



March 20, 2012

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James P. Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Moran:

We wish to extend our thanks and appreciation to you for your work on the FY12 Interior Appropriations bill and ask for your continued support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and specifically, the State Assistance program of the LWCF as you consider funding for FY13.

Once again, it is imperative that you provide funding for the State Assistance program. We specifically ask you to allocate 40 percent of total LWCF funding to the State Assistance program, the same amount that is provided to the federal land acquisition program and ask you to take steps to ensure the State Assistance funds are distributed to the states and localities using the same formula that has been successful from FYs 1965-2011- a formula which does not include a competitive grant program administered by the Department of Interior (DOI).

As you may recall, the LWCF is budget neutral. The authors of the original legislation determined that revenues raised from the sale of oil and gas leases would be the perfect source of funds for reinvestment toward the conservation and protection of our nation's outdoor recreation areas at the state and local level. As a result, throughout its forty-six year history, the LWCF State Assistance program has provided critical funds in 98% of the counties across America. Funds are distributed to every state in the nation on a formula basis which recognizes the individual needs of rural and urban areas. States then award grants to projects within their borders based on the needs identified by the states.

There is a misconception that LWCF is only a federal land acquisition program. That is not true as local communities receive significant benefit from the program through grants for capital construction and improvement projects for outdoor recreational resources such as playgrounds and recreation areas. The LWCF State Assistance program fosters economic growth through support of active outdoor recreation, which contributes \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy and supports 6.5 million American jobs according to research done by the Outdoor Industry Association. Another study by the University of Massachusetts notes that investment in park and recreation conservation projects, such as those supported by the LWCF State Assistance program, creates jobs at an even higher rate than sectors such as new highway construction, oil, gas, and solar energy projects. LWCF State Assistance grants are also leveraged dollar for dollar and more through a required non-federal match.

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Once again, for FY13, the DOI has proposed changing the distribution formula of the program; specifically proposing to use a significant portion of State Assistance funds for a DOI administered competitive grant program. Such an idea would effectively decrease the amount of funding to each state through the current formula and reduce the number of local projects that are constructed annually.

We fully recognize that the country is in an economic crisis and program reductions and eliminations must be implemented in order to salvage our nation's financial security. However, at a time when the states are facing \$18.5 billion in unmet outdoor recreational needs, funding for the State Assistance program is even more critical.

The organizations and members signed below are asking you to strengthen the investment in states and local communities by allocating a minimum of 40% of the total LWCF funding to the State Assistance program in the FY13 Interior Appropriations bill. We applaud the decision you made in FY12 to not fund a DOI administered competitive grant program, and we ask you to again specify, in the language of the bill, that for FY 13, zero State Assistance dollars are to be used for the DOI competitive grant program.

Thank you for supporting a program that benefits your constituents and all of those across the U.S.

Sincerely,

Members of the National Recreation and Park Association:

Alabama Recreation & Parks Association
Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association
California Association of Park & Recreation Commissioners and Board Members
California Park and Recreation Society
Colorado Parks and Recreation Association
Georgia Recreation and Park Association
Illinois Association of Park Districts
Kansas Recreation and Park Association
Maine Recreation and Park Association
Maryland Recreation and Park Association
Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association
Missouri Park and Recreation Association
New Jersey Recreation and Park Association
New York State Recreation and Park Society
North Carolina Recreation and Park Association
North Dakota Recreation and Park Association
Oklahoma Recreation and Park Society
Ohio Parks and Recreation Association
South Carolina Recreation and Park Association
Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association
Texas Recreation and Park Society
Virginia Recreation and Park Society
Washington Recreation & Park Association
Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association

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Members of the National Association of State Park Directors and /or the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers:

Tim Wishum, Alabama State Parks
Rob Grant, Alabama Trails Commission
Richard Davies, Arkansas State Parks
Charles Salkin, Delaware State Parks
Bill Hopkins, Delaware State Parks, Retired
Becky Kelley, Georgia State Parks
Yvonne Ferrell, Idaho State Parks
Kevin Szcodronski, Iowa State Parks
Linda Lanterman, Kansas State Parks
Bill Bryant, Missouri State Parks
Chas Van Genderen, Montana State Parks
Doug Eiken, NASORLO
Phil Bryce, New Hampshire State Parks
Tommy Mutz, New Mexico State Parks
Kris Marek, Oklahoma State Parks
Marilyn Serrano, Puerto Rico National Parks Company
Phil Gaines, South Carolina State Parks
Doug Hofer, South Dakota State Parks
Joe Elton, Virginia State Parks, President, America's State Parks Foundation
Danette Poole, Virginia Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Kaleen Cottingham, Washington State Office of Recreation and Conservation
Domenic Bravo, Wyoming State Parks, President, NASORLO