—to acquire lands for outdoor recreation of all kinds. The state dollars are used for a matching grant program to help states with the planning, acquisition, and development of places for outdoor recreation. Each state awards their grants through a competitive selection process. LWCF also supports federal programs with related purposes, such as the Forest Legacy program. These various funding streams mean that LWCF has huge impact across many priorities including:

- Providing Sporting Access: LWCF enables hunters and anglers to use national forests, national monuments, and BLM lands. Countless river access sites have been funded by LWCF dollars, creating more opportunities for anglers. The program has also helped fund Wild and Scenic river areas, ensuring healthy riparian habitats.
• Supporting Forest Restoration: LWCF forest restoration projects help improve wildlife habitat as well as reduce the severity of devastating wildfires.

• Building Communities: Stateside dollars from LWCF have supported thousands of playgrounds, splash parks, baseball fields, hockey rinks, tennis courts, soccer fields, and walking and biking trails.

• Preserving Battlefields: The American Battlefield Protection Program uses LWCF funding to acquire and protect lands where important and historic battles were fought such as Vicksburg, Shiloh, Antietam, and Gettysburg.

• Protecting Working Lands: The Forest Legacy Program uses LWCF dollars to acquire conservation easements on working forests on a voluntary basis from interested landowners. Since 1990, the program has conserved over 2.6 million acres of forests.

• Providing Equitable Access to the Outdoors: The new Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership has provided millions of dollars to 22 cities to plan and build parks and other recreation facilities in underserved communities.

LWCF provides essential funding to protect critical wildlife habitat and promote wildlife corridors. On the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, LWCF has been used to purchase key inholdings to ensure healthy habitat and connectivity for species like Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep. Photo: Andrew Black
Below are just some examples of how the Land and Water Conservation Fund is supporting the places hunters and fishermen love.

**ARIZONA**

The Santa Teresa Mountains offer extraordinary hunting, hiking, birding, and backpacking opportunities in western Graham County. LWCF recently increased public access into a landlocked area by acquiring 600 acres of the ET Ranch. The BLM, the Trust for Public Land, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the South Eastern Arizona Sportsman Club worked together to complete the $480,000 purchase, which will open public access to the 5,800-acre BLM wilderness area and the 26,800-acre Santa Teresa Wilderness Area in the Coronado National Forest.

**COLORADO**

More than $2 million of LWCF funding has been used for the Arkansas River Special Resource Management Area, now part of Browns Canyon National Monument. The stretch of the Arkansas River in the monument is the most popular whitewater rafting location in the country. It’s part of a 102-mile Gold Medal trout fishery, making for a popular spot for anglers to try their luck with brown and rainbow trout. Ancestors of the Ute, Apache, Eastern Shoshone, and Comanche used the area for hunting and gathering. Thanks to its protection as a national monument, it remains open to hunting and provides important habitat for bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer and many other wildlife species.
In coastal environments throughout the United States, LWCF helps promote healthy fisheries and is critical to providing greater access and opportunity to anglers by providing funds for boat ramps as well as fishing piers. Here a fly-fisherman hooks into a mighty “Silver King” (tarpon) off the coast of Florida. Photo: Captain Ethan Kiburz

FLORIDA

The Everglades is known as the “River of Grass.” One third of this national park is covered by water, making for excellent year-round fishing and providing critical estuarine habitat. Snapper, sea trout, redfish, bass, and bluegill are abundant in the area. LWCF has been a significant source of funding—providing over $220 million to Everglades National Park and Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area—to help restore this badly damaged ecosystem. Looking for an unusual hunting opportunity? Join the effort to eradicate the invasive Burmese Pythons from this one-of-a-kind ecosystem. Everglades National Park and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission are looking for volunteers to help triple the number of hunters to reduce the number of pythons and restore balance to this landscape.

IDAHO

In Idaho, the Land Water Conservation Fund and the outdoor industry go hand in hand. Home to major outdoor retailers First Lite, Waterworks-Lamson, and Tenkara Rod Company, Idaho’s sportsmen and women can hunt and fish on LWCF funded lands and rivers with some of the top gear in the country. Whether wearing First Lite camo to chase big mule deer in the Frank Church Wilderness with access points funded by LWCF, or using a Lamson reel or a Tenkara rod to hook beautiful native cutthroats on the LWCF funded South Fork of the Snake River, Idaho’s sportsmen and women understand the value of protecting public lands and promoting local jobs through outdoor recreation. In a state where over 1 million people hunt, fish and enjoy wildlife watching each year as well as contribute $923 million to the state economy annually, each of these companies recognize that they and Idaho’s sporting community has a lot to lose if the Land and Water Conservation Fund expires. That is why each of these companies have joined up with the Idaho Wildlife Federation to support permanent reauthorization and full funding of the Land Water Conservation Fund. As First Lite’s Paul Peterson puts it, “First Lite fully supports public access, and LWCF plays a large role in providing access for outdoor opportunities. The number one issue facing hunters and anglers today is access, and we support this program that promotes preserving access.”
MINNESOTA

The legendary Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness has received over $14 million in LWCF funding. Visitors enjoy canoeing, hiking, and fishing across its 1,090,000 acre landscape in Minnesota’s Superior National Forest. 1,200 miles of canoe routes and mean that most choose to travel by canoe through this mosaic of glacial lakes and forests. Walleye, northern pike, smallmouth bass, lake trout and brook trout attract anglers to fish the many lakes, ponds and streams found in throughout the Boundary Waters. After a long day of fishing, visitors can relax and tell stories by a campfire at one of the area’s 2,000 designated campsites.

MONTANA

Thanks to $10 million in LWCF funding and $500,000 from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Montanans celebrated a deal in 2015 to protect 13 square miles of elk and other wildlife habitat at Tenderfoot Creek. A coalition of 34 Montana sportsmen’s groups supported the deal to add the former Bair Ranch, part of the Smith River watershed, to the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation led negotiations with the Bair Ranch and the Tenderfoot Trust. The ranch was originally made up of inholdings in the national forest, creating a checkerboard ownership pattern that was challenging to manage. Now the land can be managed continuously, trout spawning streams and big game winter ranges are protected, and hunting and fishing access is guaranteed.

PENNSYLVANIA

LWCF funds were used to help establish Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge, over 20,000 acres of wetland and upland habitats that are home to five federally listed threatened or endangered species. Public hunting is permitted on 270 acres to help with wildlife management, restore balance to animal populations within the refuge, and allow threatened species to thrive. More than 140 birds species and up to 20,000 migrating raptors use a migratory flyway on the Kittatinny Ridge on the south side of the valley. The refuge is awaiting LWCF funding to complete a 3,371 acre acquisition that would increase outdoor recreation opportunities for the community and provide even more habitat for this important area.
Renowned sportsman Hal Herring imagined the loss Americans would experience in a future without the Land and Water Conservation Fund: “The end of the LWCF will be the end of an era in the U.S., an era in which the common citizens have come to expect a higher quality of life, cleaner waters for swimming, open spaces for running and playing with their children, the ability to hold on to traditions like hunting and fishing, hiking, wandering and camping, experiencing the true freedom of our birthright as Americans.”

We can’t let that happen. Since 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has helped make sure hunters and anglers have places to get outdoors and enjoy the sports they love. In all 50 states, LWCF is supporting wildlife, protecting habitat, and ensuring public access for sportsmen and women. It’s time for Congress to step up and reauthorize and fully fund this amazing resource that benefits us all. The future of our beloved hunting and fishing heritage depends on their action.
Brown trout, Boulder Creek, Colorado. Photo: Aaron Kindle