



Support for the Great American Outdoors Act

June 30th, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

Speaker

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

We the undersigned organizations strongly support the passage of the bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act as soon as possible and without amendments. This bill would permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million annually and provide \$9.5 billion over five years to fix maintenance problems that are plaguing America’s public lands.

California is full of special places. Our state and national parks give us the opportunity to explore beautiful forests, camp in stunning landscapes, and spot incredible wildlife. Our local parks provide respite from the chaos of everyday life and opportunities to go for a walk, bike ride or family picnic and provide safe places for our kids to get outside and play or swim. In addition to bringing us together for recreation and experiencing natural wonder, our parks help protect our waterways and provide refuges for iconic wildlife.

For most Californians, the idea that we’ve found some places so special, that we made sure they would be protected, forever, is one of our proudest achievements. And with the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we’ve been able to do just that.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is America’s premier conservation and recreation program. For more than 50 years, it has protected millions of acres of irreplaceable lands across our country, including national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, lakes, rivers, trails, state parks, community parks and more. “Working lands” initiatives, such as the Forest Legacy Program, have also helped private landowners protect wildlife habitat while sustainably keeping land in production to provide food, fiber, and lumber for our citizens.

California has received more than [2.5 billion](#) dollars from this fund, supporting everything from the Muir Woods National Monument, to Joshua Tree to the land along the Pacific Crest Trail.

Meanwhile, after decades of neglect, the infrastructure on our public lands is crumbling. The last major infrastructure investment in national parks was 50+ years ago. The National Parks Service is estimating 41,000 assets are now in need of maintenance or repair, including bridges, trails, roads, campgrounds and visitor centers. As a result, the American Society of Civil Engineers has given our parks a D+ infrastructure score. The costs of these repairs tend to balloon over time and often constitute a safety concern for federal workers and the public. The Great American Outdoors Act would directly address this problem with a 5-year infusion of funds so we can invest in our public lands for ourselves and for future generations.

Californians have always held their outdoor spaces dearly, and in 2018 voted to pass [Proposition 68](#), which authorized \$4.1 billion for improving state and local parks and making them more accessible. The bill also focused on the need to make parks available to minority and lower-income communities, who lacked easy access to parks and the enriching experiences they provide. This monumental investment underscores California's commitment to protecting its natural environment and ensuring that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.

As the CoronaVirus (COVID-19) pandemic drags on, people are increasingly looking towards the outdoors for their physical and mental health. And at a time when the country can feel so divided, it is important for members of Congress to come together and pass legislation that is popular and meaningful to the general public.

We urge you to take up and approve this conservation measure -- without adding amendments that could jeopardize the bipartisan balance that has been struck -- as soon as possible.
sincerely,

Brandon Dawson, Policy Advocate, for Sierra Club California
Mary Creasman, Chief Executive Officer, California League of Conservation Voters
Victoria Rome, Natural Resources Defense Council
Dan Jacobson, Director, Environment California
Ron Sundergill, Senior Director, Pacific Region, National Parks Conservation Association
Howard Penn, Executive Director, Planning & Conservation League
Ellie M. Cohen, Chief Executive Officer, The Climate Center
Gary Link, Ducks Unlimited, Director of Public Policy, Western Region
Claire Schlotterbeck, Executive Director, Hills For Everyone
Michael Wellborn, President, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
David Diaz, Executive Director, Active San Gabriel Valley
Mike McCoy, President, Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association