



April 30, 2015

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

Senator Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: “Hearing on the reauthorization and potential reforms to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)”

The outdoor industry is near and dear to Americans and their heritage and a huge economic driver that contributes to healthy communities and healthy economies. The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is the leading trade association for the outdoor industry, supporting the growth and success of manufacturers, distributors, suppliers, sales representatives, and retailers of outdoor recreation apparel, footwear, equipment and services. As you would suspect, the management of our outdoor recreation assets, including our national public lands and waters, and state and local parks, is profoundly important to the 142 million Americans who recreate outdoors each year, and to the thousands of companies in our sector.

Recreation is a significant economic driver, with Americans spending over \$646 billion on outdoor recreation each year. This is twice as much as they spend on pharmaceuticals or cars. Outdoor recreation also contributes \$40 billion in federal tax revenue and \$40 billion in state and local tax revenue. Over six million Americans are directly employed by outdoor recreation. The outdoor recreation economy depends on availability and access to quality trails, waterway, forests and parks- locally, state and federally run. Just like any other industry, our businesses rely on investments in quality infrastructure for our public lands and waters and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is the most successful program that has, and we hope continues to, support the growth and success of the outdoor industry.

This bedrock conservation policy was created more than 50 years ago, with a unanimous vote in the House, based on the simple premise that as we extract resources from the

earth, we should give something back. LWCF uses a fraction of the \$6.7 billion in revenues from Outer Continental Shelf development and invests that money in creating and maintaining quality outdoor experiences for all Americans.

From our backyards to the backcountry- LWCF has helped sustain and improve outdoor recreation opportunities for the last half-century in every county and every congressional district. Our industry depends on having continued access to these recreational opportunities and LWCF is a critical policy for the millions of jobs and billions in economic activity our industry creates, not to mention the appeal for attracting international tourists who visit our public lands and spend money in our gateway communities. It is not just the Fortune 500 brands who benefit from LWCF investments on our public lands- it is the mom and pop specialty retailers outside a park, the small businesses who run outdoor trips in our forests, the specialty manufacturers who make fly rods and the thousands of businesses who choose to locate near accessible public lands for recruitment and quality of life.

Given that there is not a one size fits all approach to managing our state and federal public lands, we hope Congress can come to a compromise that keeps all of the tools in tact, honoring the original intent of the law. Appropriate land acquisition by the states and federal government can reduce management costs and improve accessibility, and local input on projects requiring match dollars is a critical component to the stateside program. Fully funding LWCF at \$900 million annually could only improve the health of communities and economies across the country and provide more funds to the federal, stateside and forest legacy programs that fuel the outdoor recreation economy.

As Senator Angus King mentioned in last week's hearing, there are few things that the next generation will thank us for, and preserving and protecting public spaces for recreation is one of them. Extracting depletable assets compliments the LWCF program, which reinvests in permanent, sustainable recreation on public lands and is the "most farsighted, in fact visionary statutes passed in the last 100 years" (Senator King). Honoring this farsighted vision means addressing the backlog on our public lands through the appropriations process; using LWCF dollars for maintenance is inappropriate, and not the original intent of the law.

With LWCF expiring at the end of September, we urge the committee to call attention to this incredible success story and to spread the word about the great projects happening in districts and states across the country, with benefits that will be realized for generations to come. Not only should LWCF be permanently reauthorized, it should be fully funded at the originally intended level of \$900 million dollars. LWCF has received only a fraction of its intended appropriation, \$18 billion less than intended due to diversions.

Thank you for your attention to an issue that directly affects businesses large and small, American citizens, international tourists, and most importantly, future generations. The potential benefits to the American people from fully funding LWCF are extraordinary. As our nation continues to grow and seek quality outdoor experiences, we urge the committee to understand the good work LWCF has done over the last 50 years and

support this vital resource for the next 50 years. Please view the outdoor industry as a partner and we look forward to working with you in the coming months on this important bipartisan legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Barker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Barker" clearly legible.

Steve Barker
Executive Director
Outdoor Industry Association

CC:

Jennifer Mull, Backwoods
Gordon Seabury, Toad & Co
Marc Berejka, REI
Ann Krcik, The North Face
Hans Cole, Patagonia
Sally McCoy, CamelBak
Peter Metcalf, Black Diamond