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**LATE-BREAKING NEWS**


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**PUBLIC LANDS****Advocates ramp up pressure for permanent LWCF funds**

Jennifer Yachnin, E&amp;E News reporter

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A video played on a large screen outside Washington, D.C.'s Union Station this morning called for fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Michael Abate/E&E News

Conservation advocates today slammed congressional lawmakers over the slow pace of legislation to establish permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Despite bipartisan support for establishing mandatory funding for the popular conservation program, which relies on proceeds from offshore oil and gas drilling, legislation remains pending in both the House and Senate with only two weeks left on the congressional calendar.

Advocates demanded that GOP senators "step up" to complete the legislation this month. Members of the Mountain Pact, a nonprofit organization that works with Western communities on economic and environmental issues, also urged lawmakers to buck the Trump administration's budget and fully fund the LWCF in fiscal 2020.

"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," Mayor Corinne Platt of Ophir, Colo., said in a news conference organized by the Mountain Pact.

Along with Mayor Sarah Smith Hymes of Avon, Colo., Platt specifically called out Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner (R) to support the appropriations bill and permanent funding.

"We're waiting for Sen. Gardner to step up to make this happen and to encourage his colleagues to fully and permanently fund it," Smith Hymes said.

Similarly, Mayor Hyrum Johnson of Driggs, Idaho, praised his state's congressional delegation for their "strong support."

But Johnson added: "As they say, the proof is in the pudding, and until the vote comes down and we see that full and permanent funding, it's just words."

The Mountain Pact issued a letter to lawmakers in September, signed by more than 150 local officials across 11 Western states, likewise urging the adoption of permanent funding for the LWCF.

The program provides for the purchase of additional public lands and also funds grants for states to preserve and maintain parks, cultural sites, forests and recreation areas.

**Ad campaigns**

Other organizations unrolled new videos aimed at pressuring lawmakers into acting on LWCF legislation.

Montana Conservation Voters released a 30-second [spot](#) criticizing Republican Sen. Steve Daines of Montana.

"When Sen. Steve Daines promised to support Montana's public lands but then shortchanged them by hundreds of millions, Montanans noticed," Jock Conyngham, MCV board of directors chairman, says in the video as he drives a pickup truck across snow-covered ground.

The video refers to a letter Daines authored in May in which he requested "at least \$600 million" for LWCF in fiscal 2020, rather than the full \$900 million the program could be eligible to receive.

The ad will air statewide on Montana cable television stations.

A Daines spokeswoman dismissed the ad as a partisan attack, noting that Daines criticized the Senate Appropriations Committee's proposal to fund the program at \$465 million. He is also a sponsor of the Senate bill to establish mandatory full funding of the program.

"MCV is a partisan, politically motivated group whose apparent sole purpose is to mislead folks about the senator's commitment to LWCF," said Daines spokeswoman Katie Schoettler, who also highlighted the GOP lawmaker's role in securing permanent reauthorization for LWCF earlier this year.

The Clean Water Fund also rolled out its own video in recent days, sponsoring a large video installation near Union Station in Washington, D.C., through Thursday.

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