



November 16, 2015

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raul M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Protecting America's Recreation and Conservation Act

Dear Chairman Bishop and Representative Grijalva:

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has followed, with great interest, the ongoing debate over the reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and welcome the upcoming Natural Resources Committee hearing on the "Protecting America's Recreation and Conservation (PARC) Act" on November 18.

The NRPA represents over 14,000 state and local park and recreation agencies, as well as more than 50,000 individual members in communities both large and small in all states. In anticipation of this week's hearing, the NRPA deems important that we share our position with regard to the proposed legislation.

Our stated policy with regard to the reauthorization of the LWCF remains steadfast. To respectfully request your support for changes to the status quo, including:

- 1) **Permanent reauthorization of the LWCF including full and dedicated funding; and,**
- 2) **Fair and equitable treatment for the State Assistance Program of no less than 40% guaranteed funding for formula grants to the states for active outdoor recreation.**

With regard to the proposed PARC Act, NRPA applauds the inclusion of the following:

- The authorization of not less than 45 percent of annual LWCF money to the State Assistance Program, with a minimum of 30 percent being made available to communities of at least 20,000; and,
- The creation of a new urban competitive grant program for communities of at least 100,000 (CITIES).

However, we are deeply concerned that draft bill includes additional programs, which are not consistent with the stated purposes of the original act -- conservation and outdoor recreation. Our concern isn't with the objectives -- we understand the importance of Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), in particular -- but these endeavors can be better addressed without taking up 35 percent of the limited annual LWCF funding.



Chairman Bishop
Representative Grijalva

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What we find gets lost in the ongoing discussion over the reauthorization of the LWCF continues to be the issue of fairness in how LWCF dollars are being distributed. While 80 percent of Americans live in larger metropolitan areas, the LWCF is now only providing about 13 percent of overall funding to the very program – State Assistance -- which impacts people where they live, and recreate, the most. Urban communities, in particular, suffer from the severe lack of resources currently provided through the State Assistance program.

In spite of its gross lack of support, State Assistance apportionments have been administered very successfully to virtually every local community across the country. The respective state and local partners frequently go well beyond the required one-to-one match for stateside grants.

To assist with making the case for a more equitable distribution of LWCF, NRPA has released new figures outlining the economic impact of local and regional park agencies' spending and operations. We've found that local and regional park agencies' \$32.3 billion in operations spending and \$22.4 billion in capital spending led to nearly \$140 billion in economic activity and almost 1 million jobs in 2013.

These figures have been further broken down on a state-by-state level and are available at:
<http://www.nrpa.org/parkeconreport-state-charts/>

Specifically, the report finds that, in 2013, local and regional parks and recreation created \$1.173 billion in economic activity in Utah, supporting nearly 12,000 jobs and \$1.231 billion in economic activity in Arizona while supporting 11,600 jobs.

A permanently and robustly funded LWCF State Assistance program would enable planning, acquisition, development and rehabilitation of outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities at the state and local levels. We recognize the considerable competing priorities, but an honest review will confirm the effectiveness, the demand and the appropriateness of providing a fair and balanced allocation that resembles the original intent of the law.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Tulipane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Barbara Tulipane, CAE
President and CEO
National Recreation and Park Association

cc: Members of the Natural Resources Committee