

October 15, 2009

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II, Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Doc Hastings, Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall and Congressman Hastings,

We are pleased that the Natural Resources Committee Chairman recently introduced H.R. 3534, the Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources (CLEAR) Act of 2009 which will provide full, dedicated funding to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at the maximum level authorized by Congress. This provision would provide \$900 million to protect special places such as federally managed parks, refuges, trails, cultural and historic places, public lands, as well as state and local parks and recreation facilities for close-to-home conservation and recreation.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is the primary vehicle for federal and state acquisition of park and recreation lands and funding source for outdoor recreation, protecting national icons like the Big Sur Coast, Appalachian Trail, Columbia River Gorge, and the Everglades, as well as state and local parks throughout the nation ranging from Niagara Falls in New York to Tubbs Hill Park in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. Unfortunately, despite the intent of its authors, LWCF has never been fully or even adequately funded since its authorization by Congress in 1965.

H.R. 3534 will make good on the promise of 40 years ago by ensuring that revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling will be dedicated to support the conservation of America's lands and waters. At a time when our parks, recreation and open spaces are critically in need of protection, a fully funded LWCF would help leverage state, local and private funding and provide long-term solutions for stable, sustainable funding for the national needs for public land and open space. This funding is essential to secure the parks, trails, hunting and fishing areas and historic and cultural places that capture the best of America.

The Outdoor Resources Review Group (ORRG) – a bi-partisan effort chaired by Senators Jeff Bingaman and Lamar Alexander and including leading conservationists – recently released a report entitled *Great Outdoors America*. This report contains a concise summary of the major issues and challenges facing our nation with regards to conservation and needs for outdoor recreation resources. One of the key findings recommends funding the Land Water Conservation Fund at its highest authorized level, and suggests increasing the maximum funding level to \$3.2 billion as adjusted for inflation since the program's inception. We believe that the \$900 million in annual funding is a good down payment which will get us closer to addressing the nearly \$50 billion of national needs at the local, state and federal levels.

Full funding of LWCF is a prudent measure that will result in a substantial and very real return on investment. Indeed, access to quality open space attracts businesses, contributes to public health, enhances ecosystem services – like clean air and water – and also serves as the catalyst for our nation's \$730 billion active outdoor recreation economy. Simply put, fully funding LWCF is money well spent.

We urge the entire Committee to support full, dedicated funding for LWCF in upcoming energy legislation. Such dedicated funding will provide measurable benefits to our states by protecting our vital natural resources and providing healthful opportunities for outdoor recreation for all Americans.

Thank you for your anticipated support and your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Governor David A. Paterson
New York



Governor M. Jodi Rell
Connecticut



Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.
Colorado



Governor Jack Markell
Delaware



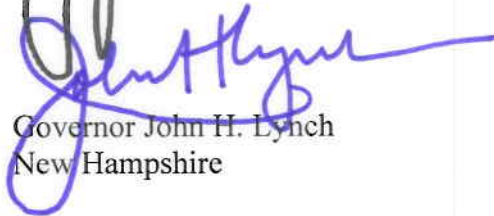
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Maine



Governor Jennifer M. Granholm
Michigan



Governor Brian Schweitzer
Montana



Governor John H. Lynch
New Hampshire



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Governor Bill Richardson
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Governor Theodore R. Kulongoski
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