

March 27, 2017

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

On behalf of the thousands of urban planners, community partners, as well as the state, county and local park agencies our organizations represent, we are writing to express our strong support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State and Local Assistance Program (State Assistance) and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program, which are administered by the National Park Service. We thank you for funding State Assistance at the highest level in over a decade in FY 2016 and urge you to continue this valuable investment as you complete your work on the FY 2017 budget cycle and in the coming fiscal year.

Specifically, we request that the Subcommittee continue to fund State Assistance at the annualized "continuing resolution" level of \$110 million for FY 2017, which would include level funding for the ORLP at \$12 million, and maintain this amount of support in FY 2018.

There is a tremendous need for outdoor recreational opportunities in the communities where most Americans live, work and play. The State and Local Assistance Program is the government's only investment tool dedicated solely to the development of close-to-home public recreation. These formula grants are apportioned annually across all 50 states and the major territories and are matched dollar-for-dollar. A total of \$94 million was allocated in 2016 to the state formula grants, including over \$8 million for California and \$1.6 million for Minnesota. We eagerly await receipt of this year's allocation upon completion of the FY 2017 funding cycle.

We appreciate your recognition for the need to target some State Assistance dollars to assist our most underserved, urban communities. Your vision has led to the development of what is now known as the ORLP. This national competitive grant program complements the traditional State Assistance formula grants program by focusing on national priorities, specifically helping urban communities to acquire or develop land to create or reinvigorate public parks and other outdoor recreation spaces in ways that significantly improve local communities and encourage people to connect (or re-connect) with the outdoors.

As the ORLP has, to date, been included as part of the overall funding for the State and Local Assistance Program, we ask the Subcommittee to ensure that any continued funding for the program does not negatively impact the total amount provided to the critical formula grants to the states for conservation and outdoor recreation.

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We again thank you for your previous efforts, which led to the highest total appropriation for LWCF in years. You also realized that a higher percentage of overall LWCF dollars should be allocated to the states for the purpose of meeting the ever increasing need for safe and accessible close-to-home recreation. The \$110 million for State Assistance in FY 2016 represents approximately one-quarter of overall LWCF appropriations.

While this amount signifies a major improvement over the previous 10 year average of less than 15% of total LWCF spending, we call upon the Subcommittee to seek a permanent solution to funding the LWCF with the State and Local Assistance Program receiving at least 40% of overall LWCF expenditures each year. With four-out-of-five Americans now living in our larger communities, and the fact the original LWCF Act called for 60% to State Assistance, it's reasonable that the formula grants to the states for outdoor recreation should receive a more equitable distribution of LWCF dollars annually.

In conclusion, we ask the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies to show continued strong support for outdoor recreation in local communities, state parks and in cities throughout the nation by funding the LWCF State and Local Assistance Program at the amount of \$110 million in FY 2017 and 2018. We thank you for considering our request and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

***Previous Signatories:***

***American Planning Association***

***National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials***

***National Association of State Park Directors***

***National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers***

***National Recreation and Park Association***

***New Org Expressing Support: Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)***

CC: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations