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Confluence of States Sends Unified Request To Unlock Federal Funds

National Bipartisan Group Calls for Flexibility in Land and Water Conservation Fund Match Requirement

SANTA FE, N.M. – The Confluence of States, co-chaired by the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), has published a letter advocating for a key update to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).



The 13-member Confluence of States, a bipartisan group of state outdoor recreation leaders, is calling on the Department of Interior (DOI) and Congressional leadership to consider increased flexibility of the LWCF's mandatory grant match requirement. The LWCF is a key source of funding for outdoor recreation access. Over the past 50 years, it has provided states and local communities with critical funds to support everything from state and local parks, playgrounds, hiking and biking trails, swimming pools, baseball fields, and wildlife areas.

With most local and state budgets devastated by COVID-19, the one-to-one federal matching requirement of the LWCF is a significant challenge to communities. Without adjusting the requirement, millions of dollars in federal outdoor recreation funds could sit unused over the next several years. Congress can support hundreds of shovel-ready projects that will put Americans back to work by providing match flexibility and allowing states and localities to fully access the newly available LWCF funding opportunities, according to the Confluence of States letter.

The call to action is addressed to DOI Secretary Deb Haaland, Representative Raúl M. Grijalva, Senator Joe Manchin, and Representative Joe Neguse. [Read the letters here.](#)

ORD, a division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department, is led by Director Axie Navas. Along with Nathan Fey, the director of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, Navas co-chairs the Confluence of States. This organization, comprised of 13 state-level offices of outdoor recreation, is aimed at developing a national platform to grow the outdoor recreation industry, protect our nation's wild places, and transform conservation into a driver for economic prosperity.

"We know outdoor recreation is a powerful economic engine," Navas said. "As our country's and states' economies start down the road of recovery, it's critical we invest in this sector. And a big piece of that will be rethinking the mandatory 1:1 funding match of the LWCF."

"Now is the time to invest in outdoor recreation infrastructure and open space," Pitt Grewe, director of the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation, said. "More people than ever are enjoying the outdoors and in need of space to recreate. Ensuring communities can easily take advantage of federal and local funding sources is critical to ensuring economic prosperity and quality of life for all Americans."

"The Great Lake State's \$10 billion annual recreation economy is built on our ability to maintain access to our abundant rivers, trails, parks and coastlines," Brad Garmon, director of the Michigan Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, said. "LWCF and the National Park Service have been primary partners in funding the outdoor recreation that the people and communities of Michigan depend on -- and ensuring those recreational opportunities remain available to future generations. With more funds coming online, more flexibility in meeting the LWCF's required match means we could deliver more projects to meet the growing demand for healthy outdoor lifestyles and restore popular trails damaged by severe weather events, such as the popular ATV and snowmobile trail from Dollar Bay to Lake Linden in Michigan's beautiful Keweenaw Peninsula."

"Outdoor recreation is fundamental to Vermont's economy and quality of life and the impact of LWCF in Vermont has been huge," Michael Snyder, commissioner of Vermont Forests, Parks, and Recreation, said. "Hundreds of parks and facilities have been acquired and improved with LWCF funds over the past fifty years, benefitting communities throughout our state. We are grateful for the NPS and our community partners and equally proud of our long history of shared successes and positive impact. With so much change in our world -- including the wonderful reawakening to the power of outdoor life -- we need to be adaptive in response if we're to continue this legacy into the future."

"Small cities and rural counties continue to face difficult fiscal challenges in meeting the increasing demand for safe, adequate, and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities," Chris Floyd, manager of Wyoming's Office of Outdoor Recreation, said. "The LWCF program needs to be robust and flexible in order to meet the needs of these struggling communities."

You can learn more about ORD and Confluence of States here:

- [New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division](#)
- [Confluence of States](#)

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