



STATE OF DELAWARE

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

TATNALL BUILDING, SECOND FLOOR  
WILLIAM PENN STREET, DOVER, DE 19901

JACK A. MARKELL  
GOVERNOR

PHONE: 302-744-4101  
FAX: 302-739-2775

August 3, 2015

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John C. Carney  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Sirs:

Fifty years ago Congress passed the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, an epic bipartisan measure that provides urban and rural outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans. The LWCF Act expires in less than 100 days. With your support, the Act will be reauthorized beyond September 2015. We are also asking you to support rebalancing funding in favor of states during this reauthorization.

Since 1965, the LWCF has been a principal resource in the creation and ongoing protection of public parks of all shapes and sizes. These include large state and regional parks, neighborhood parks, swimming pools, athletic fields, playgrounds, trails, and wildlife areas. Today, more than 98 percent of the nation's counties have received LWCF state assistance. Delaware has realized over \$34 million in LWCF support matched with an equal share of state and local funds and private donations.

There are four important aspects to the LWCF Program. First, the Fund is not supported by taxpayer dollars, but rather by an array of income sources, including royalties from offshore oil drilling. Second, funds do not go toward short-term operational needs, but for the acquisition of lands and the development of outdoor recreational opportunities. Third, each site acquired or developed is protected in perpetuity, so that it remain available for future generations of Americans. Finally, federal assistance is matched equally by state and local dollars, which today represents a total investment of more than \$8 billion in the state and local system of parks and recreation areas.

When Congress passed the LWCF Act, its primary purpose was to provide close to home outdoor recreation locations, by guaranteeing that sixty percent (60%) of the Act's funds were to be dedicated to be distributed on a matching basis, to states and territories with forty percent (40%) to go to federal land acquisition. Since that date state grant appropriations have been subject to intense lobbying and now only have averaged 12.5%. As a result, Delaware received only \$450,000 this year as well as recent years. At this funding level, it is challenging to make progress in meaningful outdoor recreation investments.

While tremendous strides have been made in meeting local outdoor recreation needs using LWCF augmented with state and local funds, there remain significant investment needs to address new parks and outdoor recreation opportunities for our growing and changing population, infrastructure upgrades, and in meeting current with health and safety requirements.

We need to think about future generations of Americans and how we ensure that they too will enjoy safe places to play and recreate. It was necessary and important in 1965, and it is arguably even more important now. This program directing funds to states aligns with Delaware's recent park and trail investments, and our efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and building outdoor recreation industries. Parks created through this visionary law will provide areas that will always be available to address outdoor recreation for our youth, adults, senior citizens and people of all abilities.

I request your support to renew the LWCF Act with a restored commitment to an equitable share for state grants. Your commitment is critical to carry forward the visionary legacy of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Sincerely,



Jack A. Markell

cc: Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, Chair, Energy & Natural Resources Committee

Rep. Rob Bishop, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee