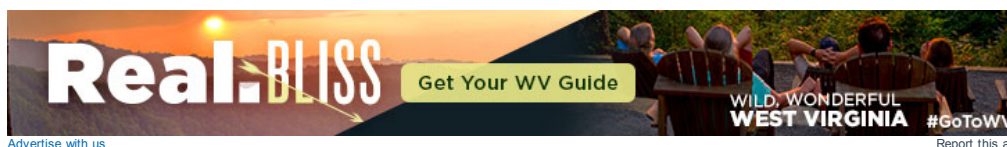


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In our opinion: Don't let 50-year-old Land and Water Conservation Fund program dry up

Deseret News editorial

Published: Tuesday, June 30 2015 12:00 a.m. MDT

Updated: 14 hours ago

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The Land and Water Conservation Fund — a 50-year-old public, state and national water and parks program — will expire at the end of September, unless reauthorized by Congress.

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Summary

The Land and Water Conservation Fund — a 50-year-old public, state and national water and parks program — will expire at the end of September, unless reauthorized by Congress.

Visit 98 percent of counties in the United States and you will see some evidence of the Land and Water Conservation Fund in place, but maybe not for long. The LWCF will expire on the last day of September unless Congress reauthorizes the 50-year-old program.

Only once has the public, state and national water and parks program been reauthorized to its original congressional amount of \$900 million — an amount Congress can change — even though it has generated billions in revenue. As young professionals and families continue moving to urban areas, parks and outdoor recreation areas remain a serious need.

Parks are invaluable to urban areas. They bring in tourism dollars, improve nearby property value, generate a sense of public safety, encourage physical activity and create local jobs. Nature spots can even be used to improve an area's infrastructure.

Philadelphia is investing \$2 billion into development of green infrastructure, which will collect 85 percent of the city's stormwater. The alternative is to spend \$16 billion on underground pipes and tunnels, according to "A Smart Investment for America's Economy," an LWCF booklet published by the City Parks Alliance.

Philadelphia is among many urban cities in the U.S. that take advantage of LWCF funds year after year. In the springtime, each state receives an appropriation of

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annual LWCF funds. [For example](#), in 2010, Utah had an appropriation of about \$480,000. To use the money, Utah's government, either at the state or local levels, has to first come up with the money for a project, after which the LWCF money matches it.

The program also has a federal side where it protects national parks and wildlife preserves, among other areas. The LWCF has even helped Congress when in a pinch — since 1965, Congress has diverted more than \$18 billion for unintended purposes.

Congress members should not be the LWCF's only fans, though; taxpayers don't pay into the LWCF. Funding comes from royalties from offshore oil and gas companies drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf — one depleting resource supports the conservation of another.

When used correctly, the funds do more than just make a new green space. Greenville, South Carolina, for instance, has completely revitalized its downtown thanks to the LWCF. In 2004, Greenville constructed [Falls Park on the Reedy River](#) for \$13 million. By 2006, the city boasted nearly \$100 million in additional private investments.

Salt Lake City has also received more than \$1.7 million in LWCF grants for projects like Sugarhouse Park and the Jordan River Parkway Trail. LWCF money has gone to support more than [450 projects](#) totaling more than \$48 million in the state.

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Utah provides a strong voice in the LWCF reauthorization. Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, who is a member of the [Mayors for Parks Coalition](#), recently signed a [resolution](#) with 22 other mayors, urging Congress to act before the LWCF expires. This is [not the first time](#) Becker has been heavily involved in parks projects. It's due time Congress considers reauthorizing the LWCF for the full \$900 million.

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GaryO Virginia Beach, VA

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