

# LATINO CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

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La Madre Tierra



April 20, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

## **RE: Support for Land and Water Conservation Fund**

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

The Latino Conservation Alliance – a group of six national Latino organizations dedicated to promoting conservation priorities in our communities – formed in late 2014 to elevate our combined voices with the goal of preserving our country’s precious natural resources and improving access to the outdoors, which is essential to the Latino community’s health, culture and the future of our children. In the last 50 years, no government program has been more successful in achieving this objective on a national scale than the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Created 50 years ago, LWCF takes a portion of royalties from offshore oil and gas development and invests that money in protecting America's most important lands for future generations – whether that be our iconic national parks or an urban neighborhood playground. Based on this simple premise that as we extract natural resources – offshore oil and gas – we should in turn protect and invest in other resources for future generations. LWCF has led to the protection of land in every state and contributed financial support to more than 41,000 state and local park projects.

**As LWCF is scheduled to expire this September, the Alliance urges your committee to emphasize the importance and need for this highly successful program to be permanently reauthorized and fully funded.**

Despite receiving only a fraction of its intended funding over the last 50 years, LWCF has been instrumental in creating opportunities for Latinos in urban, suburban and rural areas to get outdoors. It has been a critical tool in conserving national parks and forests, land by rivers, lakes and oceans, working forests, farms and ranches, fish and wildlife refuges, trails, and state and local parks. LWCF has proven itself to be not only one of the best conservation programs, but also one of our most efficient and effective government programs.

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The parks, trails, and recreation projects dependent upon LWCF funding are green spaces that contribute to the health and well-being of Latino families. The importance of LWCF to Latinos is underscored by the fact that this population is disproportionately affected by environmental factors that place their long-term health in serious jeopardy.

Over the last 50 years, LWCF funding has preserved public lands that are critical to the Latino community, from the Santa Fe National Forest and Watershed, a National Park Service Latino Heritage Site, significant for its history as the home to Hispano settlers and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the recently established Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge that provides critical outdoor and educational opportunities to Latino communities in Bernalillo and Valencia Counties in New Mexico. In California, Latino communities in L.A. and San Diego enjoy outdoor recreation and celebrate the history of Mexican and Spanish settlers of the state at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and the Cabrillo Beach Development. In New York, Latino communities in New York City enjoy a variety of recreational and cultural activities in the Bronx year-round at the Roberto Clemente State Park.

Perhaps this partly explains why the 2015 Colorado College State of the Rockies Poll found that when it comes to specific environmental priorities, there is nearly unanimous Latino support for protecting and conserving natural areas for future generations (97 percent), protecting and conserving wildlife habitat (96 percent) and making sure that rangers have the resources they need to take care of public lands and provide services to visitors (96 percent). Furthermore, the poll found that nearly 3 out of every 4 Latinos support the continuation of funding for LWCF.

LWCF protects our open spaces and improves access of these public lands for everyone, but its importance to the Latino community is without question. The preservation of these public lands and its accessibility is essential to the Latino community's health, culture and future of our children.

As your committee explores the impact of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we urge you to fully fund and reauthorize this program for the important contributions it makes to the Latino community's health, well-being and access to our nation's natural treasures.

Sincerely,

Green Latinos  
Hispanic Access Foundation  
Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)  
Hispanic Federation  
La Madre Tierra  
Latino Outdoors

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