



# News Release

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**Contact:** Tim Ahern, The Trust for Public Land, (415) 710-9095 [Tim.Ahern@tpl.org](mailto:Tim.Ahern@tpl.org)

## **Coalition Urges Full Funding of Land Conservation Programs; Praises Obama for Pledge to Invest in America's Public Lands**

**WASHINGTON, DC**— Fifty-two national, regional and state land conservation and outdoor recreation groups today released a report which documents the decline of two major federal land conservation programs and the need to restore federal funding to protect American's public lands.

"Over the past few years, even with the heroic efforts of some key players in Congress, funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been in a downward spiral," said Alan Front, Senior Vice President of The Trust for Public Land (TPL). "We are delighted that the President's new budget proposal turns the LWCF around and points it back in the right direction."

The report, *Conserving America's Landscapes*, urges Congress and the Obama Administration to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the premier federal program for buying open space and creating parks, and recreation areas across the country. Since its creation in 1965, LWCF money has protected some of America's most iconic places, including Redwood National Park, Valley Forge National Historical Park, the Appalachian Trail National Scenic Trail and Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. The Obama budget proposal would increase LWCF and commits to the goal of reaching full funding of \$900 million over the next five years.

The LWCF program also includes an important state grants component which supports state and local parks. The grants help develop park facilities and recreational amenities – creating jobs and supporting the quality-of-life factors which let communities attract employers and a strong work force. Forty-four states report at least 95 percent of the funding need for outdoor recreation facilities and parkland is presently unmet.

"We believe that people are healthier and communities are stronger when there is nearby access to recreation opportunities. The state-side LWCF has been invaluable in supporting such projects, but unfortunately the available dollars have declined dramatically over recent years," said Michael Collins, Vice President Public Affairs for Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI). "By returning funding to originally promised levels we can enhance the quality of life in communities across the country, improve the well-being of our citizens, put people to work on building parks and trails and support thousands jobs tied to the recreation industry."

Money is also needed for the Forest Legacy Program (FLP), administered by the U.S. Forest Service, to help private landowners maintain working forests to provide multiple benefits to adjacent communities including watershed protection, economic sustainability, wildlife habitat, and public recreation.

"In the Southern Appalachians rapid population growth and land-use patterns are creating fragmentation of our forested land at an alarming rate -- even and especially within Forest Service proclamation boundaries. Without urgent action we stand to lose our hunting and fishing heritage and our ability to secure sufficient drinking water and outdoor recreation areas for future generations," said Jay Erskine Leutze, Trustee, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy.

The LWCF program has been fully funded by Congress at the authorized level of \$900 million only once since its inception, and had only \$156 million last year. Primarily funded from federal offshore oil revenues, more than \$17 billion of this authorized funding has been diverted away from land conservation for other uses.

Funding for the FLP – which has enabled landowners and communities to retain ownership of forested land – has also been inadequate to address the needs of the country's demand for funding.

The report illustrates a few of the many projects across the country in need of these federal investments, including projects at James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge, HI; Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, CT/MA/NH/VT; Tahoe National Forest, CA; Cherokee National Forest and the Appalachian Trail, TN; Mt. Rainier National Park, WA; Glendale Battlefield, VA; Gila National Forest, NM; Arkansas River SRMA, CO; Henrys Lake ACEC, ID; Chippewa Flowage, WI; and the Chowan Headwaters in Virginia.

In the report, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition recommends full and dedicated funding of \$900 million annually for the LWCF federal and state grants programs and an annual allocation of \$125 million the Forest Legacy Program.

To view the report, please go to [www.tpl.org/lwcfreport](http://www.tpl.org/lwcfreport)

**The Trust for Public Land (TPL)** is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas. Since its founding in 1972, TPL has helped to protect more than 2.5 million acres nationwide. TPL depends on the support and generosity of individuals, foundations, and business to achieve its land for people mission. For more information, visit [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org).

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