

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

June 24, 2019

Senator Lisa Murkowski
Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Joe Manchin
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Full committee hearing to review LWCF

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Manchin:

On behalf of the human powered outdoor recreation community, thank you for holding a hearing to consider the benefits of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Our community strongly supports LWCF, and we greatly appreciate your efforts leading to the passage of permanent reauthorization of the program through the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. We strongly support full and dedicated funding for LWCF, and we greatly appreciate the efforts of the committee toward passage of S. 1081, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

Outdoor Alliance and the outdoor recreation community strongly support the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and we applaud its recent permanent reauthorization. Over the life of the program, however, Congress has not lived up



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to the program's full promise, and more than \$20 billion collected expressly for LWCF purposes have been misdirected. To fulfill the promise of LWCF, we strongly support S. 1081 to ensure that each year, LWCF's full \$900 is applied toward recreation and conservation goals.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is an overwhelmingly successful program for achieving balanced use of public lands by directing a portion of royalties from off-shore oil and gas development toward targeted recreation and conservation projects. To highlight just a few of the benefits LWCF has provided for human powered outdoor recreation:

- In West Virginia, critical river corridor protections have been established for the legendary Gauley and New Rivers. For the Gauley, all of the public access points along the Middle and Lower stretches of the river—used by more than 50,000 people annually—have been made possible through LWCF.
- In Colorado, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park is home to superlative multi-pitch climbing and one of the most high-quality multi-day class V whitewater runs in the intermountain West. The area has benefitted from \$2.8 million in LWCF funding to protect nearly 11,000 acres in the Park.
- In Montana, the 320 acre Bozeman Pass project protected an area under intense threat of development to ensure continued access to climbing sites and mountain biking trails. Nearby, the Chestnut Mountain acquisition offers spectacular views, amazing mountain bike trails, and high quality limestone with an abundance of rock climbing.
- In California, San Onofre State Beach received more than \$71,000 in LWCF funds in 1972 to support park improvements. Those funds helped make San Onofre a worldwide destination, and California's 5th most visited state park, bringing in more than 2.5 million visitors annually. San Onofre is arguably one of the most valued stretches of beach in California because the park houses world class surfing, camping, and hiking. The park also provides refuge for 12 threatened and endangered species and contains sacred Native American sites.¹

¹ Additional examples of the ways in which LWCF has benefitted human powered outdoor recreation are available in story-map form at <https://outdooralliance.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=e415ef4ccc1446258c642de1b0ea55c4#>.



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While the examples above represent marquee attractions and resources protected through LWCF, there are thousands of less-iconic areas where access and enjoyment, as well as conservation values, have benefitted from LWCF, and these places are of tremendous value to local communities across the country. Over the life of the program, LWCF has funded close-to-home recreation opportunities in all fifty states and every congressional district. According to a recent study by the Trust for Public Land, spending on land acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund produces a return on investment for local economies at rate of 4 to 1.²

We appreciate the committee's longstanding support for LWCF, and we look forward to working with you to advance S. 1081.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Executive Director, Outdoor Alliance
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Interim Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater
Dave Wiens, Executive Director, International Mountain Bicycling Association
Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers
Phil Powers, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club
Sarah Bradham, Acting Executive Director, the Mazamas
Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club
Chad Nelson, CEO, Surfrider Foundation

² THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND, RETURN ON INVESTMENT FROM THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND, <https://www.tpl.org/return-investment-land-and-water-conservation-fund>.

