

DRAFT

December 6, 2010

The Honorable Senator Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McConnell,

As organizations concerned with conserving Kentucky's forests, wildlife, recreational and cultural resources and heritage, we are writing to express our strong support for full and dedicated funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Specifically, we urge you to support passage of legislation this year that provides urgently needed, dedicated LWCF funding that is consistent and reliable.

As you know, the LWCF is America's most important tool for conserving our nation's land and water resources, including critical habitat for fish and wildlife, and places for Americans to hunt, fish, paddle, horseback ride, and hike and enjoy other forms of outdoor recreation. Authorized at \$900 million per year, revenue from offshore oil and gas receipts are the primary source of funds for this program. However, nearly every year money from this fund is diverted elsewhere as 3 million acres of wildlife habitat and agricultural land are lost to development.

In Kentucky, LWCF has helped conserve some of our most treasured places. Kentucky has received over \$100 million over the past four decades, protecting places such as the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park, the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, and the Daniel Boone National Forest.

LWCF also provides state assistance grants that support the acquisition and development of state and local parks and outdoor recreation facilities. LWCF provides a vital federal complement to ongoing state, local and private land conservation, and park and recreation efforts.

Active outdoor recreation is an important part of the Kentucky economy. Each year, 820,000 sportspersons and 1.5 million wildlife watchers combine to spend \$1.9 billion on wildlife-associated recreation in Kentucky. This is an integral part of the American outdoor recreation economy, which contributes \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supports 6.4 million American jobs (1 out of every 20 jobs in the U.S.), and stimulates 8 percent of all consumer spending, according to the Outdoor Industry Association.

Forest landowners and industry support 2.5 million jobs, \$263 billion in annual sales and generate \$4.4 billion in state tax revenue, contributing \$115 billion to the Gross Domestic Product. LWCF helps conserve working forests through the Forest Legacy program and supports sustainable forest management practices.

We need sustained investment to conserve fish and wildlife habitat, forests and natural areas, and to provide abundant outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans. The Land and

Water Conservation Fund was designed to do just that and it is time to keep the longstanding promise of full and dedicated LWCF funding to conserve and provide access to special places in Kentucky and throughout the nation.

Demand for federal, state, and local conservation through LWCF has never been more pressing. We look forward to continuing to work with you towards passage of appropriate legislation during the remainder of this Congress that includes dedicated funding of LWCF to positively impact the national and local economy, and for the enjoyment of these special places for present and future generations.

Sincerely,

Bluegrass Tomorrow
Central Kentucky Back Country Horsemen
Equine Land Conservation Resource
Kentucky Academy of Science
Kentucky Back Country Horsemen
Kentucky Conservation Committee
Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Kentucky Department of Parks
Kentucky Division of Water
Kentucky Environmental Education Projects, Inc.
Kentucky Heartwood
Kentucky Horse Council
Kentucky Division of Forestry
Kentucky Native Plant Society
Kentucky Natural Lands Trust
Kentucky Resources Council
Kentucky Riverkeeper
Kentucky Society of Natural History
Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission
Kentucky State Chapter, National Wild Turkey Federation
Kentucky Thoroughbred Association
Kentucky Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders
Kentucky Waterways Alliance
Louisville Audubon Society
River Fields, Inc.
The Arboretum, State Botanical Garden of Kentucky
The Nature Conservancy of Kentucky