



June 3, 2019

Dear Honorable Montana Senators Tester and Daines,

First of all, we would like to enthusiastically thank you for your continued support of permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). As local elected officials from Whitefish, Montana, we represent approximately 7,000 year-round residents and 661,209 non-resident visitors, all of whom recognize the importance of adequate funding for public lands conservation, preservation, enhancement, and expansion. Although we are pleased with the passage of permanent reauthorization, this is just a first step. We now urge you to support and advance *full and dedicated funding* for the LWCF.

The LWCF has provided funding over the last 52 years for countless federal, state, and local public lands projects in every county in the United States.¹ Most recently, LWCF provided \$2 million to help complete the 13,400-acre conservation easement Northwest of Whitefish Lake. These resources have helped to create an extensive network of public lands and waters for conservation, ecosystem preservation, and for all Americans to enjoy. Outdoor recreation and proximity to open spaces - many of which have been enhanced through the use of the LWCF - draw residents and tourists to mountain communities such as ours which provides significant economic support as well as a distinct and desirable way of life. A recent study found that counties in close proximity to public lands perform substantially better in key economic factors such as employment and personal income than counties without nearby public lands.²

Since the LWCF expired in late September 2018, the fund has lost more than \$350 million that should have been used for the conservation, enhancement, and protection of public lands and waterways. Many projects funded by the LWCF have an uncertain future due to the current lack of funding and historically unpredictable nature of funding for the program. Thus, we urge you to pass *full and dedicated funding* to ensure our public lands receive the protection they deserve now, and into the future.

The LWCF is a vital component of job creation and economic development through support for public land infrastructure. Reports show that the LWCF provides a strong return on investment. One study found that for every \$1 of LWCF funds invested there is a remarkable return of \$4 in economic value.³

Our community is inextricably linked to the public lands that surrounds it. Our residents and business owners rely on public lands visitation and exploration for economic success

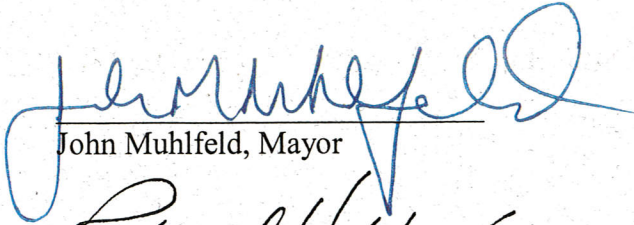
¹ <http://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/384469-local-economies-need-the-land-and-water-conservation-fund>

² <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/federal-lands-performance/>

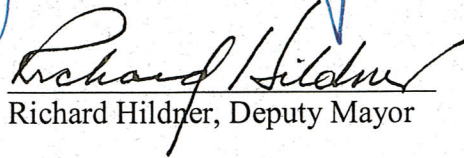
³ <https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/cloud.tpl.org/pubs/benefits-LWCF-ROI%20Report-11-2010.pdf>

and cultural vitality. The LWCF supports and enhances public lands, and as such, our communities. You have the opportunity to provide full funding to support this incredible program. So please, vote to fully fund the LWCF in support of our mountain communities, and public lands for *all* Americans.

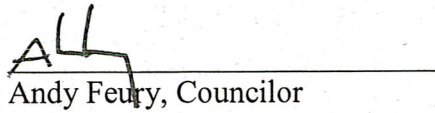
Sincerely,



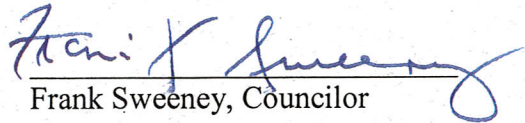
John Muhlfeld, Mayor



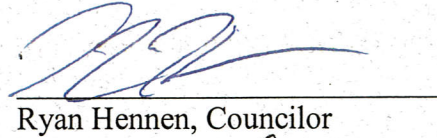
Richard Hildner, Deputy Mayor



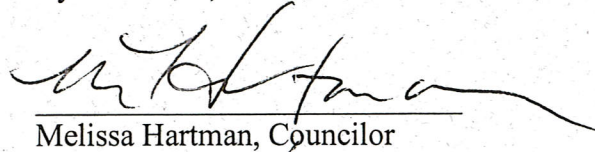
Andy Feury, Councilor



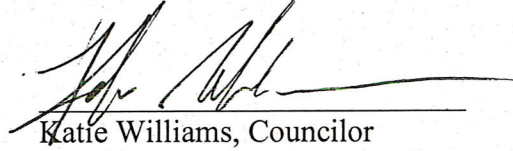
Frank Sweeney, Councilor



Ryan Hennen, Councilor



Melissa Hartman, Councilor



Katie Williams, Councilor