

## Introduction of Great American Outdoors Act in the House of Representatives Draws Support from Groups Across the Nation

“The Great American Outdoors Act is the conservation investment our country needs, creating jobs and boosting local economies by enhancing treasured natural spaces,” said **Tom Cors, director of government relations for lands at The Nature Conservancy and a spokesman for the LWCF Coalition**. “As the last few months have demonstrated, nature plays a vital role in our emotional and economic well-being. The investments in this bill will protect important landscapes, expand outdoor recreation opportunities nationwide and ensure our great outdoors and the communities it supports will be ready for generations of visitors to come. The broad, bipartisan support for the bill shows widespread understanding that conservation is a part of the solution for the challenges we face. We urge lawmakers to continue working together to finalize this much-needed investment in our communities and our natural world.”

“The bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act is a much-needed win for the American people. It will create jobs in communities across America, restore aging national park and public lands infrastructure, preserve historic sites, and protect recreation access,” said **Marcia Argust, project director of The Pew Charitable Trusts’ restore America’s parks campaign**. “Now more than ever, people recognize the importance of getting outside. Taking care of these places and the communities and small businesses that depend on them is a smart investment.”

“The Great American Outdoors Act provides desperately needed investment to communities across the country,” said **Gene Karpinski, President of the League of Conservation Voters**. “The Land and Water Conservation Fund preserves our natural and cultural heritage, it helps tell the stories of the diverse communities in our country, and it supports green spaces across the country—providing greater access to nature closer to home while supporting our outdoor recreation economy. That’s why it’s more important than ever to invest in our health and economic recovery by fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund and addressing the maintenance needs in our national parks and other public lands. Congressman Cunningham is once again leading the way on commonsense conservation solutions. This bill introduction accelerates the momentum across both chambers of Congress for the Great American Outdoors Act. Let’s get it done.”

**Will Shafroth, President and CEO, National Park Foundation:** “Introduction of the House’s bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act brings us one critical step closer to enacting this historic win for national parks into law. Years in the making, this popular and significant legislation would provide much needed funding for our parks’ considerable deferred maintenance needs by investing in facilities, roads, water systems, trails, and other resources that are essential to the visitor experience. By fixing our parks, the Great American Outdoors Act will ensure these special places are preserved for future generations, remain accessible to all Americans, and continue serving as economic engines for local communities. The National Park Foundation applauds the bill’s bipartisan sponsors for their leadership, and the many members who’ve rallied around our national parks during this difficult time. Let us do what is right for our parks today and into the future by getting this important bill across finish line.”

Before this crisis hit, Congress was poised to pass the most important piece of legislation to support outdoor recreation access in a century – the Great American Outdoors Act,” said **Jessica Wahl Turner, Executive Director, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable**. “As the nation shifts to longer-term economic investments and stimulus packages, we need Congress to act now more than ever to invest in our nation’s

outdoor recreation infrastructure and get Americans outside and back to work. This bill would provide support for communities eager to invest in close-to-home recreation access, improve infrastructure for all outdoor activities, and support the recreation economy. Great American Outdoors Act will have a long-term economic impact on rural communities and improve the safety and viability of outdoor experiences during this pandemic and for decades to come.

“We thank Reps. Cunningham, Fitzpatrick and the majority of bipartisan members who support fixing our national parks and protecting more outdoor areas for nature to thrive,” **said Kristen Brengel, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association.** “From Yellowstone to the Grand Canyon, our national parks have crumbling roads, trails and water systems that are in desperate need of repair. Fixing our national parks will put thousands of people to work in every state and should be a part of our nation’s economic recovery.”

“The Great American Outdoors Act offers innovative solutions and sustainable funding that will address the deferred-maintenance backlog on federal lands, which is critical to improving and expanding national campgrounds,” **said RV Industry Association President Craig Kirby.** “Campgrounds on federal lands are currently showing distressing signs of wear: crumbling roads and bridges; deferred maintenance needs; and limited camping availability, jeopardizing not only the RV industry but the entire outdoor recreation industry.”

“Today’s bipartisan House introduction of the Great American Outdoors Act gives an invigorating jolt to the growing momentum in Congress to fully fund our parks and public lands. The COVID pandemic has shown just how critical our national, state and local parks, trails and public lands are to the economies of communities across the country. And it is clearer than ever that we need more and safer outdoor spaces for people in every community to experience the health and emotional benefits of time spent with nature. We thank the champions of this bill for their tireless leadership, and urge both chambers of Congress to drive this legislation over the finish line and send the Great American Outdoors Act to the President’s desk.” – **Jamie Williams, President of The Wilderness Society.**

"Sportsmen and women across the country are thrilled with the introduction of the Great American Outdoors Act," **said Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation President Jeff Crane.** "The resources provided through this legislation represent one of the most significant contributions ever made to addressing the federal lands maintenance backlog and increasing public access for sportsmen and women. We are extremely grateful for the leadership and commitment of the bill sponsors."

“The Lyme Timber Company has been fortunate to partner with State and Federal agencies to achieve lasting conservation of working forests in more than a dozen states comprising more than a million forestland acres that deliver jobs, clean water, carbon sequestration and public recreation,” **said Peter Stein, Managing Director, Lyme Timber Company.** “The LWCF was a critical public funding source for these actions, and permanent full funding will allow for essential increases in the pace and scale of land conservation, especially in these difficult times.”

“The nearly \$12 billion National Park Service deferred maintenance backlog, of which 47% is for historic assets, puts historic buildings and other infrastructure at risk of permanent damage or loss. The Great American Outdoors Act is a bipartisan solution that would provide \$9.5 billion in dedicated funding over five years for much needed repairs of the National Park Service and other federal agencies. Along with fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund, this bill would ensure preservation of some of our nation’s most iconic historic places from Independence Hall to Mesa Verde National Park,” **said Tom**

**Cassidy, Vice President for Government Relations and Policy at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.**

"We have a duty to be good stewards of God's creation, to protect and defend the beauty of the land and water, and to have clean skies and fresh air for our children to enjoy," **said Rev. Mitchell C. Hescox, President/CEO of the Evangelical Environmental Network.** "It is vital that we restore our parks so that the nearly 300 million annual visitors can have a safe, enjoyable, and sacred experience. Americans deserve safe and functional public lands, and that is why the Great American Outdoors Act is so crucial. This legislation also provides a much needed boost for the economy and putting America back to work."

"America's forests are languishing under a massive funding shortfall. Millions of acres of forestland don't have the protection they need, which jeopardizes the clean water, carbon storage, jobs and outdoor recreation they provide for all Americans. This bill is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect and restore America's precious natural heritage," **said Jad Daley, President & CEO, American Forests.**

"This legislation will ensure that the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and other public lands agencies continue to preserve our nation's historic and recreation assets and drive the visitation that gateway communities depend on for their economic vitality. At a time of economic crisis, Rep. Joe Cunningham (D-SC) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) are ensuring that local communities will be able to leverage their parks and recreation assets to rebound in the short-term and provide exceptional experiences for decades to come." - **Halle Czechowski, Southeast Tourism Society**

"Our National Parks and public lands are part of our heritage as Americans. By protecting and investing in them, we will ensure that generations to come will benefit from America's best idea. The American Conservation Coalition is proud to support the Great American Outdoors Act because it will protect this heritage and support the hundreds of thousands of Americans whose livelihoods are connected to our National Parks and public lands. Our members on over 200 college campuses across the country urge Congress to pass this historic piece of legislation." - **Benji Backer, President and Founder, American Conservation Coalition**

"Full and dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund would be an enormous boost for the millions of people who need access to parks and public lands. I'm pleased to see the bipartisan leadership in supporting local parks, open space, and iconic public lands funding with the introduction of The Great American Outdoors Act. I applaud Congress' continued commitment to ensuring full and dedicated funding to LWCF," **said Diane Regas, President and CEO of The Trust for Public Land.**

"Hunters and anglers have advocated for full and dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund for years, and Rep. Simpson has been right beside us. He understands the critical role LWCF plays in providing access to great places to hunt and fish. He also appreciates the importance of resolving checkerboard lands and addressing the maintenance backlogs of our public land management agencies. Backcountry Hunters & Anglers thanks Reps. Simpson and Cunningham for introducing the Great American Outdoors Act. We look forward to working with them to get it across the finish line." - **Land Tawney, President and CEO - Backcountry Hunters & Anglers**

"All residents of urban communities deserve great parks and public spaces. They are the heart of our cities and investing in them will help us emerge stronger, economically and socially, from the current health crisis," **said Catherine Nagel, Executive Director of City Parks Alliance.** "The more than fifty members of the bipartisan Mayors for Parks Coalition have advocated for full and dedicated funding for

LWCF for years. Now more than ever that funding is needed to stimulate other investments and to help our cities recover and provide equitable access to nature.”

“The maintenance bill for our nation’s parks is overdue,” **said K.N. Gunalan “Guna”, Ph.D., PE, President, American Society of Civil Engineers.** “At a time (before the global pandemic) when Americans were spending more time in our parks—spending nearly \$900 billion in annual outdoor recreation, the National Park Service had a deferred maintenance backlog of nearly \$12 billion. The bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act would reduce the maintenance backlog and address critical infrastructure needs at our national parks - in addition to funding the Land and Water Conservation fund. It’s time to tackle the deferred maintenance backlog to not only improve the “D+” parks infrastructure grade, but to help our citizens enjoy the great outdoors and communities flourish. A ‘yes’ vote on this bill is one step closer to improving the quality of life and preserving our national treasures for generations to come.

“As many Americans are increasing the use of federal, state, and local parks it has become clear that the need for repairs and maintenance of these treasured spaces is paramount. The National Park Service needs nearly \$12 billion to address deferred maintenance needs while the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is continuously raided for non-conservation purposes. Luckily, the Great American Outdoors Act would offer a remedy to both these issues, and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) is proud to endorse this legislation,” **said Wendy Miller, FASLA, President of the American Society of Landscape Architects.** “Landscape architects helped design the first national parks and have been involved in their planning and protection ever since. We look forward to continuing our work with Congress and partners on the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act.”

“Now, perhaps more than ever, Americans are showing how essential it is to be able to access public land and water for both physical and mental health,” **said John Judge, President and CEO of the Appalachian Mountain Club.** “AMC applauds the strong bipartisan support for the Great American Outdoors Act and urges swift passage to permanently and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and address the backlog of maintenance on our public lands. In doing so, Congress will support our nation’s vibrant recreation economy and local communities and help ensure that everyone will be able to reach a park, forest, or trail near them to enjoy time in the outdoors that is truly restorative.”