

# OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

April 15, 2015

Rep. Tom McClintock  
Chair, House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
2331 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Niki Tsongas  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
1714 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

## **Re: Oversight hearing on “Federal Land Acquisition and its Impacts on Communities and the Environment.”**

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of six member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, and the Mountaineers, and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, and backcountry ski and snowshoe on our nation’s public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

In light of the Subcommittee on Federal Lands’ April 15 oversight hearing, we would like to share our community’s perspectives on the invaluable role of federal land acquisition programs, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund specifically, in supporting opportunities for outdoor recreation and the outdoor recreation economy.

Outdoor recreation is a primary way through which Americans come to know their public lands, providing physical, mental, social, and spiritual benefits while supporting the \$646 billion per year outdoor recreation economy and directly employing 6.1 million Americans. These benefits depend on access to healthy landscapes on our public lands.

Land management agencies face a difficult task in addressing the many, sometimes competing, demands for uses of public lands. For management to ensure a balance of conservation, recreation and public access, and resource development, it requires a full suite of management tools. Land acquisition is an important potential solution that must be available to help address some types of management challenges and opportunities.



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Ensuring that public lands are truly public by facilitating access is an important objective for land managers as well as for the outdoor recreation community. Targeted land acquisition can be a necessary measure for creating access to broader landscapes on the federal estate, as well as an invaluable tool for protecting particularly exemplary locations when offered by willing sellers. Land acquisitions can also be a valuable tool for reducing management costs and burdens by acquiring inholdings that may present management challenges or costly infrastructure needs.

Land exchanges can also be an effective means for achieving flexibility in public lands management. For this reason, Outdoor Alliance wholeheartedly supports reauthorization of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act. However, land exchanges are not possible or practical in all instances. Therefore, maintaining a full suite of tools to ensure flexibility in responses to land management challenges is an important step to ensuring a thoughtful balance of uses on public lands.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is an overwhelmingly successful program for achieving balanced use of public lands by directing a portion of royalties from offshore oil and gas development toward targeted recreation and conservation land acquisitions. Over the life of the program, LWCF has funded critical protections for river corridors in places like West Virginia's Gauley and New Rivers and helped establish public river access points for canoers, kayakers, and rafters in places like Washington's White Salmon River. LWCF has made possible thousands of miles of singletrack for mountain bikers and hikers, including at areas like the world-class trail system at Lory State Park near Fort Collins, Colorado, and Toro Park, California, home to challenging trails and spectacular views of Monterey Bay. LWCF has funded close-to-home recreation opportunities in all fifty states and every congressional district.

Acquisitions under the LWCF program are targeted with a high level of specificity to achieve identified, narrowly-focused public access and conservation objectives. These acquisitions are limited, and represent an important part of flexible and balanced management of the federal estate.

Land management agencies face a daunting array of challenges to meet the wide range of goals and expectations for our public lands. To meet those challenges, agencies need the ability and funding to make carefully targeted land acquisitions. While many agency challenges stem from a lack of adequate funding, eliminating agencies' ability to make carefully targeted acquisitions—or worse, compelling the sale or transfer of portions of the country's public lands—is not a practicable or effective way of meeting these challenges, nor one that meets the expectations of Americans with regard to the management of our public lands.



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Thank you for your consideration of our perspectives on the importance of maintaining the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other land acquisition tools that help to ensure opportunities for outdoor recreation and the careful management of public lands.

Best regards,



Adam Cramer  
Executive Director  
Outdoor Alliance

cc:

Brady Robinson, Executive Director, Access Fund  
Wade Blackwood, Executive Director, American Canoe Association  
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater  
Michael Van Abel, Executive Director, International Mountain Bicycling Association  
Mark Menlove, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance  
Martinique Grigg, Executive Director, The Mountaineers

