



# NEWS RELEASE

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## NEW BIPARTISAN POLL SHOWS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT ACROSS AMERICA FOR LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND *Growing Support for LWCF Found Across Demographic and Political Spectrum*

**Washington, DC**—As the House of Representatives prepares to vote on an Interior Department funding bill that would drastically cut conservation funding, a new bipartisan poll released today by the LWCF Coalition shows that an overwhelming 85% of Americans support full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)—the nation’s primary tool since 1965 to conserve land for parks, wildlife refuges, forests, rivers, trails, historic and cultural sites and other important federal, state and local public lands. By similar margins, the poll finds that a vast majority of Americans want Congress to honor its commitment to dedicate LWCF funds to these purposes rather than diverting them for unrelated uses. Yet in the bill that could be voted on as early as today, the House of Representatives has proposed siphoning off nearly all of these funds.

The telephone poll of 800 likely voters was conducted during the week of July 10, 2011, and was undertaken jointly by two research firms, one Republican (Public Opinion Strategies) and one Democratic (Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates ). The poll’s major findings (margin of error of +/- 3.46%) include:

- An overwhelming majority—88%—of voters support continuing to deposit fees from offshore oil and gas drilling into the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In 2009, 81% of voters supported continued LWCF funding.
- Voters from all major segments of the electorate support continued funding for LWCF, including:
  - 93% of Democrats, 87% of independents, and 83% of Republicans
  - 95% of Latinos, 88% of whites, and 85% of African Americans
  - 86% of voters in each region of the U.S.

The poll’s findings come at a time when the U.S. House of Representatives has proposed a draconian 80 percent cut to LWCF in the FY 2012 Interior funding bill—the lowest level of funding since the law establishing LWCF was passed in 1965. The cuts have been proposed despite the fact that the fund *uses no taxpayer dollars*. Over the past 45 years LWCF has helped to protect land in every state, and in 98% of U.S. counties. The fund has supported more than 41,000 state and local park projects, and has helped conserve working forests, farms and ranches. Lands protected with LWCF funds provide clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, natural areas for wildlife, and a heritage of spectacular parks, forests, and historic battlefields for us and future generations of Americans to enjoy.

“An overwhelming majority of the American public recognizes the value of investing in conservation and the protection of our outdoor heritage,” said Gaspar Perricone, Co-director of the Bull Moose Sportsmen’s Alliance Action Fund. “Hunters and anglers throughout the nation are hoping Congress will set aside partisan politics and do what is right by our natural resources. Investments in conservation have proven to yield a 4 to 1 return by supporting quality recreation opportunities for millions of Americans that collectively generate over 730 billion

annually for the nation's economy. Attempting to balance the budget on the backs of sportsmen and women not only fails in terms of economic sense, but also goes against the will of the people."

"These poll results show that conservation continues to be of critical importance to Americans, even in tough economic times," said Mark Tercek, President and CEO of The Nature Conservancy. "Without spending a single taxpayer dollar, LWCF has helped to protect a network of federal, state, and local lands that, in turn, help fuel the economies of communities throughout the nation."

"Americans of all political stripes understand that LWCF represents a fiscally conservative promise made to the American people; a promise to balance resource use with conservation by setting aside a small portion of offshore drilling royalties to preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities to all Americans," said David Jenkins, Vice President of Republicans for Environmental Protection. "They also understand that breaking this promise and raiding the LWCF epitomizes the lack of fiscal discipline that plagues Washington."

"LWCF is critical to conserving wildlife habitat and providing access for public recreation, including hunting and fishing," said Blake Henning, vice president of lands and conservation for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. "Eliminating funding for this program undermines conservation efforts by sportsmen across the country who are concerned about losing open space -- as well as a traditional way of life."

A House vote on LWCF funding could come as early as today.

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*The LWCF Coalition comprises conservation, recreation, business, and sportsmen's groups working together to support the LWCF program in order to meet America's conservation and recreation needs in the 21st century. For more information on LWCF and the places in each state that have been protected using LWCF funds, visit [www.lwcfoalition.org](http://www.lwcfoalition.org).*