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Western mayors urge Congress to support Land, Water Conservation Fund in 2020 federal budget

Niehaus: Leave this place at least as good, if not better, for future generations

By **Doug McMurdo**
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Moab Mayor Emily Niehaus was among several other mayors representing cities in the West to urge Congress to permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. A group called the Mountain Pact hosted a press call Tuesday, Dec. 10 with Western mayors to urge Congress to take action for the 2020 federal budget. On the call, speakers discussed how the Trump administration's proposal to zero out funding for LWCF in the FY20 budget is hurting public lands and Western communities



Moab Mayor Emily Niehaus

Said Niehaus, “Many rural cities like Moab are embracing community development founded on our access to public lands for clean energy, environmental quality, and outdoor recreation, all of which are the source of sustained economic growth for communities like Moab. By underfunding land management agencies and the LWCF, we’re threatening our democracy, our climate, our nation’s public lands stewardship legacy, and, Utahns’ belief –

regardless of political party – in the importance of leaving this place at least as good, if not better, for future generations.”

Corinne Platt, mayor of Ophir, Colorado said, “Each year that Land and Water Conservation Fund goes without full funding is another year that our nation’s commitment to public lands and expanding outdoor access for communities erodes even further. “Senator [Cory} Gardner says he supports full funding and we need him to push Senate leadership to finally take meaningful action. If Congress fails to provide full and stable funding for the

protection and enhancement of America's public lands, the economic success and cultural vitality of mountain communities like Ophir may be at risk."

Sarah Smith Hymes, mayor of Avon, Colorado said, "Senator Gardner has said he supports this effort but has yet to move this through the current legislative graveyard. We urge him to put action behind his words and push leadership to protect our public lands by permanently and fully funding LWCF as part of the appropriations deal. This will prevent its coffers from being raided for unrelated projects and will help sustain the outdoor recreation economy that helps so many of us survive here and live."

The mayor of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, Jonathan Godes, said, "Communities like Glenwood Springs are culturally and economically linked to the health of all of our public lands. All Americans who have visited towns like Glenwood Springs, Moab, Driggs, Avon and Ophir know that our towns are shared national treasures and gateways to these public lands. Western communities are not interested in either empty promises or 'best efforts.' Republican senators need to deliver full funding and stop LWCF from ending up in the legislative graveyard."