



For Immediate Release

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The Nation's Mayors Seek President's Continued Support for Land and Water Conservation Fund

Washington—Nearly 50 mayors across the country urged President Obama this week to support federal funding of urban parks and green space as **a strategy for creating jobs and driving economic development**. Mayors from Chicago, New York City, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and smaller cities like Bozeman, Montana, and Bridgeport, Connecticut, sent a letter requesting the administration's continued support for **full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund**, the nation's premier tool for protecting open space in urban and rural communities nationwide without the use of taxpayer dollars. The City Parks Alliance met with senior White House officials this week to deliver the letter and discuss the importance of LWCF funding to America's urban communities and economies.

The letter notes the significant economic impact these venues have had on local economics:

"Outdoor recreation activities contribute \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supporting 6.5 million jobs, according to the Outdoor Industry Foundation. New investments in parks could quickly create **an added 100,000 to 200,000 positions**—jobs based largely in communities and, thus, hard to outsource."

The President's proposed FY2012 budget recommends full funding for LWCF, including \$200 million for matching grants to states and communities. The LWCF does not rely on taxpayer dollars, but rather on a very small percentage of fees paid by companies conducting offshore oil and gas production. Congress must appropriate the funds every year to parks. However, nearly every year since 1965—when the LWCF was created—lawmakers have largely diverted the funds to other, non-related purposes.

The mayors' letter came just a week after U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar identified many renowned urban parks as places to create and protect in the final 50-State America's Great Outdoors Report—a compilation of public feedback and strategic conversations with the nation's governors and diverse stakeholders about locally-driven conservation opportunities. City parks in Cleveland, Detroit, Hampton, Va., Philadelphia and Pittsburgh were among the projects highlighted in the report representing "a 21st Century approach to conservation that is designed by and accomplished in partnership with the American people." Research shows that urban parks help to drive tourism, raise property values, and help communities to thrive. A new study of Chicago's Millennium Park, for example, concludes that the cultural, environmental, educational and economic benefits to the city quadrupled the value of the public-private investment in the space.

"Cities are the engines that drive the nation's economy," said Catherine Nagel, executive director of the City Parks Alliance, an independent, nationwide organization dedicated to urban parks. "Parks

and green space are critical to helping our cities become healthier and more vibrant places to live and work, and the leadership of the president and Congress is critical to keeping this engine running."

For 45 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been a crucial source of support to conserve open space and water resources, while also funding new parks, trails, and recreational facilities in urban and rural communities.

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund continues to be an essential tool to meet the increasing demand for livable communities in cities all across this country," said Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock. "In Denver, we value our great opens spaces and recreational facilities. These investments are as much economic investments for the city as they are quality of life investments for our residents. I applaud the President for his commitment and proudly sign the letter encouraging his continued support."

President Obama acknowledged the importance of urban parks and open space and his support for the Fund when he released the America's Great Outdoors report, saying:

"They help spur the economy. They create jobs by putting more Americans back to work in tourism and recreation. ...They help Americans stay healthier by making it easier to spend time outside. And they'll help carry forth our legacy as a people who don't just make decisions based on short-term gains of any one group but on what's best for the entire nation in the long run."

The mayors, along with the City Parks Alliance, believe Congress should provide consistent funding for LWCF and not divert these funds for other purposes—a sentiment echoed by nine in 10 Americans, according to [recent national polling](#).

You can read a copy of the mayors' letter and [a list of signees here](#).

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CITY PARKS ALLIANCE is the only independent nationwide membership organization solely dedicated to urban parks. It unites and serves a growing network of hundreds of civic and community leaders, government agencies, park and recreation authorities, funders and others. The mission of City Parks Alliance is to create vibrant and healthy parks and green spaces that contribute to sustainable cities by organizing, facilitating and nurturing a broad-based movement.