



## **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)-State Side Assistance**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 was enacted to help preserve, develop, and assure access to outdoor recreation facilities to strengthen the health of U.S. citizens. Congress created the Land and Water Conservation Fund as a funding source to meet the growing public consciousness of health and environmental issues. There are two sides to the program: a Federal side which authorizes up to 100% funding for additions to National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, and other federal public lands; and the State Assistance program, which provides 50% in federal funds to states and localities as matching grants. State Assistance funds are allocated to states and ultimately to cities, counties, and towns for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation sites and facilities.

Over the past 44 years, the LWCF State Assistance program has appropriated \$4 billion in matching grants to states and localities for the planning, acquisition and development of outdoor recreation opportunities in the United States. This combination of federal and state/local funding has enabled the approval of over 41,000 projects in every geographic region of the U.S, in 98% of counties, and almost every locality that supports the acquisition of open space for park lands and/or the development of outdoor recreation facilities. Over the life of the program, LWCF has helped to create thousands of hiking trails and athletic fields among numerous other projects that have allowed America to be physically active.

### ***Recent Funding Trends:***

In recent years, the program has been curtailed by a lack of commitment from the Administration and Congress. For Fiscal Years 2006-2009 the Administration recommended zero funding for LWCF State Assistance and we saw appropriations for the program decline from \$100 million in FY 2004 to only \$19 million in FY 2009, further accelerating the need for park and recreational resources at the local and state level. The accelerated need is evidenced by the fact that in 2008 the National Park Service estimated that the unmet needs for park and outdoor recreation resources totaled more than \$27 billion at the state and local levels.

### ***Why Should Congress Support Funding for LWCF State Assistance***

- The LWCF is far more than a land and resource conservation program—LWCF projects improve the quality of an individual's health and the health of communities. These public parks, sports fields, and recreation facilities provide opportunities to increase physical activity (and health) through affordable, close to home recreation resources. The need for such resources is especially acute in rural and urban areas.
- LWCF projects continue to fulfill the purpose originally intended by Congress- increasing the quantity and quality of physical activity opportunities for all Americans. Long before physical inactivity and obesity reached epidemic proportions in the US, the country's leaders expressed their

understanding of the connection between health, physical activity and recreation through the creation of the LWCF and including a state/local component.

- LWCF funded land acquisition projects protect public lands. No other federal program provides this level of protection to America's natural resources and public lands. LWCF has been the spark behind many State efforts to create new and creative ways of expanding on such protection including the development of scenic river and recreational trail programs in addition to land preservation and facility development.
- LWCF projects enable active and outdoor recreation for all ages and incomes. It supports national and local goals for recreation, conservation of natural resources, improving the health and well-being of all Americans. Land is being developed at an incredible rate and once it is gone-it is lost forever. The LWCF Act requires that all property acquired or developed with LWCF assistance be maintained perpetually in public outdoor recreation use—insuring that generation after generation will have a variety of safe, affordable places to engage in physical activity.

***Current Status:***

- The President's Budget proposed \$30 million in funding.
- The House of Representatives has passed the FY 10 Interior Appropriations bill, providing \$40 million for LWCF State Assistance.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee provided \$35 million to LWCF State Assistance. A vote on the FY 10 Interior Appropriations bill by the full Senate has not yet been scheduled.
- Members of the House Natural Resources Committee are considering introducing energy legislation in the Fall of 2009. A discussion draft of the legislation includes a provision to fully fund LWCF at the authorized level of \$900 million, and specifies that 50% of this funding would be allocated to the State Assistance program.

***Advocacy Action:***

- Ask Senators to match the House funding and to provide \$40 million in funding for LWCF State Assistance.
- Ask all members of Congress to support full funding of LWCF.