

Column: Investing in our public lands can pay big dividends

Submitted by [paula](#) on Tue, 07/14/2020 - 11:46am



In South Lake Tahoe, Truckee, and Mammoth Lakes, our public lands are woven into the fabric of life. These lands are symbols of our strength and keepers of serenity in these turbulent times. As we've seen locally, our parks and public lands are a beloved resource and one that is essential for our collective recovery. If we want our parks and public lands to be there for us for the long haul we need to invest in them now. Full, permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is needed to create more access points on existing public lands, and build more close-to-home parks and trails across the country.

Thankfully, the U.S. Senate just passed the [Great American Outdoors Act](#) with an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 73 to 25. This economic recovery bill will fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It will also provide much-needed funding for the crippling \$12 billion deferred maintenance backlog at our national parks -

something that is critical to the continued protection and preservation of our treasured natural and cultural resources. These deferred maintenance projects will help ensure a better national park experience for thousands of visitors each year by repairing outdated educational and interpretive facilities, upgrading trails and campgrounds, repairing restrooms, and addressing park utility systems and maintenance buildings.

In this time of public health emergency, we thank Senators Harris and Feinstein for investing in our parks, public lands, and outdoor recreation in recognition of their importance to our economy, and to our communities' wellbeing, through full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

We now need the House of Representatives to quickly take up the Great American Outdoors Act. 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 state. Across the nation, the travel and tourism industries have been taking a hit in the current crisis. Investing now in full funding for LWCF can help with a strong long-term recovery for gateway communities and states that rely on visitors to public lands.

California's outdoor recreation economy supports almost [\\$92 billion in consumer spending and \\$30.4 billion in wages and salaries](#), and serves as the lifeblood for countless communities across California. 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.

These projects don't just build community in our state, they bolster the economy as well. In California, [LWCF invested almost \\$2.5 billion alone](#). It has contributed to community projects [like the Truckee River Regional Park](#), El Dorado Campground (also known as Campground by the Lake), and Bijou Park. The program is truly a win-win for voters and our land alike.

Investing in our public lands, and providing full, permanent funding for LWCF is a low-cost economic stimulus that can pay big dividends for communities across America. We urge Representative Pelosi to get this done and over the finish line. Representatives McClintock and Cook, vote for the Great American Outdoors Act. The health of California and our citizens depend on it.

- Mayor Dave Polivy, Town of Truckee, California Mayor
- Devin Middlebrook, City of South Lake Tahoe, California Councilmember
- John Wentworth, Town of Mammoth Lakes, California Councilmember