United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 18, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

Thank you for the important investments you made in the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Forest Legacy Program as part of the Senate's Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) Interior Appropriations bill.

There is strong bipartisan support for these two programs, as was demonstrated in the letter sent to you on March 26, 2015, from 47 Senators. We write to again today to emphasize this support, in the hopes that, as you negotiate with the House of Representatives on the final funding measure for FY16, you are able to maintain critically important funding for these programs. Enclosed is a copy of our letter from March asking for your continued support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Forest Legacy Program, which support public land conservation and access to the outdoors for all Americans.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your work to ensure sufficient funding to support these vital programs.

Sincerely,

PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator

RICHARD BURR
United States Senator

JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator

SUSAN M. COLLINS
United States Senator

MICHAEL F. BENNET
United States Senator

KELLY AYOTTE
United States Senator

cc: Chairman Thad Cochran
Vice Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 26, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
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Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

We are writing to express our strong support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Forest Legacy Program. As you begin the process of drafting the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you include a strong investment in LWCF and Forest Legacy that will support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for all Americans.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of LWCF and the 25th anniversary of the Forest Legacy Program this year, we are reminded of the important role these programs play in protecting natural resource lands, outdoor recreation opportunities, and working forests at the local, state and federal levels, ensuring that critical wildlife habitat, hunting and fishing access, state and local parks, Civil War battlefields, and other important lands for current and future generations. We firmly believe that LWCF and Forest Legacy are important programs to ensure continued access to public lands for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities – an important and unique aspect of our American heritage. Continued investments in these programs help our nation's outdoor recreation, conservation and preservation economy, which supports millions of American jobs and contributes billions of dollars annually to the entire U.S. economy.

Since 1977, LWCF receipts have been collected annually to specifically fund federal land acquisition, conserve threatened and endangered species, and provide grants to states. LWCF was designed to not use taxpayer dollars and the LWCF receipts are not revenues for general purposes, but rather payments to the government specifically intended for conservation spending. However, more than $18 billion has been siphoned from the LWCF trust fund since the program's inception in 1965, diverted from their original conservation purpose. This chronic redirection of funding has created a large backlog of conservation needs across the country, including already-negotiated land acquisitions from willing sellers. The resulting uncertainty has led states and federal land management agencies to postpone or cancel many important projects.

Despite a history of underfunding, LWCF remains the premier federal program to conserve our nation's land, water, historic and recreational heritage. The LWCF and Forest Legacy provide a diverse array of conservation tools to address national, state, local and regionally driven priorities across the country. These include working lands easements that allow farmers and ranchers to continue acting as stewards of the landscape that sustains their livelihoods and working forest

projects conserved through Forest Legacy keeping critical timberlands forested and accessible and providing jobs in rural communities.

The LWCF is also a critical tool to acquire inholdings, expand public lands and protect national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, wild and scenic river corridors, national scenic and historic trails, Bureau of Land Management lands and other federal areas. The companion LWCF state grants program provides crucial support for state and local park acquisitions, recreational facilities, and trail corridors. The LWCF stateside program has funded over 41,000 projects including outdoor recreation facilities, sports fields, and trails in all fifty states. The LWCF state grant is the government's primary investment tool for ensuring that children and families have access to close-to-home recreation and the demand is far outstripping the available funding. Access to local parks and community green spaces is vital for connecting youth and their families across the country with the outdoors.

These LWCF and Forest Legacy expenditures also create important long-term savings for our federal agencies and the public because they secure land that provides valuable water resources, guard against incompatible development, support private working lands, and reduce fire risk. We hope you will remember that both LWCF and Forest Legacy leverage and complement state, local, and private conservation investments.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee in the coming months to ensure that these vital programs are adequately funded in FY 2016 to support our longstanding commitment to conservation and to ensure that critical park protection and recreational development opportunities across the nation exist for generations to come. As you begin drafting the FY 2016 Interior Appropriations bill, please include strong and consistent funding for both LWCF and Forest Legacy.

We are grateful for your leadership in ensuring that funds necessary for our conservation and recreation needs across the country will continue to be available, particularly this year as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of LWCF and the 25th anniversary of the Forest Legacy Program.

Sincerely,

PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator

RICHARD BURR
United States Senator

JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator

SUSAN M. COLLINS
United States Senator

cc: Chairman Thad Cochran
Vice Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski

MIKE CRAPO
United States Senator

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator

BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator

RON WYDEN
United States Senator

TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator

CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senator

BARBARA BOXER
United States Senator

SHERROD BROWN
United States Senator

MARIA CANTWELL
United States Senator

BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senator

THOMAS R. CARPER
United States Senator

cc: Chairman Thad Cochran
Vice Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski

JOE DONNELLY
United States Senator

RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator

AL FRANKEN
United States Senator

MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator

MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator

AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator

JOE MANCHIN III
United States Senator

ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator

JEFF MERKLEY
United States Senator

JACK REED
United States Senator

BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator

DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senator

cc: Chairman Thad Cochran
Vice Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski

JON TESTER
United States Senator

ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator

SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator

KELLY AYOTTE
United States Senator

MICHAEL F. BENNET
United States Senator

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
United States Senator

CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senator

KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senator

JOHNNY ISAKSON
United States Senator

TIM KAINE
United States Senator

EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senator

CHRISTOPHER MURPHY
United States Senator

GARY C. PETERS
United States Senator

JAMES E. RISCH
United States Senator

MARK R. WARNER
United States Senator

STEVE DAINES
United States Senator

CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator

CORY GARDNER
United States Senator

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator