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Congressman Neguse Leads Over 100 Legislators in Bipartisan Call for Economic Relief for Outdoor Recreation Industry

The request seeks to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and address the growing maintenance backlog on public lands

Washington D.C.— Today, Congressman Joe Neguse, along with Congressmen Brian Fitzpatrick, Joe Cunningham, and Derek Kilmer, led over 100 legislators to request strong funding in future COVID-19 economic relief legislation for federal programs that serve as the foundation of the outdoor recreation industry—a critical sector that provides jobs and economic support to many local communities in Colorado’s second congressional district and across the country.

In a letter addressed to House and Senate leadership, Congressman Neguse and the other members stressed the importance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) which has established many of our nation’s most coveted public lands that generate billions of dollars for state and local economies. The members urged that Congress deliver full and permanent funding for LWCF at the authorized level of \$900 million to ensure continued federal investment in parks and public lands which will aid the recovery of communities that rely on a strong outdoor recreation economy.

The letter also requested that Congress provide strong funding to address the backlog of maintenance projects on public lands. Decades of underfunding and neglect have led to overgrown trails, crumbling roads, and dilapidated buildings, leading to \$11.9 billion in deferred maintenance projects in national parks alone.

“The outdoor recreation industry serves as the economic engine for many of our local communities supporting 5.2 million jobs nationally and contributing 2.2 percent to our national gross domestic product,” said **Congressman Joe Neguse**. “Congress must approve full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and ensure that we address the backlog of conservation and recreation access needs in every state across the country. This will both create jobs in the communities surrounding our public places and improve the quality of our parks when they safely open for visitors.”

“Communities like the Lowcountry rely on LWCF and public lands programs to support the outdoor recreation, hospitality, and tourism industries, key sectors of the economy that have been negatively impacted by the coronavirus pandemic,” said **Congressman Joe Cunningham**. “As we begin the slow process of recovery, it is critical that we fully fund LWCF, support local jobs, and ensure continued funding for the places that help drive our coastal economy.”

“Since its establishment, the LWCF has made numerous contributions to our economy, creating jobs in local communities and promoting recreational activity,” said **Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick**. “Providing robust

funding for the LWCF would help relieve the backlog of maintenance projects at our national parks and other public lands, allowing millions of Americans to continue to enjoy their beauty.”

“Growing up on the Olympic Peninsula, I’ve seen firsthand how our National Park and public lands have captivated visitors and created generations of jobs,” said **Congressman Derek Kilmer**. “But unfortunately, many of our most iconic landscapes and visitor experiences are falling into disrepair. As we work to recover from this pandemic, it’s absolutely critical that we provide dedicated funding for deferred maintenance and LWCF to support rural economies and keep our public lands accessible for future generations.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has shown a spotlight on the crucial role that investment in public lands and outdoor recreation infrastructure plays in communities across Colorado and the country,” said **Jim Ramey, Colorado State Director at The Wilderness Society**. “As we confront state and local budget challenges, Congress has a great opportunity to provide support for a strong reopening and long-term recovery by providing funding for our public lands. The bipartisan efforts to dedicate full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and address the parks maintenance backlog stand ready-to-be-passed and used as tools to put people to work and promote economic growth.”

“The outdoor recreation industry has been dealt a devastating blow by this pandemic, from mom and pop retail stores and rural guides and outfitters, to large outdoor equipment manufacturers and service providers. When Americans aren’t visiting their favorite national park, or checking out the newest outdoor products, vehicles and gear — it has a dual impact on our industry,” said **Jessica Turner, executive director of Outdoor Recreation Roundtable**. “Our industry applauds the efforts of Congressmen Neguse, Fitzpatrick, Cunningham and Kilmer to urge their colleagues to include full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and imperative resources for the maintenance of our public lands in the next COVID-19 package. Their leadership supports our industry, which annually contributes over \$778 billion to the economy and employs over five million Americans, so businesses large and small can get back to doing what they do best- supporting healthy economies, communities and people.”

“Public lands are vital to our way of life – and our livelihoods – in communities all along the Continental Divide. Fully funding LWCF and addressing the maintenance backlog on our public lands will put people to work and provide much-needed support to small business owners, especially in rural areas. We are grateful to Representative Neguse for leading this effort to support Coloradans and all Americans by including LWCF in upcoming economic stimulus.” said **Teresa Martinez, Executive Director of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition**.

View text of the letter [here](#).

Last week, local officials from across the U.S. signed a letter in support of full funding for LWCF. See the letter [here](#). The letter was signed by local leaders in Avon, Boulder, Clear Creek, Eagle, Frisco, Larimer, Lyons, Summit and Vail as well as other municipalities across Colorado.

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