May XX, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan:

We are writing in support of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the important investments that LWCF makes in our districts. As you may know, LWCF was created in the spirit of reinvesting the revenues from the sale of our national resources into future resources for all Americans -- asset for asset, in true fiscally conservative fashion. With this in mind, we respectfully request your support in including Senate-passed language on LWCF in the Energy bill should the House and Senate versions (H.R. 8 and S. 2012, respectively) be conferenced. Should conferees be appointed, we will forward this letter along to each of them as well.

LWCF has had incredible bipartisan success over its near half-century of existence, touching all 50 states and nearly every county in America. It is a continuing investment in the economic driver that our federal, state, and local public lands represent. The parks, trails, forests, wildlife refuges, battlefields, historic sites, and working lands sustained by LWCF funding support an outdoor recreation and tourism sector that contributes a total of $1.06 trillion annually to the American economy, supporting 9.4 million jobs (1 out of every 15 jobs in the U.S.).

This well-envisioned toolbox is critical for all Americans as it fosters successful partnerships with states, localities, private organizations and landowners to meet unique local conservation, recreation and historic preservation needs across the country. LWCF has been the solution to increasing access for hunters and anglers to make public lands public, and protecting fish and game habitat on which sportsmen also rely. It preserves historical treasures from Civil War battlefields to our most recent history, such as the United Flight 93 Memorial in Pennsylvania. It helps to ensure that our ranchers and forest owners can keep working the land, and that our local communities can have parks and outdoor recreation sites.

These varied benefits of LWCF would be sustained by provisions in the Senate Energy bill that would permanently reauthorize LWCF; refine the program’s focus on prioritization, cost efficiency, and accountability; and ensure that this highly successful program continues to meet communities’ conservation needs while helping to protect and maintain our shared heritage. Also included was the 1.5% sportsmen’s access provision that has been included in all proposed LWCF legislation for the last several years and is critical to making public land truly public, since changing land use and ownership patterns have blocked historic and much-needed access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation.

These provisions were included in the initial Chairman’s mark considered by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and passed twice by that Committee by a wide bipartisan margin. A proposed amendment on the Senate Floor to alter these provisions was
soundly defeated, again by a wide bipartisan margin, before that chamber approved the bill by an overwhelming vote of 85-12. The Senate-passed bill directly addresses urgent conservation, access, and recreation needs into the future for America’s hunters and anglers, outdoor businesses, and recreationists.

As the Energy conference between the House and Senate proceeds, we strongly urge you to help ensure that the Senate LWCF provisions are included in the final legislation.

Sincerely,

CC:

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Majority Leader

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce