



**Board of County Commissioners**

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May 4, 2020

The Honorable Michael Bennet  
United States Senate  
261 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

As Congress works on an economic stimulus package in this time of public health emergency, we hope you will invest in our parks, public lands, and outdoor recreation in recognition of their importance to our economy, and to our communities' wellbeing through full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). As local elected officials from mountain communities in the West, we represent 54,000 year-round residents and hundreds of thousands of annual visitors, all of whom recognize the importance of public lands conservation, preservation, enhancement, and expansion. We urge you to support and advance *full and dedicated funding* for the LWCF.

In the weeks and months to come, our nation's parks, trails, and outdoor spaces will be integral to our nation's coping and recovery. Great parks and green spaces make stronger, healthier communities. Everyone deserves access to the outdoors and the countless benefits parks provide. America's public lands bring us peace of mind and generate economic revenue—both will be critically needed to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Our national, state, and local parks; trails, and public lands are a critical economic driver for communities big and small, urban and rural, across the nation. Across the nation, the travel and tourism industries have been taking a hit in the current crisis. Investing now in full funding for LWCF will help with a strong long-term recovery for gateway communities and states that rely on visitors to public lands.

The LWCF has provided funding over the last 52 years for countless federal, state, and local public lands projects in every county in the United States.<sup>[1]</sup> These resources have helped to create an extensive network of public lands and waters for conservation and ecosystem preservation for all Americans to enjoy. Outdoor recreation and proximity to open spaces—many of which have been enhanced through the use of the LWCF—draw residents and tourists to mountain communities, which provides significant economic support as well as a distinct and desirable way of life. A recent study found that counties in close proximity to public lands perform substantially better in key economic factors such as employment and personal income than counties without nearby public lands.<sup>[2]</sup>

The LWCF is a vital component of job creation and economic development through support for public land infrastructure. Reports show that the LWCF provides a strong return on investment. One study found that for every \$1 of LWCF funds invested there is a remarkable return of \$4 in economic value.<sup>[3]</sup>

Our communities are inextricably linked to the public lands that surround them. Our residents and business owners



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rely on public lands visitation and exploration for economic success and cultural vitality. The LWCF supports and enhances public lands, and so therefore our communities. You have the opportunity to provide full funding to support this incredible program. So please, vote to fully fund the LWCF in support of our mountain communities, and public lands for *all* Americans.

Broadly-supported, bipartisan LWCF legislation was already in the queue for Senate floor time before coronavirus upended the calendar—it is directly relevant, ready to go, and makes sense for Congress to include in a stimulus package.

Investing in our public lands, and providing full, permanent funding for LWCF is a low-cost economic stimulus that will pay big dividends for communities across America. Please include full and permanent LWCF funding in the stimulus package.

Sincerely,

**Eagle County Board of Commissioners**

Kathy Chandler-Henry

Chair

Matt Scherr

Commissioner

Jeanne McQueeney

Commissioner

<sup>[1]</sup> <http://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/384469-local-economies-need-the-land-and-water-conservation-fund>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/federal-lands-performance/>

<sup>[3]</sup> <https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/cloud.tpl.org/pubs/benefits-LWCF-ROI%20Report-11-2010.pdf>