

Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership

**A lasting voice for innovative management and investment in the public forests of
North Carolina's mountains.**

The Honorable

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms./Mr.....:

We are writing as members of the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership (NFPF) to request your support for full and dedicated funding and reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The NFPF is a broad spectrum of user interests and organizations that include recreation, forest products, cultural heritage, economic development, conservation, and more – all of which have a stake in the future and present conditions of western North Carolina's public lands. LWCF was created in 1964 through offshore oil royalties, at an annual appropriation level of \$900 million, and at no cost to the US taxpayer. In the five decades since its inception, LWCF has contributed approximately \$216 million to help conserve more than 37,000 acres of North Carolina's forests, battlefields, and wildlife habitat, and supported more than 800 of our state and local parks. \$78 million of the \$216 million has funded state assistance grants that have supported hundreds of projects for North Carolina's state and local parks including Leinbach Park in Forsyth County, Camden Community Park in Camden County, Pittsboro Recreation Complex in Chatham County and Four Mile Creek Greenway in Mecklenburg County.

Over the life of the program, approximately \$4 billion in LWCF grants to states has leveraged more than \$7 billion in nonfederal matching funds, and has benefited nearly every county in America, supporting over 41,000 projects. From building hiking and biking trails, to improving community parks, playgrounds and ballfields, this 50:50 matching program is the primary federal investment tool to ensure that families have easy access to public, open spaces.

Why LWCF for Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests?

- The Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest is the second most visited National Forest in America.
- The number of visitors to North Carolina has doubled in the last 15 years to 19.4 million.
- Outdoor recreation supports 192,000 jobs and generates \$19.2 billion in consumer spending in North Carolina.
- North Carolina ranks 6th in the nation in total visitors.
- North Carolina's 1.63 million hunters and anglers invest nearly \$2.3 billion in local communities and support 72,462 local jobs.
- North Carolina's equine industry is valued at nearly \$2 billion.

Economic Benefits of Supporting LWCF

Active outdoor recreation is an important part of the North Carolina economy. The Outdoor Industry Association has found that active outdoor recreation contributes more than \$7.5 billion annually to the state's economy, supports 95,000 jobs across North Carolina, generates \$430 million in annual state tax revenue and produces \$6.1 billion annually in retail sales and services across North Carolina. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that each year over 3.4 million people participated in hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching in North Carolina contributing \$2.7 billion to the state economy. Nearly 60% of the over 50,000

horse-owning households in North Carolina participate in recreational trail riding. With full LWCF funding, North Carolina's outdoor recreation economy will stay strong and continue to create sustainable long-term economic growth.

LWCF Funded Units in North Carolina

Federal Program

Alligator River NWR
Blue Ridge Parkway
Cape Hatteras NS
Cape Lookout NS
Carl Sandburg Home NHS
Croatan NF
Currituck NWR
Fort Raleigh NHS
Great Dismal Swamp NWR
Guilford Courthouse NMP
Nantahala NF
Pisgah NF
Roanoke River NWR
Uwharrie NF
*Blue Ridge Parkway
*Chattooga WSR

What is at Stake

On September 3, 2014, our nation celebrated the 50th Anniversary of this landmark conservation legislation, and in September, 2015 the fund is set to expire. This is a critical time for the future of LWCF and our public lands. Chronically underfunded, LWCF has a real chance to receive full funding this fiscal year, which would make it just the second time in its 50 year history. At full funding, LWCF can help protect and conserve more places around the country for people and wildlife as well as continue to support state and local economies. Congress must act now to reauthorize the program or it could disappear forever. Thank you for your support, and if we can answer any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact any of our member organizations.

Sincerely yours,

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Members of the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership:

Access Fund
American Whitewater
Root Cause
Back Country Horsemen of America & NC
Carolina Mountain Club
Columbia Forest Products
High Country Hikers
Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition
International Mountain Bicycling Association
Mountain True
National Wild Turkey Federation
NC Horse Council
Audubon North Carolina
Ecological Services & Markets
The Nature Conservancy

Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards
Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association
Special Permit Holders
Sustainable Foothills
The Wilderness Society
Wild South
Highland Cashiers Land Trust
NC Wildlife Federation
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
Southern Appalachian Mineral Society
American Rivers
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

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