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State Outdoor Recreation
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105H, ABNR BUILDING
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
COLUMBIA, MO 65211-7230
573-353-2702

(F.)

May 22, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, DC
20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, DC
20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
Senate
The Capitol
Washington, DC
20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
Senate
The Capitol
Washington, DC
20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

We would like to thank you for your strong support for state outdoor recreation grants in the recently passed John D. Dingell Conservation, Management and Recreation Act of 2019. Your support for this great program of providing outdoor recreation access in close to home locations is greatly appreciated.

The Association also wants to thank you for your support of increased funding for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state grants program and Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) funding in FY 20. These two programs resulted in state grants of \$227 million dollars. The local and state outdoor recreation needs are great and continuing increases are important to address infrastructure and redevelopments of areas and facilities in communities throughout the nation.

Our members also encourage you to support legislation which implements full and dedicated funding of LWCF to restore our outdoor recreation infrastructure. As you know, projects funded under the state assistance program have been matched at the state and local level and significantly enhance the federal investment in these projects. Increasing state grants will certainly be welcomed and allow for a major increase in the building, repair and upgrading of outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

The impact on state and local revenue from the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the ability of state and local governments to provide the full 50% match required by LWCF on the short term unless temporary changes are considered. We respectfully request the following changes, which we were led to believe can be accomplished through the annual appropriation process without amending the LWCF Act. These changes will ensure access to our outdoor recreation resources and upgrade and restore its infrastructure, and assist in our needed economic recovery.

(F)cont'

1. For a five year period reduce the required state and local match to 20%.
2. Extend the timeframe for obligation of project grant funds from the current 3 years to 5 years.
3. Authorize the states to utilize up to 10% of the annual apportionment for administration.

Attached is a summary of our proposal which highlights the multiple benefits of adopting these temporary changes. Not only does it provide needed outdoor recreation in close to home locations, but because 85 % of these projects are for infrastructure and construction, there are significant economic benefits, therefore bolstering the resilience of our state and local community economies.

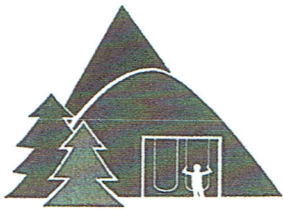
We are grateful to you for your long-standing commitment to investing in the future of conservation and recreation through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We offer these temporary changes, because we know how important outdoor recreation is to our citizens and know the state grants portion of the LWCF can provide multiple benefits, including added economic stimulus effects in projects spread throughout the nation. We look forward to working with you to realize the full potential inherent in the LWCF state assistance program and allow us to continue to provide access to outdoor recreation for all Americans.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Linda S. Lanterman, President



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(F) Interview

May 22, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary US
Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: COVID-19 Recommended temporary changes to the
LWCF State Assistance Program

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We are writing to ask your support for temporary changes in the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Assistance program to address our current circumstances due to the impending fiscal impacts on state and local governments. We believe the changes we propose not only meet our needs for outdoor recreation, but also stimulate our local and state economies. The recent demand for parks in both urban and rural communities shows how important these facilities are, especially in close to home locations. This access to parks, trails and recreation areas has proven important and valuable in our current circumstance in maintaining the mental and physical health of our citizens.

We are aware of federal programs that requested temporary reductions in the required match on programs and other projects. We understand the need for their requests and, because of the impact on the fiscal viability of state and local governments to match LWCF, we are proposing actions that have multiple benefits to our states, territories and local communities.

The proposed changes in the LWCF State Assistance program outlined in the attached proposal will be sent to Congressional leadership and key Committees and reflects our best judgment on changes to address the current and projected short term fiscal condition of state and local governments which typically provide the matching funds for these grants. And, because of the nature of these state, local and territorial grants, we believe these actions will support the administrative efficiency of the program, provide more time to obtain matching funds, create needed economic activity and support employment.

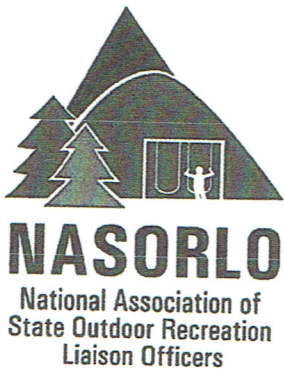
In addition our requested changes will ensure state staff is sufficient to administer the program. We are requesting that the LWCF appropriation language be changed to allow up to a maximum of 10% of the annual apportionment to each state and territory be used for the actual administrative expenses to manage the program. This request for administrative support is similar to that of other federal state partnerships, but has never been authorized for the LWCF program.

The states are willing partners with the Department of Interior and National Park Service in efficient administration of the LWCF. It is important to note we have seen changes to the LWCF Act occurring in the past through the appropriations process and report language without amending the LWCF Act. We will be asking Congress to do the same with these requests and are not in favor of opening the generic LWCF Act to accomplish these changes.

We feel these recommendations are pertinent, needed and in the best interest of the nation. These changes will significantly support the need for economic activity, create jobs and assist in national and state recovery efforts. We ask for your full support for our efforts.

Sincerely,

Linda S. Lanterman, President



(F) attach

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LWCF State Grants Assisting Communities in Economy Recovery

Problem Statement: The nation is facing an unprecedented situation caused by the economic impacts of a worldwide pandemic. To restart and restore economic stability and the outdoor recreation infrastructure to meet community needs requires bold action. The state and local grants portion of the LWCF can be used to facilitate this recovery.

Proposal. NASORLO has documented how state and local grants are a unique vehicle to provide not only outdoor recreation but at the same time stimulate the local and state economy. State and local government revenues are severely impacted by the loss of revenue from the lock down of the economy. Therefore we are proposing temporary changes to the LWCF state grants program until the economy has recovered and use the LWCF State Assistance Program to support the economic recovery and provide improved outdoor recreation.

We base this proposal on the following data.

A. We found significant benefits to state and local economies because of the data from a recent NASORLO survey. It found that;

- o **85% of state and local LWCF grants are awarded for construction and infrastructure improvements. The expenditure of these funds typically benefits local and regional economies, creates jobs and supports resilient communities.**

The proposal outlined below seeks to incorporate an adjustment in the appropriations language which change the matching requirement of the LWCF for a five year period. This action seems appropriate, given that state and local project data show these projects, in addition to providing close to home recreation, also generate related economic activity and support employment.

To obtain the maximum benefits and realize the potential of this proposal would require the following changes for project grants and project administration.

- *FY 21 - 25 We propose to reduce the required match for outdoor recreation projects to 20 %, This change is justified based upon the types of projects typically funded with state and local grants and will give state and local governments, who provide the matching funds, time for their revenues to recover.*

- *To recognize the importance of efficient state administration of these funds will also require assistance; therefore, we are recommending that up to 10 % of each state's LWCF apportionment be made available for administration, similar to that of other federal grant programs.*

- *And that the timeframe for obligating each grant be extended from the current three years to five years.*

Economic activity and jobs supported. Based upon our estimates full funding of LWCF and continued focus on restoration and development of outdoor recreation projects throughout the nation would result in an estimated one half billion dollars annually into state and local economies. The state grants program distributes these benefits equally into both urban and rural areas, as the National Park Service data shows all counties in the nation have received LWCF grants.

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NASORLO is an 501 c (6) organization of appointed state and territorial officials working to provide outdoor recreation by investing proceeds from the LWCF state assistance program in state and local projects. www.nasorlo.org