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September 16, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Speaker
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Minority Leaders Schumer, and McCarthy:

As affiliate organizations of the National Wildlife Federation, and on behalf of our millions of members and supporters devoted to conservation and the outdoors, we write to support full-funding, this year and beyond, of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Funding LWCF at the authorized level of \$900 million each year is vital to conserve fish and wildlife habitat, and expand outdoor opportunities for hunters and anglers, across the country. We encourage Congress to commit FY20 resources to this goal, and seek opportunities to quickly pass the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act, (S. 1081, H.R. 3195), to provide permanent full-funding for the program.

Congress created the Land and Water Conservation Fund in 1964, and intended it to be funded at its authorized level—which since 1978 has been \$900 million annually. Unfortunately since the program’s inception, Congress has delivered on that promise just twice. Many billions of dollars have been redirected to pay for unrelated budget items.

H.R. 3195 and S. 1081 would ensure that \$900 million each year is expended only for projects benefitting conservation, outdoor recreation and access—at no cost to American taxpayers. The bipartisan nature of these bills is overwhelming and merits attention. Allocating the full amount this year and passing permanent funding would finally and fully realize the full potential of what this program could, and should, be. It would also reflect the bipartisan consensus that this is the right thing to do for LWCF.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of America’s most successful wildlife conservation and recreation programs. It has made a positive impact on all fifty states, and nearly every county in our country. Its success in enhancing recreational opportunities is recognized at famous fishing sites such as the Madison River in Montana, family recreation spots such as the Great Sand Dunes in Colorado and famous hiking spots such as the Appalachian Trail which passes through fourteen states from Georgia all the way to Maine. Each of our organizations has a similar project with its own story to tell, and a new story waiting to be told by future generations

Remarkably, nearly 10 million acres of our public lands are land-locked and currently unavailable to the public because they are isolated by private inholdings or other issues. Full, dedicated, permanent funding would allow for more LWCF purchases to secure permanent access, connect existing public lands, and create expanded parking and trailhead access for the public. It is the only way to ensure that the acquisition-for-access centerpiece of the program, which is crucial to the sporting community, continues to grow. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is the primary funding source for acquisition and conservation of new public lands essential to sustaining our outdoor traditions and safeguarding fish and wildlife habitat.

We are grateful that in February, Congress overwhelmingly supported permanent reauthorization of LWCF. It is now time to deliver on the full promise and potential of this beloved conservation program to keep outdoor traditions, and fish and wildlife, within reach for future generations. Congress can do that by appropriating \$900 million for the program this fall and by expeditiously approving bipartisan bills in the House and Senate that would make this commitment permanent.

We appreciate Congress’ past support of LWCF. It is time for that support to be reflected in FY20 appropriations and passage of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter. Please don’t hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Arizona Wildlife Federation

Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Arkansas Wildlife Federation

Conservation Coalition of Oklahoma

Association of Northwest Steelheaders

Conservation Council for Hawaii

Colorado Wildlife Federation

Conservation Federation of Missouri

Conservation Northwest
Delaware Nature Society
Earth Conservation Corps
Environmental Advocates of New York
Environmental Council of Rhode Island
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Florida Wildlife Federation
Georgia Wildlife Federation
Idaho Wildlife Federation
Indiana Wildlife Federation
Iowa Wildlife Federation
Kansas Wildlife Federation
Kentucky Waterways Alliance
Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Michigan United Conservation Clubs
Minnesota Conservation Federation
Mississippi Wildlife Federation
Montana Wildlife Federation
National Aquarium
Natural Resources Council of Maine
Nebraska Wildlife Federation
New Hampshire Audubon
New Jersey Audubon
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Nevada Wildlife Federation
North Carolina Wildlife Federation
North Dakota Wildlife Federation
Ohio Conservation Federation
PennFuture
Planning and Conservation League
Prairie Rivers Network
Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
South Dakota Wildlife Federation
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
Tennessee Wildlife Federation
Texas Conservation Alliance
Vermont Natural Resources Council
Virgin Islands Conservation Society
Virginia Conservation Network
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Wyoming Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Federation