United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2015

Hon. Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid:

Fifty years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America's most successful conservation and recreation program. The Fund was designed to assure that outdoor recreation lands would be secured, on a pay-as-you-go basis, for future generations. As we mark this anniversary, the expiration of this critical investment tool on September 30 is quickly approaching. We write to express our strong support for LWCF, to ask your help in ensuring that the program's authorization does not lapse, and to urge that its permanent reauthorization be included in legislation to be enacted this session.

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; acquiring inholdings and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields, and other federal areas; and making additions and improvements to state and local parks and recreation facilities.

Lasting authorization and consistent funding of the LWCF will help ensure that the Fund plays the strongest possible role in revitalizing local communities. America's outdoor recreation, conservation, and preservation economies contribute over $1 trillion to the nation's economy each year and support 9.4 million American jobs, this is one out of every 15 jobs in the U.S. Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

The LWCF uses no taxpayer dollars, and instead, funds are primarily derived from oil and gas receipts paid to the federal government by energy companies that extract publicly-owned resources from the Outer Continental Shelf. Congress created LWCF as a bipartisan promise to return precious resources back to the American public by using these funds specifically for conservation and recreation purposes. Despite its history of underfunding, LWCF remains the premier federal program to conserve our nation's land, water, historic, and recreation heritage.

We urge the inclusion of a short-term reauthorization of the LWCF in the coming days before the program expires on September 30, and seek your commitment to work with us to achieve permanent authorization and consistent funding of the LWCF in any legislation

poised to become law this year. We must act quickly to renew this program, and we look forward to working with you toward that end.

Sincerely,

Richard Burr
United States Senator

Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Lamar Alexander
United States Senator

Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Michael Bennet
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Lindsey Graham
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Angus S. King
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator

Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

Gary Peters
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

James E. Risch
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Mark Warner
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator