Dear Senate Majority Leader McConnell, Senate Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, and House Minority Leader Pelosi,

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is our nation’s primary source for preserving nationally significant public lands and providing recreational opportunities in communities across the country. Despite widespread public support for this critically important fund, Congress has failed to reauthorize LWCF. We implore Congress to take immediate action to fully fund and reauthorize LWCF before the end of the year.

Our organizations represent former land management agency employees with tens of thousands of years of collective experience. We know from first-hand experience that the agencies rely on LWCF to acquire land for conservation and recreation. National parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, rivers, and lakes have been set aside for conservation and public enjoyment thanks to funds from LWCF. In addition, states and local communities across the nation have relied on these funds to create playgrounds, swimming pools, trails, and ball fields.

Since its creation, LWCF has helped the Forest Service acquire public land to expand outdoor recreational opportunities, protect clean water supplies, preserve wildlife habitat, and protect our cultural and natural resources. It has funded specific conservation and recreation projects that enhance the management of, and public access to, existing public land and resources under the Bureau of Land Management. And LWCF funds have supported conservation within national wildlife refuges, hatcheries, and other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service areas.

Congress’ failure to reauthorize LWCF will have long-reaching and devastating impacts on all fifty states and our territories. This funding is a critical investment not only in our quality of life and the continued protection of our public lands for future generations, but in the American economy. Outdoor recreation, conservation, and historic preservation activities contribute more than a trillion dollars annually to the U.S. economy, supporting 9.4 million jobs.
The LWCF was created as a bipartisan commitment to safeguard natural areas, water resources and our cultural heritage, and to provide recreational opportunities to all Americans. It has a long history of support across party lines. We ask this current Congress to make the most of their time left in session, put aside partisan politics, and reauthorize and fully fund LWCF.

Sincerely,

Philip A. Francis, Jr., Chair, Executive Council
Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks

James Caswell, Chair
National Association of Forest Service Retirees

Ed Shepard, President
Public Lands Foundation

Bob Streeter, Chairperson
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees Association