

January 22, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representative  
Washington, DC 20515

CC: Department of the Interior Secretary

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write to express our strong objection to the Department of the Interior's recent decision to unilaterally end the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program. On January 19<sup>th</sup>, the Department of the Interior and National Park Service released an order declaring that the department would divert funding from urban parks, blatantly disregarding congressional intent of the program.

ORLP grants are an important subset of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) that are designed to provide crucial funding to urban areas that lack local access to parks. In the short time the program has been in existence, it has funded nearly 50 projects that built or upgraded green spaces in underinvested communities. In fact, the program received a historic \$125 million for this fiscal year in the FY2021 Omnibus and COVID Relief and Response Act (P.L. 116-260).

Now, more than ever, the public is turning to the outdoors for the necessary emotional, physical and mental reprieve as a way to cope with immeasurable stress that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, over 82 million people across the country are unable to access a park within 10 minutes from their home, a crucial measure for positive health impacts.<sup>1</sup> The quality and size of local parks also varies across communities. Research shows that parks in primarily non-white communities are half the size of parks in predominantly white communities, and five times more crowded.<sup>2</sup> ORLP was intended to directly address these social, economic and health inequities.

The Department of the Interior's imprudent decision to unilaterally end the ORLP program directly contradicts the will of Congress and hurts vulnerable communities who most need green spaces. In the final hours of the Trump administration, this secretarial order surreptitiously defies the will of elected officials who have funded this program at increasing amounts each year, and seriously disenfranchises urban communities across the country who were planning to apply for FY2021 ORLP grants.

We respectfully request that Congress permanently authorize the ORLP program to prevent such future regulatory manipulation like this from happening again. We are also urging the Biden

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<sup>1</sup> National Recreation and Park Association, "2018 America's Engagement with Parks Report" <https://www.nrpa.org/globalassets/engagement-survey-report-2018.pdf>, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> The Trust for Public Land, "The Heat is On" <https://www.tpl.org/the-heat-is-on>, 2020.

administration to immediately overturn this decision and restore the ORLP program to its original intent. Our collective goal is that all people have access to green spaces, especially in underinvested communities. Restoring and reinvesting in the ORLP program will allow the federal government to show its commitment to the goal of supporting and achieving equity in the outdoors. We look forward to working with Congress on this important issue.

Sincerely,

National Recreation and Park Association

United States Conference of Mayors

Wilderness Society

REI Co-op

The Trust for Public Land

PeopleForBikes

Hispanic Access Foundation

City Parks Alliance

Children & Nature Network

International Mountain Bicycling  
Association

Outdoor Outreach

Missouri Park & Recreation Association

Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society

Latino Outdoors

Youth Outside

Abbate Designs LLC

Maryland Ornithological Society

American Heart Association

KABOOM!

Arizona Heritage Alliance

National League of Cities

Brown Girl Surf

New Mexico Wild

Well Being Trust

American Academy for Park & Recreation  
Administration

International Play Equipment

Manufacturers Association

ThinkCreate, LLC

Safe Routes Partnership

American Academy for Park and  
Recreation Administrations

New Mexico Asian Family Center

Willamette Partnership

WT Group, LLC Accessibility Practice

Morris Township Parks & Recreation Dept.

Glenview Park District

Greenfields Outdoor Fitness Inc.

Burlington Parks, Recreation and  
Waterfront

Texas Recreation and Park Society

Arizona Parks and Recreation Association	Park Pride
Clemson University	Streamlabs
California Park & Recreation Society	Tennessee Recreation & Parks Association
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership	Parks and Recreation Department, City of Albuquerque
BOKS (Build Our Kids' Success)	Prospect Recreation & Park District
Brio2 Solutions	Friends for Youth
Bernalillo County Community Health Council	American Planning Association
SM Watts Consulting, LLC	City of Greeley Culture, Parks and Recreation
Environmental People of Color	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Outdoor Asian	Atlanta Downtown Improvement District
Genesis Health Clubs	Willamalane Park and Recreation District
Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota	City of Lakewood, Colorado
J Kardys Strategies, LLC	U.S. Green Building Council
American Hiking Society	Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials	Young Women Empowered
Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)	Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District
Derby Recreation Commission	American Council on Exercise
Urban Libraries Council	City of Pittsburg, KS department of Parks and Recreation
McHenry County Conservation District	Atlanta BeltLine Partnership
Merriam Parks and Recreation	SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators
Sierra Club	Wilmington Youth Rowing Association
The Venture Out Project	Oak Grove Youth Football
National Afterschool Association	Sustainable SITES Initiative
American Society of Landscape Architects	

United States Center for Coaching  
Excellence  
The Corps Network  
Elite Soccer  
Fight For Children  
Hyland Hills Park and Recreation District  
Baldwin City Recreation Commission  
The Bikery  
City of Wichita Park and Recreation  
Department  
Alliance for a Healthier Generation  
Oregon Box Lacrosse  
Continental Divide Trail Coalition  
Gurnee Park District  
Maine Recreation and Park Association  
NC Recreation & Park Association  
Conservation Law Foundation  
Seattle Parks Foundation  
Lewis Latimer House Museum  
Friends of Dallas Parks  
Trails and Open Space Coalition  
Friends of 4Parks Alliance, Inc  
Friends of the East River Esplanade (60th-  
120th Streets), Inc.  
David Brower Center  
San Diego Mountain Biking Association  
Big Reuse

Great Rivers Greenway  
National Parks Conservation Association  
Newtown creek Alliance  
Kansas City Parks and Recreation  
San Jose Parks Foundation  
Portland Parks Conservancy  
BBLA, Inc.  
American Trails  
Outdoor Afro  
Green Map System  
Hunters Point Parks Conservancy  
Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens  
Lily Auchincloss Foundation  
Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and  
Equity (RISE)  
Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association  
Youth Transportation Organization (Yoots)  
Buffalo Bayou Partnership  
South Carolina Recreation and Parks  
Association.  
TeamSnap, Inc.  
Sports & Fitness Industry Association  
Great Basin Institute  
Washington Wildlife & Recreation  
Coalition  
Outdoor Industry Association  
Musco Sports Lighting, LLC

Washington Association of Land Trusts  
City of Las Vegas  
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance  
E3 Washington  
LeagueApps  
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust  
National Wildlife Federation  
NJ Audubon  
Chicago Park District  
IslandWood  
Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy  
The Conservation Fund  
Louisville Parks Foundation  
Gulf Coast Youth Association  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
New Jersey Conservation Foundation  
Conservation Voters of South Carolina  
Friends of the Public Garden  
Campaign for a Commercial-Free  
Childhood  
Randall's Island Park Alliance, Inc.  
Student Conservation Association  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social  
Responsibility  
The Mountaineers  
Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park

Illinois Association of Park Districts  
U.S. Soccer Foundation  
The Mountain Pact  
Texas Children in Nature  
Decatur Park District  
Champaign Park District  
Little League International  
California Mountain Biking Coalition  
Indy Parks  
Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association  
Parent-Child Relationship Association Inc.  
Prevention Institute  
Edgemere Coalition Community Garden  
Drew Gardens  
Climate for Health, ecoAmerica  
American Forests  
Watershed Science, LLC  
Washington Recreation and Parks  
Association  
92Blessings  
Hoosier Environmental Council  
WildCare of Western New York  
Merrell  
National Association for Olmsted Parks  
Akron Parks Collaborative  
Environmental Professionals of Color