

# Whitefish Pilot

[HTTPS://WWW.WHITEFISHPILOT.COM/LOCAL\\_NEWS/20190313/PRESIDENT SIGNS LANDS BILL BUT FUNDING STILL NEEDED FOR CONSERVATION FUND](https://www.whitefishpilot.com/local_news/20190313/president-signs-lands-bill-but-funding-still-needed-for-conservation-fund)

## PRESIDENT SIGNS LANDS BILL, BUT FUNDING STILL NEEDED FOR CONSERVATION FUND

March 13, 2019 at 11:05 am | By [Heidi Desch](#)



A major public lands bill was signed into law Tuesday by President Trump including the permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The bill previously passed the House and Senate. Montana's Congressional delegation all voted for the bill.

Trump signed S. 47, which also includes the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act barring new mining on public land north of Yellowstone National Park.

Republicans U.S. Sen. Steve Daines and Congressman Greg Gianforte were present for the signing.

Daines Tuesday released a photo of himself holding a pen from the signing ceremony at the White House.

“What a great day for Montana, a great day for America,” Daines said in a release. “I just came back from the West Wing of the White House, the Oval Office, where I witnessed President Trump sign the lands package.”

“Today, we celebrate this new law, this victory for Montana,” Gianforte said in a release. “Communities throughout Montana came together in support of conserving our public lands, and they deserve a lot of credit for getting this across the finish line.”

While the bill reauthorizes the LWCF it doesn’t fund it. That will have to come from Congress as separate legislation.

While he signed the bill, Trump’s 2020 budget proposal recommends pulling back about \$23 million of what was appropriated this year to the LWCF.

Democrat U.S. Sen. Jon Tester called on the Trump Administration to reverse the cuts and stop undermining the successful conservation initiative.

“It is easy to understand why folks hate Washington when politicians cheer on the President as he signs a bill to authorize LWCF just one day after trying to gut its funding,” Tester said in a release. “I hope the President’s cheerleaders put money where their mouth is and fully fund this critical conservation initiative.”

Signing of the bill, called the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, was praised by several groups that have supported the reauthorization of the LWCF, but they also called for permanent funding for the fund.

Anna Peterson, executive director of The Mountain Pact, celebrated the reauthorization as supporting public lands.

“LWCF is essential to mountain communities across the west,” she said in a statement. “Unfortunately, President Trump and Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt proposed to eliminate funding for LWCF in their proposed 2020 budget. Now, every member of Congress who supported LWCF needs to stand up against the Trump Administration’s cuts and support full and dedicated funding, otherwise the promise of LWCF will continue to be unfulfilled.”

The Land and Water Conservation Fund expired last year after Congress failed to reauthorize the program that directs a portion of federal revenues from offshore oil and gas leasing to fund grants that went to local, state and federal projects that benefit conservation and outdoor recreation.

The LWCF played a key role in securing funding for the recently completed Whitefish Lake Watershed Project, a 13,400-acre conservation easement northwest of Whitefish Lake. The Haskill Basin conservation easement finalized in 2016 also relied on LWCF funding to ultimately preserve about 3,000 acres of forestland north of town including providing protection for the city of Whitefish’s source for drinking water. The fund also provided funding for the Trumbull Creek conservation easement for about 7,000 acres north of Columbia Falls.