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## Gardner green washing on GAOA? Many conservation groups don't care, but call out dismal record

By [David O. Williams](#)  
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Camp Hale from an EcoFlight flyover on Aug. 9, 2016 (Kristin Kenney Williams photo).

Washington D.C. —Today, Congressman Joe Neguse helped secure passage of the Great American Outdoors Act out of the U.S. House of Representatives. The legislation would fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million and invest \$19 million in the public lands maintenance backlog. In May, Congressman Neguse led a group of 118 Members of the House – including 7 Republicans – in [sending a letter](#) to House and Senate leadership requesting full and permanent funding for LWCF and parks maintenance funding in future COVID-19 stimulus legislation. In November 2019, Congressman Neguse [led a letter](#) signed by over 60 of his colleagues requesting increased funding for LWCF in the FY2020 appropriations process. View the Congressman's remarks on the House floor [here](#).

“I am thrilled to ensure passage of the Great American Outdoors Act out of the U.S. House of Representatives today. This important legislation will fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund—a program responsible for many of our nation’s most coveted public lands and investments in over 41,000 parks —and address our public lands maintenance backlog. I am incredibly grateful to our county commissioners, conservation groups, anglers and outdoor recreation businesses who have contributed time, dedication and commitment to this collaborative effort for many years,” **said Congressman Joe Neguse**. “While this legislation is crucial, we can’t stop here. We must take up the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act — which has now passed the House on a bipartisan basis twice — to provide permanent protection for 400,000 acres of Colorado’s public lands. The Senate’s cooperation to work with our communities on public lands legislation can and should extend to the locally-crafted CORE Act, it’s time we see a hearing and vote in the Senate on this bill. Preserving our public lands, investing in our outdoor recreation economy and ensuring future generations can continue enjoying Colorado’s beautiful outdoors is an ongoing task, and we must continue to work to ensure the voices of our local communities are heard and our environment and lands are protected.”

“We are beyond grateful to Rep. Neguse for getting The Great American Outdoors Act over the finish line after years of work and for his consistent leadership protecting our public lands. He has been a conservation champion for Coloradans and our communities across the state are better off because of his service.” **Anna Peterson, Executive Director of The Mountain Pact, an organization that works with local elected officials in the west and with over 30 mountain communities across Colorado.**

“Today’s bipartisan House passage of the ‘Great American Outdoors Act’ gets us to the very brink of fully and permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund so it can serve its full potential for our country and communities,” **said Jamie Williams, President of The Wilderness Society**. “After years of leadership and support from long-term and recent champions in both chambers of Congress, the ‘Great American Outdoors Act’ is now heading to the President’s desk with a tidal wave of momentum. Once signed, this historic bill will finally keep the 55-year-old promise of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to strengthen our communities through investment in our parks and public lands.”

“Thank you Congressman Neguse and members of our federal delegation who worked for years to fully fund and permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Great American Outdoors Act will play a critical role in Colorado’s path to economic recovery by protecting our public lands, open spaces, and parks now and for decades to come. The president should sign this bill as soon as possible,” **said Jessica Goad, Deputy Director at Conservation Colorado**. “Since it was created in 1965, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has enjoyed some of the most bipartisan support we have ever seen for conservation legislation. With this commonsense legislation so close to the finish line, it is critical that Congress and our Congressional delegation turn their attention to other legislation that will protect Colorado’s environment and spur our country’s economic recovery. Their work is not done, and we hope they will act in this legislative session to pass bold climate policies, protect the budget and enforcement powers of the Environmental Protection Agency, ensure public lands protections through legislation like the CORE Act, and stand up against Trump administration nominees like William Perry Pendley who are attacking the public lands we love.”