



June 5, 2020

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support S. 3422, the Great American Outdoors Act

Dear Senator:

The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) works to turn environmental values into national priorities. Each year, LCV publishes the *National Environmental Scorecard*, which details the voting records of members of Congress on environmental legislation. The *Scorecard* is distributed to LCV members, concerned voters nationwide, and the media.

We urge you to vote YES on cloture and final passage of S. 3422, the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). GAOA is an ambitious conservation funding bill that combines two strong bipartisan and bicameral legislative proposals: full and permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund alongside funding to address the maintenance backlog on our public lands.

In its more than 50-year history, LWCF has been a crucial program for the protection of our public lands and waters by providing funding to create state and local parks; improving access to outdoor spaces; and protecting national parks and forests, wildlife refuges, and other public lands. LWCF has also helped to address a legacy of injustice that has resulted in certain communities – oftentimes low-income communities and communities of color – lacking access to nearby green spaces and recognition through public landmarks. From iconic landscapes such as the Grand Canyon to historical sites such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park to neighborhood ballparks across the nation, LWCF preserves our natural and cultural heritage and supports green spaces nationwide.

This legislation also provides funding to help address our aging system of national parks and other public lands, which is suffering from neglected historic sites, crumbling roads and trails, and outdated visitor amenities. Deteriorating infrastructure, exacerbated by increasing visitation pressures and inconsistent annual funding, has led to a nearly \$12 billion backlog in repair needs in America's national parks; this total increases to \$18 billion when overdue maintenance needs on other public lands are included.

The investments in this bill create jobs and help small businesses get back on their feet, and they provide a desperately needed stimulus to the outdoor recreation industry. This industry supports more than 5.2 million jobs in this country and contributes \$778 billion in national economic output each year, but a survey of its member businesses by the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable found that 79% of outdoor recreation businesses have had to lay off or furlough a portion of their workforce as a result of the current economic crisis. A recent study found that every \$1 million invested in LWCF could support between 16 to 30 jobs, while LWCF investments in state and local parks help sustain the \$166 billion in economic



activity and more than 1.1 million jobs these parks support. Similarly, much-needed investments to repair national parks infrastructure could generate nearly 110,000 jobs.

For these reasons, LCV strongly urges you to support cloture and final passage of S.3422. We will strongly consider including vote(s) on this bill in the 2020 Scorecard, including the vote on cloture. If you need more information, please call my office at (202) 785-8683 and ask to speak with a member of our government affairs team.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gene Karpinski".

Gene Karpinski
President