

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader, United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, United States House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing local leaders, parks and conservation groups, and millions of supporters across the country, we write to urge you to include a one-time, historic investment for our local parks in any future economic stimulus or infrastructure package as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Parks and greenspace have always played an essential role in our communities, providing economic value, emotional and physical health benefits, and bringing people together. During the coronavirus pandemic, nature has taken on a whole new meaning for many of us, becoming the one place we go for exercise, fresh air, and respite from anxiety, and grief. But not everyone has equal access to the outdoors: in some communities parks may be too few and far between or too dangerous and rundown, and open space restricted by locked gates and “No Trespassing” signs. This crisis is demonstrating yet again that in too many communities, parks and accessible open space are still considered a privilege, when they should be a right.

A historic, one-time investment in local parks would stimulate job creation and economic activity, expand park access for the one-in-three Americans who do not have a close-to-home park¹, and provide the health and social benefits to underserved communities feeling the impacts of this crisis most acutely.

Parks are drivers of local economies: in 2017 alone, local parks and recreation agencies generated \$166 billion in economic activity and supported more than 1.1 million jobs nationwide.² A 2018 report showed that parks and recreation spending on operations creates 23 jobs for every million dollars spent and 16 jobs for every million dollars spent on capital improvements.³

Congress can act swiftly to address this urgent need for jobs and parks by investing in the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) or Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR)

¹ The Trust for Public Lands, “Parks on the clock: why we believe in the 10 minute-walk” <https://www.tpl.org/blog/why-the-10-minute-walk>, 2016.

² George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis and NRPA, “The Economic Impact of Parks” <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-study-summary-2020.pdf>, 2020.

³ George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis and NRPA, “The Economic Impact of Local Parks” <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-study-full-report-2018.pdf>, 2018.

programs which prioritize shovel-ready park development and acquisition projects that expand outdoor recreation opportunities in urban communities lacking sufficient close-to-home parks, engage public-private partnerships, and create jobs and help stimulate local economic development. This historic, one-time investment would complement the Great American Outdoors Act we support to fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Congress has consistently supported locally-driven parks and recreation programs through the annual appropriations process. Over the short existence of ORLP, projects in forty eight towns and cities in 29 different states have expanded close-to-home outdoor recreation access. Projects include improving accessibility of playgrounds, creating parks on former brownfield sites and industrial lands, and developing dual-use spaces for recreation and green infrastructure storm water management that builds resilient communities.

We thank you for bipartisan Congressional leadership in passing the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and most recently the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. These measures are providing critical funding to meet the immediate needs of communities bearing the brunt of this pandemic. As Congress prepares a package that will stimulate the economy, create jobs, and provide communities with the support they need we appreciate your inclusion of increased funding for local parks.

Sincerely,

National Supporters

America Walks
American Hiking Society
American Planning Association
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Society of Landscape Architects
American Trails
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood
City Parks Alliance
City Parks Foundation
Clean Water Action
Collaboration of Regional Trail Initiatives
Green Schoolyards America
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Hispanic Access Foundation
Latino Outdoors
League of Conservation Voters
National League of Cities
National Parks Conservation Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Outdoor Afro
Outdoor Alliance
Outdoor Industry Association
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

REI Co-op
Sierra Club
The Trust for Public Land
The Wilderness Society
US Conference of Mayors
Vet Voice Foundation
Wilderness Inquiry
Winter Wildlands Alliance
World Urban Parks

Regional and Local Supporters

Active San Gabriel Valley
Akron Parks Collaborative
Alliance for Infrastructure Reuse and
Redevelopment (AIRR)
Anchorage Park Foundation
Appalachian Mountain Club Auburn Area
Recreation & Park District
Austin Parks Foundation
Avonworth Community Park
Big City Mountaineers
Brightline Defense
Broadway Mall Association
Bronx River Alliance
Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy
Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
Butler County, PA
California Geographic Alliance

California Invasive Plant Council	Nashville Parks Foundation
California Mountain Biking Coalition	Natural Areas Conservancy
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership	New York Restoration Project (NYRP)
California Park & Recreation Society	New Yorkers for Parks
City of Gilroy Parks & Recreation Commission	Outdoor Outreach
Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association	Parks and People Foundation, Inc.
Conservation Lands Foundation	Pashek+MTR
Continental Divide Trail Coalition	Pathfinder Ranch
Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions	Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society
David Brower Center	Philadelphia Parks Alliance
East Coast Greenway Alliance	Portland Parks Conservancy
Fairmount Park Conservancy	Portland Parks Foundation
Friends of Governors Island	Prospect Park Alliance
Friends of Mill Ridge Park	Redwood Empire Mountain Bike Alliance
Friends of Sloan Canyon	Richland Township, PA Parks and Recreation Department
Get Outdoors Nevada	Riverside Park Conservancy
GirlVentures	Roberts & Associates
Groundwork Richmond	San Diego Mountain Biking Association
Hudson River Park Friends	San Jose Parks Foundation
Hunters Point Parks Conservancy	Seattle Parks Foundation
Kokatat, Inc.	Seed Your Future
Landforce	Seirus Innovative Accessories Inc.
Lantern Camps	Southern Nevada Conservancy
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust	Tehachapi Valley Recreation & Park District
Los Angeles Parks Foundation	Ten Strands
Los Angeles River State Park Partners	The Praxis Project
Los Padres ForestWatch	The Venture Out Project
Louisville Parks Foundation	UC Irvine Outdoor Adventures
Madison Square Park Conservancy	Van Cortlandt Park Alliance
Memphis River Parks Partnership	Youth Transportation Organization
Minneapolis Parks Foundation	

Cc:

Sen. Shelby, Chair of Committee on Appropriations
 Sen. Leahy, Ranking Member of Committee on Appropriations
 Rep. Lowey, Chairwoman of Committee on Appropriations
 Rep. Granger, Ranking Member of Committee on Appropriations
 Sen. Murkowski, Chair of Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
 Related Agencies & Chairman of Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
 Sen. Udall, Ranking Member of Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
 Related Agencies
 Rep. McCollum, Chair of Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
 Rep. Joyce, Ranking Member of Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
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