



April 21, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator
Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Chairwoman Murkowski and Senator Cantwell,

We, the undersigned members of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK), urge you to permanently reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). LWCF provides critical resources for ensuring that children, youth and families are able to spend time outdoors.

The Outdoors Alliance for Kids is a national strategic partnership of businesses and non-profit organizations representing more than 30 million individuals from diverse sectors with a common interest in expanding the number and quality of opportunities for children, youth and families to spend time outdoors. OAK supports public policies and investments that expand outdoor and environmental education opportunities, promote community health and wellness, and engage more youth in environmental stewardship.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of the most successful government programs in modern history. LWCF is built on the simple premise that as we extract oil and gas from the earth, we should give something back in the form of protecting places for current and future generations. Created 50 years ago, LWCF takes a portion of royalties from offshore oil and gas development and invests that money in protecting America's most important lands – whether our iconic national parks or our neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

Protection of land through LWCF increases opportunities for play and recreation that help keep our kids fit and healthy. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly two-thirds of Americans cannot safely walk to a park from their home. A lack of safe places to play and recreate outdoors is a contributor to the childhood obesity epidemic. LWCF increases opportunities for children and youth to get physically active – whether in their own neighborhood or on a school or family trip to our national parks or public lands. The Fund also provides opportunities for children and youth to learn about the natural world and participate in environmental stewardship activities that help them develop critical life and leadership skills.

With LWCF expiring this September, we hope your committee will focus on ensuring this highly successful program is permanently reauthorized and fully funded. The success of the federal land acquisition and state and local assistance programs over the last half-century shows what this program could do if fully funded. It is essential that we continue to provide ample opportunities for young people to get outdoors regardless of whether they live in urban, rural or suburban areas.

LWCF protects our open spaces, near and far, and improves access to them for all Americans. As your committee examines LWCF, we believe it is clear the program provides incredible value to the American people and especially children and youth. In addition to the health and wellness benefits our public lands provide, the outdoor recreation economy which is built on the protection of our national, state and local treasures, contributes \$646 billion to the economy and provides 6.1 million jobs in America. We have all benefited from the foresight of the visionaries who created LWCF, and we ask that you also look to the needs of future generations and support this critical program.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this request. We look forward to having your support for the permanent reauthorization and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Should you or your staff have any questions about this letter, please contact OAK's Chair Jackie Ostfeld at 202-548-6584 or Jackie.Ostfeld@sierraclub.org.

Sincerely,

ACA | Canoe-Kayak-SUP-Raft-Rescue

American Forests

American Hiking Society

American Society of Landscape Architects

Appalachian Mountain Club

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education

Big City Mountaineers

Children & Nature Network

Choose Outdoors

Kids4Trees

Hipcamp

Hudson River Sloop Clearwater

IslandWood

International Mountain Bicycling Association

Izaak Walton League of America

National Military Family Association

National Park Trust

National Parks Conservation Association

National Recreation and Park Association

National Wildlife Federation

North American Association for Environmental Education

O'Neill Sea Odyssey

Outdoor Foundation

Outdoor Industry Association

Outdoors Empowered Network

REI

Sierra Club

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

The Wilderness Society

Transforming Youth Outdoors (TYO)

Trust for Public Land

YMCA of the USA