



Mayors for Parks Coalition Background

What is Mayors for Parks?

The Mayors for Parks Coalition, a project of the City Parks Alliance, is a national bipartisan coalition of mayors from large and small cities across the country that support strong park systems. The co-chairs of the Coalition are the Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock (D) and Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price (R).

The Coalition advocates for increased federal funding for our nation's urban parks. Specifically the Coalition seeks full and dedicated funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), increased funding for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program, and inclusion of parks as an eligible component in any infrastructure package.

City Parks Alliance and its Mayors for Parks Coalition have supported increased federal funding to our nation's urban parks through letters to Congress and the administration, op-eds, media events, adopted US Conference of Mayors resolutions, blogs, conference panels, social media, and educational visits with administration officials, members of Congress and staff from relevant agencies.

Background

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of the most effective funding programs supporting parks today. Since its creation in 1964, LWCF has had strong bipartisan support. LWCF is funded through revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling royalties, a portion of which is matched by state and local contributions – increasing the return on investment without using federal tax dollars. The LWCF has supported more than 42,000 projects that are found in 98% of the nation's counties. LWCF funds leverage private investment, spur economic development and tourism, and provide close-to-home recreational opportunities.

The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) is a LWCF program that was created in 2014. The ORLP is a nationally competitive grant program that delivers funding to urban areas – jurisdictions of at least 50,000 people – with priority given to projects located in economically disadvantaged areas and lacking in outdoor recreation opportunities. These awards help urban communities address outdoor recreation deficits by supporting projects in cities and densely populated urbanized areas that create new outdoor recreation spaces, reinvigorate existing parks, and form connections between people and the outdoors.

Highlighted Coalition Activities

2014

In June, City Parks Alliance, with its Mayors for Parks Coalition, was successful in securing the unanimous passage of a resolution from the U.S. Conference of Mayors supporting the reauthorization and full funding of the LWCF. The resolution cited the role parks play in creating healthy communities and healthy economies in urban areas around the country.

In July and August, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell visited Mayors for Parks Coalition members Mayor Betsy Price of Fort Worth, TX, Mayor William Bell of Birmingham, AL, Mayor Jim Brainard of Carmel, IN and Mayor Greg Stanton of Phoenix, AZ to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the passage of LWCF. These events highlighted the importance of urban parks and called on Congress to renew LWCF at its fully funded level of \$900 million annually.

On September 3, the 50th anniversary date of signing LWCF into law, coalition members tweeted to their members of Congress, sent press releases and submitted op-eds to their local newspapers.

In September, Mayors for Parks delivered a LWCF letter to Congress signed by coalition members urging members of Congress to reauthorize and fully fund LWCF.

2015

In January, City Parks Alliance held a Mayors for Parks press briefing with Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell and released a new report, “A Smart Investment for America’s Economy: The Land and Water Conservation Fund,” which highlights the success stories of LWCF in cities across America. Other participants were Mike Boots, White House Council on Environmental Quality, Catherine Nagel, Executive Director, City Parks Alliance, Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price, Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock, Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, and Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra.

In April, CPA held a Mayors Forum that included San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee, Seattle Mayor Edward Murray, Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price and Greenville, SC Mayor Knox White at its international Greater & Greener conference in San Francisco. The mayors discussed the importance of LWCF and how initial grants leveraged billions more in local and private investment.

In May, 38 mayors from cities across the country sent a letter to Congress urging full funding and reauthorization of LWCF. The letter called attention to the fact that LWCF is set to expire in September without Congressional action.

On June 21 (Father’s Day), The Hill published a bipartisan op-ed by Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett (R) and Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker (D) on the importance of LWCF funding to their cities.

In June, City Parks Alliance, with its Mayors for Parks Coalition, was successful in securing the passage of a LWCF/Urban Parks resolution by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The resolution, which was sponsored by Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, along with 22 cosponsors, urged Congress to reauthorize and fully fund LWCF. It also emphasized the importance of urban parks as essential elements in a comprehensive approach to urban policy and community development.

On September 30, the sunset date of LWCF, Co-chairs Denver Mayor Michael Hancock and Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price released a statement of disappointment that LWCF expired and urged Congress to take action immediately to reauthorize and fully fund LWCF.

In November, City Parks Alliance released a new report titled “A Smart Investment for America’s Health – The Land and Water Conservation Fund.” The report provides an overview of the physical, mental and environmental health benefits provided by parks across America and highlights the important role that LWCF plays in creating these parks.

2016

In February, Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price released a coalition statement praising President Obama's decision to include full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund at the \$900 million in his fiscal Year 2017 budget.

In March, the new Mayors for Parks website was launched (mayorsforparks.org). The site is a place where mayors, their staff and the public can access information on the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the multiple benefits of urban parks.

In June, City Parks Alliance, with its Mayors for Parks Coalition, was successful in securing the passage of a LWCF/Urban Parks resolution by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The resolution, which was sponsored by Carmel, IN Mayor Jim Brainard, along with 24 cosponsors, urged Congress to permanently reauthorize and fully fund LWCF. It also emphasized the importance of the Outdoor Recreation Partnership Legacy Act of 2015 which gives park grants directly to cities.

On August 30, the Arizona Daily Star published a Labor Day op-ed by Tucson, AZ Mayor Jonathan Rothschild asking Congress to permanently reauthorize and fully fund the Land & Water Conservation Fund.

On October 18, City Parks Alliance gave Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell a leadership award for her efforts to permanently reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and her participation in the Mayors for Parks Coalition.

In October, co-chairs Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock and Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price called on the Presidential candidates to address urban park and recreation needs.

In December, co-chairs Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock and Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price sent a letter to President-elect Donald Trump asking that his administration include parks as an eligible component in any infrastructure plan. The letter also called for permanent reauthorization and full funding of LWCF.

2017

In May, co-chairs of the Mayors for Parks Coalition Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price and Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock, joined Catherine Nagel, Executive Director of City Parks Alliance, to express disappointment in the President's budget to drastically reduce funds for the LWCF.

In May, 40 Mayors for Parks members sent a letter to Congress urging full funding and reauthorization of LWCF. The letter also asked that parks be included in any infrastructure legislation.

In June, City Parks Alliance, with its Mayors for Parks Coalition, was successful in securing the passage of a LWCF/Urban Parks resolution by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The resolution was sponsored by Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett, President of USCM. The resolution highlighted the new Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program Grant Act program under LWCF that gives grants to disadvantaged communities.

On June 20, Representatives Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA) and Michael R. Turner (R-OH) introduced the *Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grant Program Act* (ORLP) H.R. 2943. The ORLP Act is a part of the existing Land and Water Conservation Fund State and Local Assistance Program and would create a dedicated source of funding for urban parks providing up to \$25 million annually.

On July 31-August 3, City Parks Alliance held its international conference *Greater & Greener 2017: Connecting Cities, Cultures and Generations*, The conference included a bipartisan Mayors Forum with Mayors for Parks members participating. Minneapolis, MN Mayor Betsy Hodges (D), Saint Paul, MN Mayor Chris Coleman (D) and Carmel, IN Mayor James Brainard (R) addressed the role of equity and access in parks and public space, and the importance of the Mayors for Parks Coalition and its LWCF goals.

In September, City Parks Alliance released its infrastructure video series intended to elevate parks in the national conversation about America's economy. City Parks Alliance produced five videos (4-6 minutes each) on the following topics: Traffic and Transportation, Resilience, Health and Social Challenges, Economic Impacts, and one compilation. Six Mayors for Parks Coalition members participated in the project.

2018

Throughout 2018 City Parks Alliance and its Mayors for Parks Coalition worked closely with the LWCF Coalition on the 52-week countdown initiative. City Parks Alliance secured Mayor for Parks Coalition mayor quotes, LWCF park background info and pictures of LWCF city parks from Denver, CO, Oklahoma City, OK Indianapolis and Carmel, IN, Greenville, SC and Fort Worth, TX.

In June, City Parks Alliance, with its Mayors for Parks Coalition, was successful in securing the adoption of a park infrastructure resolution titled *City Parks: America's New Infrastructure* by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The resolution was sponsored by the Pittsburgh, PA Mayor William Peduto, a Mayors for Parks Coalition member. The resolution urged Congress and the administration to include urban parks in any infrastructure package moving forward.

On August 24, City Parks Alliance Executive Director Catherine Nagel, Senator Joe Donnelly (D-IN), League of Conservation Voters, Mayors for Parks staff and other conservation supporters held a media event in Carmel, IN to highlight the importance of reauthorizing LWCF.

The week of September 10, Mayors for Parks Coalition members participated in a social media campaign urging Congress to reauthorize LWCF before it expires September 30, 2018.

On September 25, City Parks Alliance and its Mayors for Parks Coalition promoted the introduction of the *Outdoors for All Act* (S. 3499) by Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA). The bill is the companion bill to Representatives Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA) and Mike Turner (R-OH) ORLP bill (2943). This parks bill codifies the current ORLP program and provides a guaranteed source of funding for urban parks using revenue from offshore oil and gas, not subject to appropriations.

2019

On February 25, Representatives Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA) and Michael R. Turner (R-OH) reintroduced the *Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grant Program Act* (ORLP) H.R. 1334. The ORLP Act is a part of the existing Land and Water Conservation Fund State and Local Assistance Program and would create a dedicated source of funding for urban parks providing up to \$25 million annually.

On February 26, the US House of Representatives passed the *Natural Resources Management Act* which includes permanent authorization of LWCF. The Senate had passed the companion bill. Along with permanent authorization of LWCF, the bill protects 2.3 million acres of wilderness and other public lands.

On March 12, the President signed the *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act*, (formerly the *Natural Resources Management Act*), which includes permanent authorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The law also protects 2.3 million acres of wilderness and other public lands. It is one of the largest conservation packages in a decade.

On March 26, The Hill published an op-ed by Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock and Catherine Nagel, Executive Director, City Parks Alliance, asking for full and dedicated funding of LWCF and highlighting the ORLP program that provides funds to underserved communities.

Contact:

Julie Waterman

Advocacy Director

(202) 258-9418 (cell)

jwaterman@cityparksalliance.org