



<http://avon.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1642>

Posted on: May 13, 2020

Sarah Smith-Hymes Joins Over 100 Elected Officials to Send Letter to Congress

Sarah Smith-Hymes Joins Over 100 Elected Officials to Send Letter to Congress Requesting Investment in Parks, Recreation & Public Lands in an Upcoming Stimulus Package

Avon Mayor Sarah Smith-Hymes joined more than 100 mayors and local elected officials from across the west in sending a letter to Congress urging them to include full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in upcoming legislation designed to provide economic stimulus to restart the economy in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The letter points out how outdoor recreation is a critical driver of their local economies and that investing in full funding for the LWCF will help with a strong long-term recovery for gateway communities and states that rely on visitors to public lands. The letter was organized by the Mountain Pact with assistance from Western Leaders Network.

The letter states:

“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 west, 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.”

[SEE THE FULL LETTER HERE](#)

“Everyone deserves access to the great outdoors, and fully funding LWCF would continue to help make that possible,” said Sarah Smith-Hymes. “That’s why we’re asking Congress to take swift action to support permanent, mandatory funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. LWCF funding would not just protect our public lands for generations to come - but also provide critical stimulus to the economy of small towns and rural communities reeling from the impact of the pandemic. The time is now.”

Federal lands contribute more than \$50 billion to the American economy each year and support hundreds of thousands of jobs in local communities across the country. Studies have shown that America’s [outdoor recreation economy supports over 7.6 million jobs, contributes over \\$887 billion in annual economic output](#); serves as the lifeblood for countless communities across the country; and that [every dollar spent](#)

on LWCF returns \$4 in economic value from natural resource goods and services alone - over and above the economic benefit of the outdoor recreation economy and tourism.

Capital spending by local park and recreation agencies to build and enhance local parks and trails generates an additional \$64 billion in economic activity and supports nearly 378,000 jobs annually. Local parks generate \$154 billion in annual economic activity and support 1.1 million jobs.

“Economic stimulus aid should reflect America’s values and priorities,” said Anna Peterson, Executive Director of the Mountain Pact. “Our parks, trails, and green spaces are absolutely essential to restoring our country’s health and way of life amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is already wildly popular among Congress, enjoying bipartisan support—even that of the President—and the LWCF is our most successful and effective tool for keeping nature and wildlife within reach for millions of communities.”

For more information on LWCF, visit <https://www.lwcfcoalition.com/tools>.

