

**Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
Hearing on Implementation of the Land & Water
Conservation Fund
June 25, 2019**

Key Points:

- *State assistance cornerstone of original act State Assistance funds project where people live*
- *Full funding will assure that Outdoor Recreation needs are being met – these needs are identified through collaborative planning and generated through local grant requests.*
- *Stable allocation allows for long-term planning, phasing of projects and program efficiency (budgeting)*

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Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Manchin and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for providing the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers (NASORLO) with this opportunity to provide information on the implementation of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF). We are the primary advocate for the State and Local Assistance Program of LWCF. Our members are appointed by their governors to manage the program on behalf of each state and territory. We guide the expenditure of LWCF investments through outdoor recreation grants and ensure that these assets remain intact and are forever available to the public. I currently serve as President of NASORLO and am the State Liaison Officer for Pennsylvania as part of my position as Deputy Secretary, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

In 1958, Congress established the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. The purpose of this Commission was to assess the country's outdoor recreation needs. It released a

report that called for the establishment of a national recreation program. A major recommendation was federal funding to provide grants to states to assist them in “recreation planning, acquiring lands and developing facilities for outdoor recreation.”¹ This set the stage for the development and passage in 1964 of LWCF establishing funding to assist states and territories with their outdoor recreation needs and to acquire new federal recreation lands.

This new funding recognized the critical role of states and local communities in meeting the nation’s outdoor recreation demands. As enacted, the law required 60% of the funds for state purposes. In the 1970s that guaranteed percentage was removed.

The State and Local Assistance Program has supported access to outdoor recreation in communities in every county across the country -- providing **close to home** outdoor recreation in **every state and Congressional District**.

Thank you for your longstanding commitment to the LWCF State and Local Assistance Program. The successful enactment of the Dingell Act and LWCF permanent reauthorization including a guaranteed allocation of 40% of funds for states was a bi-partisan success. NASORLO is pleased to see this program stability, which will enable states to more effectively meet the demand for outdoor recreation close to home. Funding is now at a level where we can run a significant nationwide program that will allow the phased development of parks and recreation areas and funding for larger projects.

To be eligible for LWCF funds each state develops a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan every 5 years. This assures that state grant programs are responsive to the public’s

needs, changing recreation trends, and population. Grants are selected through an open application process and require a one-to-one match. Many projects are closer to a two-to-one match.

Over 46,000 state and local projects totaling \$8 billion have been completed. Projects span from State Park improvements, to sport fields, and playgrounds in small communities to large urban parks. Seventy-five percent of projects recently have been for infrastructure development, upgrades and new construction.

Since 1965, the State and Local Assistance program has received only 25% of appropriated funds. Over the last 10 years, it has been even less, averaging 19% of appropriations. However thanks to your leadership, in the last three fiscal years, the combination of appropriated funds and GOMESA funds has returned the program closer to its original levels and at a level that states can run effective outdoor recreation programs.

For the past 5 years, NASORLO has been working with NPS on identifying issues and suggesting program improvements. We are currently working with NPS on a manual re-write, which we hope will address some of these needs. Improvements we would like to see are outlined in my written testimony.

In Pennsylvania, I have seen first hand the impact of this funding, for example: In the City of Lancaster, we have invested \$300,000 in LWCF funds in an historic City Park. Hundreds of thousands of local families and visitors enjoy the park every year for recreation festivals and other events. A new all-inclusive play area encourages safe outdoor play and accommodates children of all abilities. Outdoor play is critical for children's development – their physical health, their mental health, and the development of life skills – leadership and cooperation.

When I visit LWCF projects for ground-breakings and ribbon cuttings – the community enthusiasm is very apparent. Local government, community leaders and residents always speak with pride about the investments they are making in their park – they speak from the heart about how much these assets mean to their community.

NASORLO supports ongoing, full and permanent funding of LWCF. Outdoor recreation has long been recognized as critical to our health, quality of life and economy. We know that federal investments help to create jobs and leverage significant investments in communities by state and local government and the private sector. The Land and Water Conservation Fund State and Local assistance program is the cornerstone of these resources. In our growing country, the need for places for kids to play, communities to gather, and all of us to enjoy the outdoors is increasingly important. States and territories look forward to a continued and strengthened partnership with the federal government in making these critical investments.