



# A **SMART INVESTMENT** FOR AMERICA'S ECONOMY



## THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND



Since 2000, the number of young, educated adults moving to livable, walkable urban neighborhoods has increased.

37%.



Maintaining a healthy weight saves

**\$1,500**

per person in healthcare costs a year.



outdoor industry

**6.1  
million  
jobs**



oil & gas industry

**2.1  
million  
jobs**

Philadelphia is saving **\$14 BILLION** by managing storm water and preventing flooding with parks and green infrastructure instead of new pipes and tunnels.



GRAY  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
**\$16  
billion**



GREEN  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
**\$2  
billion**

← **\$1 in LWCF grants**



Every **\$1** of federal LWCF grants for the South Platte River in Denver leveraged **\$2,083** in local public and private funding.

# LWCF—A smart investment for America’s cities

In 1964 Congress established the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to protect and enhance our nation’s incomparable array of natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities. It was the culmination of a bipartisan effort to achieve some lasting good for all Americans and the land we share. The vision was simple—to reinvest a portion of energy revenues from offshore oil and gas that belong to us all into conservation of the land, water and recreation resources we all need—conserving America’s heritage without spending tax-payer dollars.

The LWCF State and Local Assistance Program was created in 1965 to provide matching grants to state and local governments for locally-supported projects that provide close-to-home recreation. Since its inception there have been over 42,000 matching grants totaling over \$4 billion, leveraging billions more in local public and private investment.

In fact, more than 98% of the counties in the nation have a park project funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Over the last decade American cities have experienced a renaissance—a “Metropolitan Revolution”—in which young professionals and families are increasingly choosing to live in the urban core.<sup>1</sup> With LWCF support, cities are investing in parks, trails and playspaces, and creating healthy communities where young adults are choosing to live and work, and families are choosing to raise their children.

This report highlights the success stories of LWCF funding in cities. However, of the total amount appropriated to date, less than 2% of it has been spent on projects for the 100 largest cities.<sup>2</sup> A larger percent of LWCF funds appropriated for urban projects would exponentially increase the economic benefits highlighted in this report.

The outdoor recreation economy generates \$80 billion in national, state and local tax revenues each year.<sup>3</sup>

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**\$2,083 in local public & private funding**



“Greenville never had an iconic image; the bridge and waterfalls became that. We spent \$13 million on the park and within two years had about \$100 million in private investment. LWCF’s initial investment led to permanent protection of the site and the support that has since flowed into the park and surrounding area.”

— GREENVILLE MAYOR KNOX WHITE



PHOTO CREDIT: REEL VIDEO & STILL, INC.

## **REEDY RIVER FALLS PARK AND LIBERTY BRIDGE, GREENVILLE, SC**

In 2004, Greenville transformed its downtown by restoring Reedy River Falls Park, originally protected by LWCF, and building Liberty Bridge. The pedestrian bridge is the capstone of a park that has inspired a wave of prosperity throughout the West End, including construction of a minor league baseball park.<sup>6</sup>



# Reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund

**City Parks Alliance urges Congress to permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Congress should fully fund LWCF to at least the original congressionally authorized level of \$900 million per year.**

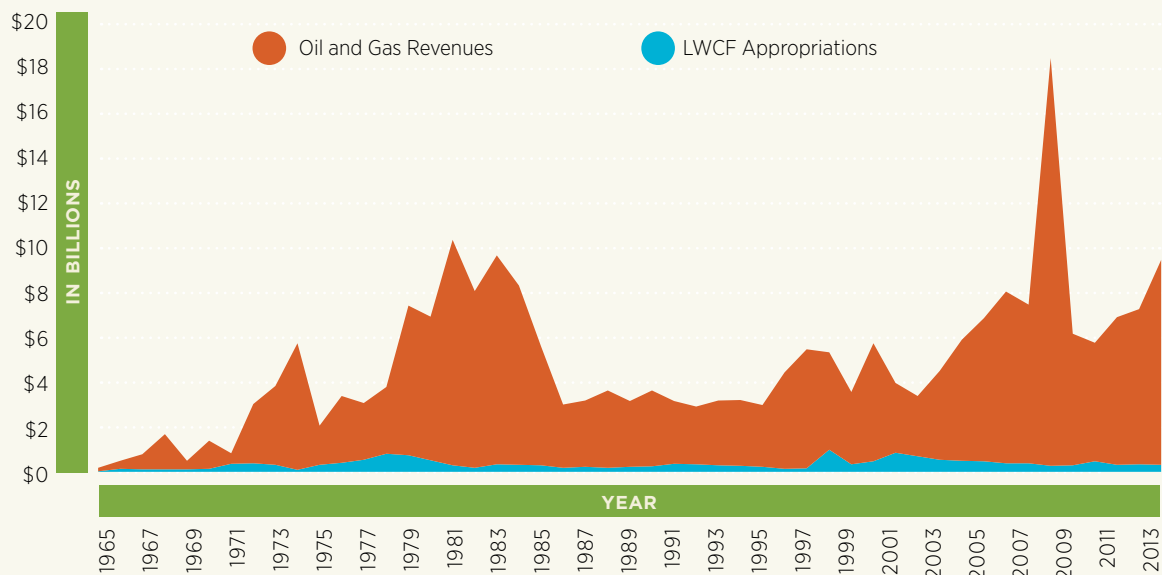
While City Parks Alliance supports the historic role Congress has played in allocating funds between LWCF's component programs based on demonstrated needs, **City Parks Alliance also urges Congress to increase the amount of LWCF funding for urban parks to keep our cities healthy and competitive.**

Current federal offshore energy receipts now exceed \$9 billion per year. According to the original legislation, this fund was created specifically for the purpose of permanently protecting some of America's lands, water

and recreation resources, with revenue derived from depleting a finite resource owned by all of us—oil and gas reserves. The \$900 million originally authorized by Congress to be spent annually on LWCF is now less than 10% of total revenues deposited into the treasury for this purpose.

Since its inception, Congress has only funded LWCF at its annual authorized level once. **Over the life of the program, more than \$18 billion of LWCF's funding has been diverted by Congress to other unintended purposes.** But the need has never been greater. Land values and park development will continue to increase as the population grows, especially in metropolitan areas where open space is at a premium.<sup>4</sup>

**Offshore Oil and Gas Revenues vs. LWCF Appropriations<sup>5</sup>**



# LWCF parks attract residents and businesses

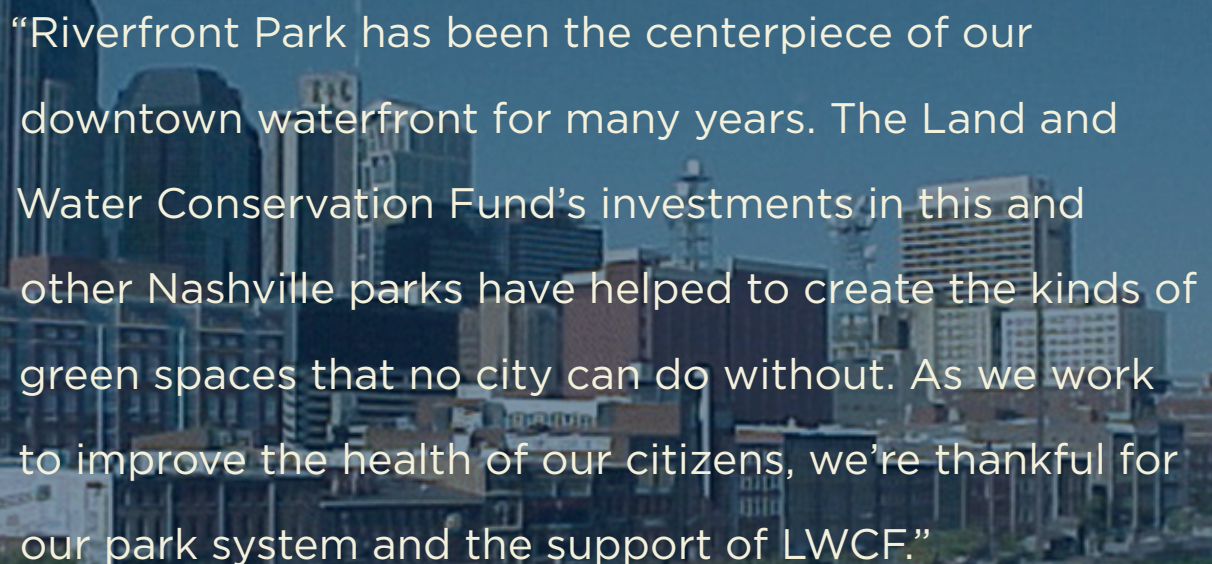
**The driving force in America's economy increasingly lies in large cities that, after decades of growth, now harbor 80% of our population and generate 85 percent of our GDP.** In the next 15 years, the 259 largest U.S. cities are expected to generate more than 10 percent of global GDP growth—a share bigger than that of all such cities in other developed countries combined.<sup>7</sup>

American cities serve as the entrepreneurial engines of our nation, with robust and diverse labor markets and a mix of employers. Across the country, from Salt Lake City to Oklahoma City to Jacksonville, young talented individuals and firms in a growing number of sectors are moving to the urban core.<sup>8</sup>

With an influx of well-educated workers,

cities are investing in the type of quality of life that both workers and companies are demanding—communities that blend housing, business, transit, retail and recreation, **including parks that are hubs of cultural and physical activity, trails that support alternative transportation, and outdoor playspaces that make dense urban communities livable and vibrant for Americans of all ages.**

In addition, LWCF improves access to America's vast network of public lands, providing city-dwellers greater opportunities to enjoy the mountains, deserts, and streams that are a day trip or less away. Proximity to public lands has shown to be an economic asset for cities across the country. The LWCF bolsters this asset for businesses and residents alike.



“Riverfront Park has been the centerpiece of our downtown waterfront for many years. The Land and Water Conservation Fund’s investments in this and other Nashville parks have helped to create the kinds of green spaces that no city can do without. As we work to improve the health of our citizens, we’re thankful for our park system and the support of LWCF.”

— NASHVILLE MAYOR KARL DEAN





**RIVERFRONT PARK, NASHVILLE, TN** The Riverfront Park in downtown Nashville, funded in part by LWCF, was one of the first of an interconnected network of parks, trails and civic amenities that Nashville is building as part of its riverfront revitalization. As each phase has been completed, recreational visits to Nashville’s urban core have increased.’ Nashville’s focus on creating a vibrant downtown by investing in parks as a hub for recreation and development has contributed to a **50% INCREASE in the number of 25 to 34 year olds with college degrees moving to Nashville’s urban core over the last decade.**<sup>10</sup>



# LWCF leverages private sector investment

The LWCF Stateside grants have leveraged significant state and local investments in urban parks through the program's one-to-one match requirement, which local governments usually far exceed.

**In addition to leveraging match dollars, LWCF stateside grants have spurred billions of dollars in private investments in and around LWCF parks through direct investments in new real estate and commercial development,** creating a wide range of jobs from construction to retail to sales and services. Cities, such as Greenville (SC), Nashville and Seattle, have revitalized their central business districts through park investments that are attracting new businesses and residents to once neglected downtowns.

LWCF projects also benefit property owners adjacent to or near parks and trails through increased property values. **Studies**

**have shown that houses near parks or trails have 5% to 20% higher property values than those in the surrounding community,** which benefit local municipalities by increasing property tax revenues. Investments in parks and trails in turn contribute to our citizens' wealth and the financial stability of our local governments.<sup>11</sup>

Western cities, in particular, have experienced dramatic economic development in recent decades, at least in part due to the LWCF's legacy. About 90% of Westerners live in urban areas, including many of the fastest growing cities in the country, surrounded by an abundance of public recreation lands.<sup>12</sup>

**Over the past 50 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has created a legacy of parks that will contribute to the economic vitality of cities for generations to come.**

Increasing access to safe places to bike and walk is a priority for many communities trying to reduce obesity. Since 1965, LWCF has funded the creation of 8,762 locally-supported trail projects.<sup>13</sup>







The public seating at Denver's Confluence Park invites park visitors to stop, patronize local cafes, and shop at outdoor retail and other stores.

**CONFLUENCE PARK ON THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER, DENVER, CO** LWCF's \$1.2 million in grants for the South Platte River in Denver galvanized over \$2.5 billion in local public and private funding, an investment that has revitalized Denver's downtown and continues to drive economic development and job creation. **Leveraging two thousand dollars in local public and private funding for every federal dollar spent is a smart national investment.**<sup>14</sup>



Gateway Park hosts 15 to 18 tournaments annually involving out-of-town sports teams, with an economic benefit of \$5.5 million per year for Fort Worth.<sup>19</sup>



**GATEWAY PARK, FORT WORTH, TX** Since LWCF's initial \$725,000 grant enabled Fort Worth to purchase 325 acres to create Gateway Park, an additional **\$4.8 million has been committed by state and local sources to double the size of the park.** New athletic fields and an exciting mix of recreational amenities, such as a mountain bike course, playground and disc golf course, are making Gateway Park a regional destination that can be accessed through the Trinity River Trail network.



# LWCF promotes public health

It is well established that physical activity helps prevent obesity and related medical problems, and there is mounting evidence that providing close-to-home places to exercise—parks, primarily—can improve health. People who live close to parks that are easy to get to and well-maintained are more likely to use them; conversely, people who live far from parks are apt to use them less.<sup>15</sup>

Participating in outdoor recreation, starting at a young age with close-to-home accessible activities, leads to greater participation in a wider variety of outdoor activities throughout life. The most popular of these “gateway” activities are walking, running, bicycling, fishing and hiking, which can all be pursued in local urban parks and trails.<sup>16</sup>

Half of all Americans get less than the minimum recommended amount of physical activity. Of the half of Americans who participate in outdoor recreation, over 70% say their

primary motivation is to get exercise. **Yet one in ten Americans, from teens to seniors, say they are not active outside because the places to recreate are too far away.** Children, in particular, suffer from a lack of access to close-to-home recreation, which has led in part to the highest rates of childhood obesity in the world.<sup>17</sup>

The United States is the most overweight nation in the world. **An obese American racks up nearly \$1,500 more per year in health care costs than an American of normal weight, for a national total of \$147 billion in direct medical expenses.**<sup>18</sup>

The vitality of our nation depends on the vitality of our people. LWCF is a smart investment for keeping Americans active, an investment that will save lives, save costs and contribute to creating a strong, secure and healthy America.

“Urban parks are crucial assets for every city. The LWCF has provided vital assistance to Fort Worth in acquiring and developing parks that are integral to our city’s neighborhoods. As we seek to build healthier communities and encourage more engaged, connected citizens, our urban parks and green spaces are critical to the ultimate success of those efforts.”

— FORT WORTH MAYOR BETSY PRICE  
CO-CHAIR, MAYOR FOR PARKS COALITION

# LWCF generates jobs and U.S. manufacturing

The 50% of Americans who participate in outdoor recreation put \$646 billion of their hard-earned dollars right back into the economy. Even better, this spending directly results in highly sought-after jobs for 6.1 million Americans.<sup>20</sup>

Our nation's parks, public lands and waters drive both consumerism and tourism by supporting the outdoor recreation economy. For most Americans, the experience that first sparks their interest in outdoor recreation is a visit to a local park in their own community.

**Visitors to America's parks, whether coming from across town or across the world, spend their tourism dollars in local communities and buy their outdoor products primarily from U.S. businesses.<sup>21</sup>**

The U.S. is the global leader in design and manufacture of outdoor recreation products. Growth in the outdoor industry is creating a demand for highly skilled workers in areas like

technology, product design, manufacturing, sustainability and global commerce.

In short, outdoor recreation is a growing and diverse economic super sector that is a vital cornerstone of successful communities and cannot be ignored. Most importantly, outdoor recreation is no longer a "nice to have," it is now a "must have" as leaders across the country recognize the undeniable economic, social and health benefits of outdoor recreation.

**The outdoor recreation economy can only continue to be a growing generator of jobs and an economic powerhouse if we manage and invest in America's parks, waters and trails as a national outdoor recreation system designed to reap economic dividends for America. LWCF increases the capacity of cities to make these important investments in their parks, which are the cornerstone of our outdoor recreation economy.**

## OVERLOOKED ECONOMIC GIANT

*Annual Consumer Spending (in billions)<sup>22</sup>*


Finance and insurance	\$780
Outpatient healthcare	\$767
<b>OUTDOOR RECREATION</b>	<b>\$646</b>
Gasoline and other fuels	\$354
Motor vehicles and parts	\$340
Pharmaceuticals	\$331
Household utilities	\$309

## OUTDOOR RECREATION EMPLOYS AMERICA

*Job Comparisons by Industry<sup>23</sup>*

<b>OUTDOOR RECREATION</b>	<b>6.1 million</b>
Finance and insurance	5.8 million
Construction	5.5 million
Transportation & warehousing	4.3 million
Education	3.5 million
Oil and gas	2.1 million
Real estate, rentals, leasing	2.0 million



A photograph showing two people riding bicycles on a paved trail. The trail is bordered by a wooden railing on the left, which runs alongside a river. The surrounding area is filled with trees displaying vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the length of the trail.

The Cuyahoga Valley's "Ride the Rail, Bike the Trail" program allows visitors to ride the Scenic Train with their bikes to destinations throughout the park and connect with 125 miles of trails.

Americans spend more on bicycling gear and trips—\$81 billion—than they do on professional sports—\$25.4 billion—including football, baseball and basketball.<sup>25</sup>

**CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, CLEVELAND AND AKRON, OH** Whether renting or purchasing bikes, skis or other gear, staying in hotels, or eating in local restaurants, visitors to Cuyahoga Valley National Park pump \$54.6 million into the local economy each year. Cuyahoga Valley National Park's trails and lush rolling hills span from Cleveland to Akron, attracting 2.5 million visitors per year, some of whom travel across the country, some just across town. They come to take advantage of the park's abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, including the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail and Scenic Railroad, which follow the Cuyahoga River for the length of the park.<sup>24</sup>



# LWCF lowers infrastructure costs for cities

LWCF grants to water districts, cities, schools and other local partners can be a critical tool for park agencies in addressing their rapidly increasing water infrastructure costs while providing much needed recreation.

Decades of underinvestment in infrastructure has left most American cities with an infrastructure deficit that threatens their long-term economic stability, with water and wastewater one of the largest deferred infrastructure costs.<sup>26</sup>

Nationwide, water utilities are confronting a new set of complex challenges posed by the impacts of climate change and increased flooding. The confluence of these factors has caused major economic losses in

communities around the country. Hurricane Sandy caused up to \$70 billion in damages to communities across the Mid-Atlantic, while smaller floods in cities such as Phoenix and Houston have caused millions of dollars in damages.<sup>27</sup>

Cities, such as Denver, Philadelphia and the District of Columbia, are creating new parks and trails, and greening schoolyards and neighborhoods as part of a green infrastructure approach to managing stormwater. The result is a reduction in the cost of building and maintaining large underground pipes and tunnels, while improving the environment and creating close-to-home recreation.

By matching water utility and other local funding sources with LWCF grants, cities are better able to manage stormwater and prevent flooding, while also creating recreation opportunities, cleaning rivers, greening communities and improving schoolyards.







LWCF has funded the development of 25,800 sports fields in communities across the country. Many are designed to soak up millions of gallons of rainwater, thereby reducing sewer overflows and preventing flooding in nearby rivers.<sup>28</sup>

PHOTO CREDIT: GEORGE WIDMAN PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC.

**PHILADELPHIA, PA Philadelphia's 10,334 acre park system, developed in part with \$12 million in LWCF funds, is saving the city \$6 million PER YEAR in stormwater management costs.<sup>29</sup>** As part of its Green City, Clean Waters initiative, over the next 25 years Philadelphia will be investing \$2 billion in parks and green infrastructure to capture 85% of the city's stormwater, saving the city \$16 billion that would otherwise be spent on underground pipes and tunnels.<sup>30</sup> LWCF grants can match these water utility investments to ensure that stormwater management investments are simultaneously creating outdoor recreation opportunities.

# Conclusion: LWCF—A Smart Investment

The projects highlighted in this report demonstrate the transformative impact that LWCF funding can have on cities by supporting local efforts to create:

- ▶ A network of parks and trails that attracts residents and businesses,
- ▶ Downtown parks that generate private sector investments,
- ▶ Playgrounds and sports fields that support the health and quality of life of America's families,
- ▶ Waterfront parks that soak up and slowly release stormwater and prevent flooding, and
- ▶ Close-to-home parks and trails that are part of a national outdoor recreation system designed to reap economic dividends for America.

**LWCF has been a smart investment enabling cities to transform themselves into the cultural, social and economic drivers of American prosperity.** As urban populations continue to grow, and families choose to stay and raise their children in city neighborhoods, LWCF funding will become even more critical to cities in their efforts to create healthy, vibrant communities for generations to come.

Congress must act to secure a permanent reauthorization for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Congress should fully fund LWCF to at least the original congressionally authorized level of \$900 million per year and increase the amount of LWCF funding for urban parks to keep our cities healthy and competitive.

“The LWCF is a vital source of funding for local governments to create and protect green spaces in urban areas. Without the LWCF, it will become much more challenging for Denver to gain access to the resources needed to enhance the parks and trails that are so integral to improving quality of life for our residents and strengthening our local economy.”

— DENVER MAYOR MICHAEL B. HANCOCK  
CO-CHAIR, MAYOR FOR PARKS COALITION



# Additional LWCF Star Cities



The Watermark artwork, funded by the Scottsdale Arts Commission, enhances the LWCF-funded Indian Bend Wash greenbelt while managing floodwaters. (Designer: Haddad-Drugan)

**over the past 40 years** have enabled the creation of the Indian Bend Wash, an oasis of parks, lakes, paths and golf courses traversing 11 miles through the heart of Scottsdale. Developed initially as an alternative to cement culverts, **the greenbelt has successfully protected the city, including a 65 square mile drainage area, from flood damage during many record-setting rainfalls.** This world-renown flood control project is rated among the top urban green spaces in Arizona.

**SUGAR HOUSE PARK, SALT LAKE CITY, UT** Set in the Sugar





House neighborhood of Salt Lake City, Sugar House Park is a gem that attracts residents from around the city for events, sledding, sports, gardens and an extensive trail network. Multiple LWCF grants have supported a renovation of the park and trail connections to nearby Sugar House Business District, Parley's Rail to Trail and the Jordan River Trail. **These new connections have increased biking and pedestrian access to the business district and contributed to over \$200 million in new housing, retail and commercial development.**<sup>32</sup>





PHOTO CREDIT: GEORGE M. ARONSON

# STERLING FOREST, NEW YORK — NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS

Sterling Forest State Park comprises 22,000 acres of nearly pristine forest in the New York — New Jersey Highlands and provides clean drinking water to two million people in one of the nation’s most densely populated areas. Sterling Forest, which straddles two state borders west of New York City, **was created in 1996 with \$17.5 million in federal LWCF funding and \$20 million in match from the states of New Jersey and New York.** The remaining \$17.5 million came from private sources.<sup>31</sup>

# INDIAN BEND WASH, SCOTTSDALE, AZ **Eight LWCF grants**

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City Parks Alliance is the only independent, nationwide membership organization solely dedicated to urban parks. Its mission is to engage, educate and nurture a broad-based constituency to support the creation, revitalization and sustainability of parks and green spaces that contribute to dynamic cities.

The Mayors for Parks Coalition, a project of City Parks Alliance, is a national bipartisan coalition of mayors that advocates for reauthorization and full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

## **CITY PARKS ALLIANCE**

2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor • Washington, D.C. 20037  
202-974-5120 • [cityparksalliance.org](http://cityparksalliance.org)  
[cityparksalliance.org/action-center/mayors-for-parks](http://cityparksalliance.org/action-center/mayors-for-parks)

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