

Congress must renew the Land & Water Conservation Fund



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As Westerners fortunate enough to live in this beautiful state, many of us treasure the time we spend outdoors — from watching our kids play and run in the local park, to backcountry hiking in Saguaro National Park, to that long-awaited crisp morning of deer season in our favorite National Forest campsite.

Indeed, for many of us, the beauty and recreational opportunities of our deserts and mountains are why we choose to live here. They're why businesses and local communities do well in the Grand Canyon state — outdoor recreation, quality backcountry hunting experiences, Old West nostalgia, birding festivals and more draw tourism and revenue into our economy. Outdoor recreation is responsible for more than 100,000 Arizona jobs and generates \$787 million in state and local tax revenue a year.

Rarely do we stop to think about how these recreational spaces came to be — how were the lights at the local ball field paid for, how did a beautiful piece of land get preserved, who funded the improvements at the Game and Fish shooting range or the renovation of the fish hatchery? Often, these assets and improvements are thanks to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), an under-appreciated mechanism for enabling local communities to realize their conservation and recreation aspirations. In partnership with states, counties, cities and towns, the program has preserved land and created opportunities to play and be outside in every state in America.

In Arizona, more than 700 local projects have benefited from LWCF. In Southern Arizona alone this includes Catalina State Park, Sierra Vista Municipal Park, ball field lighting at Arthur Pack Park, Kennedy Lake, Udall Park, the swimming pool at Amphitheater High School, and many more, with more than \$12 million in funding, thanks to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. But on Sept. 30 of this year, that successful economic engine shuts down unless Congress acts to renew it.

Created in 1965, the Land and Water Conservation Fund uses royalties paid by companies drilling for oil and gas on America's outer continental shelf to fund conservation and outdoor recreation projects around the country. The fund is based on a simple idea: When we deplete the earth's finite natural resources, some of the proceeds should pay to strengthen conservation. For 50 years it has helped communities of all sizes prioritize their own recreational and conservation needs and then implement locally-driven solutions.

It's a success story. Every member of Arizona's congressional delegation should join the growing bipartisan group in Congress to reauthorize LWCF before the end of September. It's a sensible, simple thing to do and it's necessary for Arizona to continue to be a place where we love to live.

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