

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

More than fifty years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America's most successful conservation program. The bill was designed to assure our growing population that outdoor recreation lands would be secured, on a pay-as-you-go basis, for future Americans' requirements. We are thrilled that Congress has just voted overwhelmingly to reauthorize LWCF permanently in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (S.47), making a definitive statement in support of LWCF as a uniquely constructed, common-sense concept: that proceeds from public resource extraction will be dedicated to the protection of our greatest natural parks and outdoor places.

LWCF deserved to be made permanent because it's a program that works, to the benefit of all Americans. Now that Congress has resoundingly affirmed its commitment to LWCF as originally intended by protecting its annual \$900 million deposits for the long-term, we look forward to working on a bipartisan basis towards directing those funds to their intended conservation purposes.

We urge you to recognize the resounding level of support for LWCF and the compelling now-or-never needs the program addresses in communities across America by investing the increased resources needed to successfully implement this valuable, time-tested program in the FY 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. We thank you for funding LWCF at an increased level in the FY 2019 omnibus appropriations bill, and also note that there are still many time-sensitive unmet needs in our states and districts that were not addressed at this level. We therefore urge you to significantly increase this crucial investment in the coming fiscal year to address the growing unmet needs for recreation and conservation in every state and county in America.

Investments in LWCF support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for all Americans, in rural communities and cities alike. It has created outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and 98 percent of counties across the country, opening up key areas for hunting, fishing, and other recreational access; supporting working forests and ranches; and acquiring inholdings and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields, and other federal areas.

The State and Local Grants Program and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program provide crucial support for state and local park acquisitions in cities, counties, and rural towns as well as recreational facilities and trail corridors. It is the government's primary investment tool for ensuring that children and families have access to close-to-home recreation, having funded over 42,000 projects in virtually every county in the nation.

The Cooperative Endangered Species grants program provides states and counties with essential resources for habitat conservation that in turn allows for appropriate economic development. The American Battlefield Protection Program ensures the protection of America's Civil War and Revolutionary War sites at the state and local level. And finally, the Forest Legacy Program helps maintain critical jobs in the woods while protecting outdoor resources, recreation access, and local economies.

As you know, LWCF uses no taxpayer dollars. Congress created LWCF as a bipartisan promise to return precious resources back to the American public by using federal energy revenues specifically for conservation and recreation purposes. Unfortunately, over the 50-year history of LWCF, over \$20 billion of the funds designated for LWCF have been diverted from their original conservation and recreation purpose. This chronic problem has created substantial unmet conservation and recreation needs; has caused state, local, and federal land management agencies to postpone or cancel many important priority projects; and has created undue hardship for many property owners.

Despite this history of underfunding, LWCF remains the premier federal program to conserve our nation's land, water, historic, and recreation heritage. LWCF funds support an entire suite of conservation tools to address national, state, local, and regionally-driven priorities across the country. These include working lands easements that keep farmers and ranchers as stewards of the landscape that provides their livelihoods, working forest projects that keep timberlands forested and accessible and provide jobs in our rural communities, and vital recreation access projects – making public lands public – for hunting, fishing, and other activities.

LWCF is essential to America's outdoor recreation, conservation, and preservation economies, which together contribute \$1.06 trillion to the nation's economy each year and support 9.4 million American jobs (one out of every 15 jobs in the U.S.). Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies in the coming months to ensure that the suite of LWCF programs receive the high priority and significantly increased funding they need in FY 2020 to maintain our commitment to conservation and recreation, as well as to states and local communities. As Americans continue to visit forests, parks, historic battlefields, and wildlife areas in increasing numbers across America, we urge you to provide the funding levels necessary to ensure these opportunities exist everywhere in our great nation. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

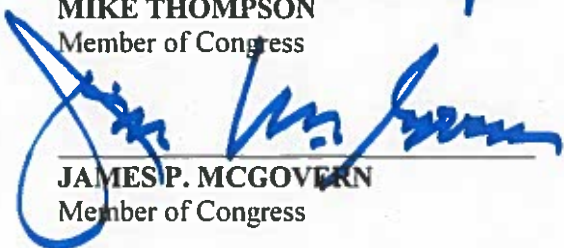
Sincerely,



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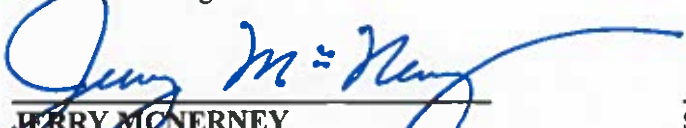

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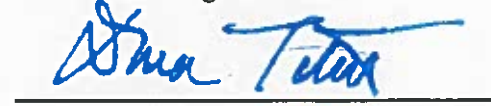

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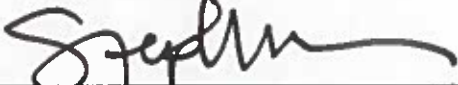

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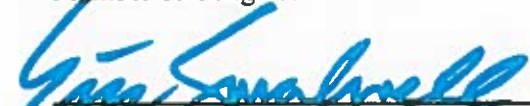
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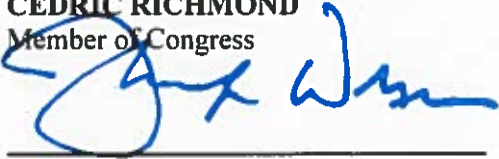

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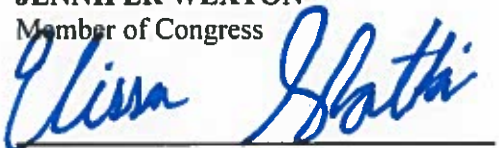

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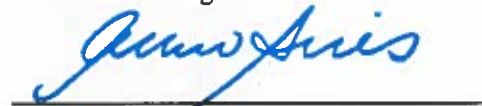

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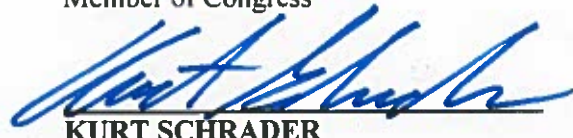

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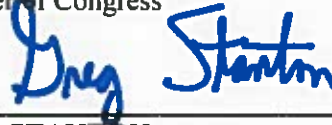
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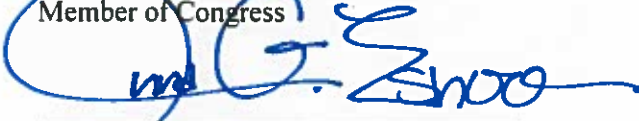
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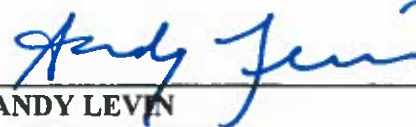
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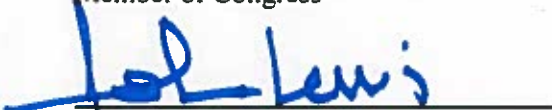
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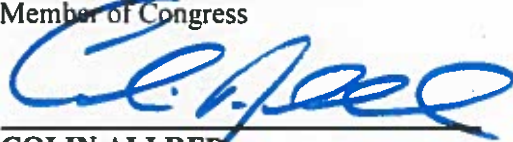
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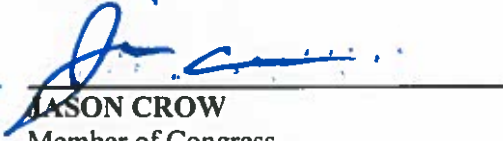
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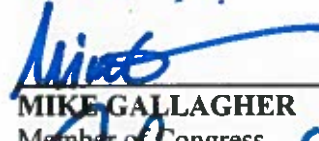
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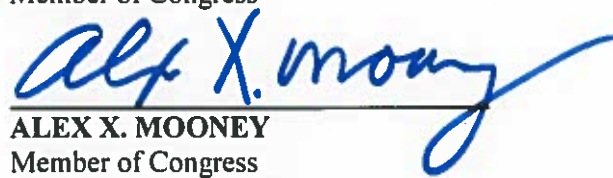
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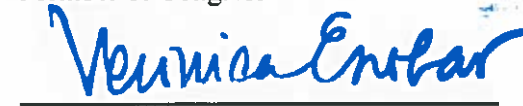
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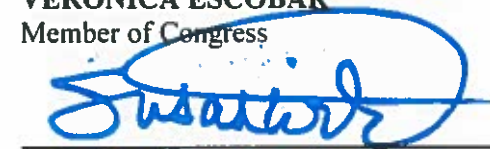
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