

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

July 21, 2015

Senator Jon Tester
311 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Ryan Zinke
113 Cannon House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Tester, Senator Daines, and Congressman Zinke:

I write to strongly urge your support for swift reauthorization of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

As you know, the LWCF was created by Congress in 1965 as a bipartisan commitment to safeguard natural areas, water resources, wildlife, and our cultural heritage, and to provide outdoor recreational opportunities. Now, in 2015, the program is set to expire unless Congress takes action. Congress must act quickly to reauthorize the program, at funding levels that meet or exceed the currently-authorized levels.

The LWCF has done so much good for our state; it's hard to imagine what Montana would be like without it. From fishing access sites to parks and playgrounds, the LWCF has changed the everyday lives of Montanans for the better.

Recently, a group of diverse Montanans and Montana businesses released a report describing the economic and community benefits of the LWCF in Montana. Here are just a few of the benefits:

- Since 2005, over \$237 million of LWCF money has been invested in Montana;
- As of 2012, 181,000 acres of working forest lands have been conserved through the LWCF;
- Roughly 165 fishing access sites in Montana have been purchased or improved with the help of the LWCF.

From city parks and recreation facilities in Sidney and Missoula, to conservation easements on family ranches along the Rocky Mountain Front, to preserving forest jobs and hunting and fishing opportunities in the Thompson and Fisher Valleys, the LWCF has supported and complemented an outdoor way of life that is the envy of the nation.

Of course, it's more than our quality of life, hunting and fishing opportunities, and forest and ranching jobs that are at stake. Montana's \$6 billion outdoor recreation industry has been a direct

beneficiary, as has the state's booming business climate, with over 70% of businesses identifying access to public land and quality recreation as major factors in deciding to locate in Montana.

The LWCF has made Montana a richer and more productive place to live and work. While some in Washington DC wring their hands over issues like state/federal funding allocations, or other possible "improvements," Montanans know a good thing when they see it. The current structure and flexibility that is built into the LWCF has served Montana well.

Congress needs to move, and move now, before the onset of the political season in Washington DC, where every topic, no matter how popular, becomes a political football. For example, there is a strong bipartisan coalition supporting permanent reauthorization in S. 338, demonstrating the broad appeal of the LWCF. Please act now to complete reauthorization of the LWCF, with funding levels that improve upon current funding.

Thank you for your consideration of my request and your ongoing service to our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor