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The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks

Voices of Experience

May 10, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240
Subject: Land and Water Conservation Fund

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks (Coalition). The Coalition is comprised of over 1,500 members who collectively have more than 35,000 years of experience managing and protecting national parks. We believe that our parks and public lands represent the very best of America, and advocate for their protection.

We, the undersigned, urge you to recommit to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). We applauded when you confidently stood up for this historic conservation program while representing the people of Montana, and we remain hopeful that you will once again take this stance on behalf of all Americans as Secretary of the Interior.

Many of our members who worked for the National Park Service experienced firsthand the value of this program. From preserving the Doody homestead in Glacier National Park, to saving the Shenandoah Battlefields not far from your hike during National Park Week, the LWCF has long been a very effective program for preserving our nation's heritage.

But so much more national park land could have been protected. We have been frustrated that the LWCF has only been fully funded one time in its entire 52-year history. Without full funding, the National Park Service and its sister agencies lost the opportunity to further conservation goals on the ground. Priority projects, developed in collaboration with local landowners, states, and regions, had to be shelved.

Under your helm, the funding levels for LWCF are sadly on a negative trajectory. We are disappointed that President Trump and you failed to support the LWCF in the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2019. Congress has the opportunity to right that wrong, and we believe they will listen to their constituents and restore funding for the program just as they did with the Consolidated Appropriations Act earlier this year.

Secretary Zinke, your upcoming Senate hearing provides you with the opportunity to assure the Committee that you believe in the LWCF and want to see it reauthorized before it expires on

September 30. Reminding Congress of your past support for permanent reauthorization would undoubtedly have a positive impact on their deliberations.

The new mission statement for the Interior Department emphasizes protecting America's great outdoors and supplying energy to power our future. By using a portion of royalties from offshore oil and gas development instead of taxpayer dollars, the LWCF is a perfect example of a program that contributes to the achievement of those two goals. In the coming weeks, as Congress debates the FY19 budget, please pledge your support for permanent reauthorization of the LWCF.

Sincerely,

The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks Executive Council:

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