



America Speaks Out: Protect Our Public Lands

Washington, DC (February 16, 2011) – Today the President is announcing a new community-driven conservation and recreation agenda for the country, encapsulated in a report entitled, *“America’s Great Outdoors.”*

John Kostyack, Vice President of Wildlife Conservation for the **National Wildlife Federation** said this about the report:

“At the same time the House of Representatives mounts a sneak attack on conservation through the budget process, the America’s Great Outdoors initiative points us in the opposite direction. It confirms what most Americans already know: we can’t afford to lose our threatened open spaces and natural ecosystems.

“National Wildlife Federation strongly supports the report’s call for full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which takes a small portion of offshore oil revenues to acquire special places for open space, wildlife habitat, and recreation. The LWCF is a vital tool to provide areas for children and families to connect to the outdoors by creating new parks, trails, wildlife refuges, and more.

“The Land and Water Conservation Fund is among the priorities in the Americas Great Outdoor initiative that depend on Congress taking action through the budget and appropriations process. Congress must act now to seize upon this investment opportunity. Conserving open spaces and ecosystems provides a way to nurture healthier kids, some of whom have lost their connection to nature. At the same time, protecting the wild in our world will give us, as well as future generations, millions of outdoor recreation jobs, places to fish and hunt, diverse wildlife populations, clean water to drink, and clean air to breath.

“When broad and diverse constituencies stood up at listening sessions, met with officials from multiple government agencies, and called and wrote their Congressional representatives, their overarching theme was that America has treasured landscapes that should be cared for so that wildlife can thrive and future generations can enjoy them as we do today.

“As Congress and the President debate about budgets, they must heed the nation’s call for making conservation a priority by implementing the recommendations in the Great Outdoors report. We cannot compromise our nation’s commitment to clean air, clean water, healthy wildlife habitat, and green spaces for children and families to connect to nature.

With the emphasis on local conservation and coordination through the interagency “AGO Council”, the report’s recommendations respond to the concerns of the public.

“With fish and wildlife on the decline in many parts of the country due to compromised and diminishing habitat and rapidly growing climate change impacts, this timely report focuses our attention on the continued need to conserve open spaces, home to many iconic fish and wildlife species. Unless we make conservation investments today, we risk losing our natural heritage forever.”