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NEWS RELEASE

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OBAMA'S BUDGET INCLUDES KEY FUNDING FOR LAND AND WATER

Investment Benefits Local, State, and National Economies

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A broad coalition of conservation and recreation organizations today applauded a budget request by President Barack Obama that significantly increases funding for outdoor recreation and strategic land investments through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the federal government's primary program to protect America's irreplaceable natural, historic, recreational, and other treasured landscapes.

The funding increase is a step toward fulfilling the president's pledge to fully fund LWCF by 2014, and will benefit our local, state, and national economies, according to the Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition.

"In the face of the current economic downturn, investing in outdoor recreation and conserving important natural resource lands is more important than ever," said Kathy DeCoster, Vice President for The Trust for Public Land. "A reinvigorated LWCF will expand opportunities for Americans to enjoy outdoor activities and will ensure that our public lands continue to be a valuable cultural and economic resource for our country. President Obama and his natural resource team, including longtime conservation leaders like Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, deserve our thanks and our help as they work to protect the places Americans care about."

Federal and state public lands as well as local parks and outdoor recreation sites greatly enhance communities' quality of life, which in turn helps large cities and small towns attract new residents and businesses and helps generate tourism-related jobs and revenues. As cited in the Department of the Interior's 2009 report, annually "federal parks, refuges and monuments generate more than \$24 billion

in recreation and tourism.” Active outdoor recreation, including hunting, fishing, camping, climbing, hiking, paddling, backcountry skiing, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and other activities, drives a total of \$730 billion in annual economic activity, supporting 6.5 million jobs (1 of every 20 jobs in the U.S.), and stimulating 8 percent of all consumer spending, according to the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA). In the West, OIA reported that more than 43 million people participate in hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing each year, spending over \$33 billion annually.

“In these difficult economic times, LWCF is an investment in the future that is good for business and individuals alike,” said David Moulton, Director of Climate Policy and Conservation Funding at The Wilderness Society. “Not only does it strengthen local communities and make our forests, parks and refuges easier to manage, it also keeps our water clean and our air healthy—resources you can’t put a price on.”

The LWCF was created by Congress in 1965 and is authorized to receive \$900 million annually in federal revenues from oil and gas leasing. Since its creation, LWCF has been integral in establishing and protecting some of America’s most famous and popular places, including our country’s iconic national parks and historic sites such as Redwood National Park in California, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, and Valley Forge National Historical Park in Pennsylvania; national hiking trails such as the Appalachian Trail; national forests such as the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont; wildlife refuges, National Conservation Lands, and beaches on the Gulf Coast and Atlantic seaboard where millions of Americans recreate, as well as Civil War battlefields and Native American sites.

In addition, the program’s state assistance grants help communities to develop park facilities and recreational amenities—creating jobs and supporting the quality-of-life factors that allow communities to attract employers and a strong work force. Noteworthy projects completed with LWCF state assistance grants include the Bay Trail in Oakland, Calif., Eagle Nest Lake State Park in New Mexico, Central Park in New York City, Wimberly Blue Hole Regional Park in Texas, and Dash Point in Wash., which now provides new public access to Puget Sound. All of these projects involved significant local effort and matching funds, which is a requirement of the stateside part of the program.

“Access to close-to-home, outdoor recreation opportunities is imperative for healthy communities and healthy lifestyles,” said Stacey Pine, chief government affairs officer of the National Recreation and Park Association. “The LWCF State Assistance Program helps state and local governments in making this vital access possible, and creates a positive ripple effect for safe local infrastructure that ensures accessibility, as well as employment, environmental quality, and health and wellness.”

Despite this decades-old promise, the LWCF program has been chronically under-funded by multiple congresses and Administrations. It has received full funding only once in its history; in 2007, the program was funded at a recent-year low of \$138 million. Last year, the Obama Administration recommended a funding increase and pledged to reach full funding of \$900 million annually by 2014.

Of the president’s 2011 budget request for LWCF, \$50 million is for state grants and \$384 million for federal land acquisition (an increase of over \$100 million for total LWCF funding). Beyond these LWCF investments, the budget also includes \$100 million for the USDA’s Forest Legacy Program (a \$23-million increase over FY10) and \$85 million for the cooperative endangered species fund.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition is an informal partnership of national, state, and local conservation and recreation organizations working together to support full and dedicated funding for LWCF.

Additional quotes for media use:

- “The outdoor industry is committed to ensuring every child in America has access to a trail or park within one mile of their home. This type of financial commitment to our nation’s recreation infrastructure will immediately put people to work rebuilding our nation’s trails, parks and greenways and will easily pay for itself over the long term in the resulting reduction in health care costs as Americans become more active and in the economic benefit recreational tourism brings to local economies.” – Frank Hugelmeyer, President, Outdoor Industry Association
- “We applaud President Obama for his investments in the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Forest Legacy Program, which protect our land, water and quality of life. The President has proposed key investments that would protect such spectacular landscapes as Montana’s Crown of the Continent, Tennessee’s Cumberland Mountains, and Oregon’s Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. We also commend Senators Bingaman and Baucus and Congressman Rahall, who have introduced legislation that would guarantee permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund by dedicating a small portion of offshore oil and gas fees to land and water protection. This reinvestment in America is critical at a time when 3 million acres of land a year are lost to development and when the economy needs a program that supports jobs in tourism and outdoor recreation and our working farms and ranches.” – Robert Bendick, Director of U.S. Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy
- “We are rapidly losing some of America’s greatest natural wonders, and investing in this fund is critical to protecting our public lands for all Americans to enjoy. While we appreciate President Obama’s investment, it falls short of the need and puts our national heritage at risk from incompatible development.” – Ron Tipton, Senior Vice President for Policy, National Parks Conservation Association
- “Local and state LWCF stateside grants require the funding to be matched which creates more than two dollars of benefit for every one dollar invested. America needs jobs and building outdoor recreation facilities in local, state and national parks, refuges, monuments and other public lands puts Americans to work. This investment now will create tourism and outdoor recreation spending for generations to come.” – Joe Elton, President, National Association of State Park Directors
- “The state’s grants portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund has provided needed outdoor recreation improvements in areas and facilities close to nation’s population, from local park and playground projects in rural states like North Dakota, to recovery projects and upgrading of parks in Louisiana, to providing outdoor recreation opportunities and parkland acquisitions in urban areas like Cook County, Ill. The stateside of the program has been successful for over forty years and continues to stimulate active family lifestyles and provide support to the economy of the state and nation.” – Tim Hogsett, President, National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers
- “Global warming and human development are having major effects on wildlife and its habitat all over the country. Preserving land in a strategic way, with funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, helps to ensure that habitat will be available for wildlife, including many endangered species, to not only survive, but thrive.” – Mary Beth Beetham, Director of Legislative Affairs, Defenders of Wildlife