



# National Association of Conservation Districts

September 12, 2018

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural  
Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural  
Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Established under state law, conservation districts share a single mission: to work cooperatively with federal, state and local resource management agencies and private sector interest groups to provide technical, financial and other assistance to help landowners and operators apply conservation to the landscape at the local level.

The current authorization for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) expires at the end of September. NACD urges Congress to take this opportunity to make improvements to the program rather than authorize an extension of the program in its current form. The LWCF was created in 1965 to assist states and federal agencies with land and water conservation to meet outdoor recreation needs. Congressional appropriations have ultimately determined the level of funding provided to LWCF each year. Unfortunately, of the total revenues that that could have been appropriated, LWCF received less than half. LWCF has become a slush fund for acquiring new federal lands with 61 percent of total funds going toward this purpose.<sup>1</sup> For fiscal year 2018, Congress appropriated \$425 million to LWCF in discretionary spending, over half of which was intended for land acquisition.<sup>1</sup>

The federal government currently owns an estimated 640 million acres, equivalent to the combined size of Alaska, Texas and California. NACD believes LWCF should no longer be used for additional land acquisition, but rather provide maintenance to our roads, bridges, buildings and other infrastructure. According to the Department of the Interior, there is \$16 billion in deferred maintenance needs among its agencies with the National Park Service making up the largest share of that total.<sup>2</sup> LWCF funds could make a positive dent in that total if Congress began authorizing the funds for that purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33531.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/doi-maintenance-backlog>



## National Association of Conservation Districts

Our nation's federal lands provide outdoor recreational opportunities for all Americans, but that will only continue if the infrastructure on these lands is properly maintained. NACD supports reauthorization of LWCF and we strongly encourage Congress to make positive reforms to the program by removing the authority to acquire additional federal lands and prioritizing proper maintenance of existing federal lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent Van Dyke".

Brent Van Dyke  
NACD President