COLORADO BUSINESSES PRESSURE CONGRESS TO SAVE LWCF

DENVER, Co. (Aug. 30, 2018) – A coalition of almost 80 Colorado businesses sent a letter to Colorado’s legislators in Congress earlier today urging them to save the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will expire on September 30 – just one month from today – unless Congress steps in.

Since its creation by Congress 54 years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or LWCF, has invested more than $268 million to protect Colorado’s outdoor places, public access to trails, hunting and fishing access, and urban parks. Using money from offshore oil and gas leasing, LWCF has helped protect iconic Colorado destinations such as Rocky Mountain National Park and the Garden of the Gods, as well as lesser known local treasures such as Durango’s Rank Park and Denver Urban Gardens.

Citing Colorado’s booming $28 billion outdoor recreation industry as well as the positive effects that public lands have on communities across the state, a wide variety of businesses joined together to send the message that LWCF is vital to Colorado’s future, including AC Golden Brewing Company, a subsidiary of MillerCoors; outdoor gear companies like Big Agnes and Osprey Packs; and small businesses ranging from a law firm in Fort Collins to a cattle ranch in Carbondale.

"Colorado’s incredible natural beauty was an important factor in my decision to establish my business here, and I see our public lands as vital to the Coloradan way of life,” said Jim Nolte, owner of Denver’s Megastar Financial. “That’s why I chose to speak up, even though my business doesn’t directly relate to public lands.”

The letter focuses on the effect that LWCF’s expiration will have on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT), which stretches over 3,100 miles from Canada to Mexico along the spine of the Rocky Mountains. Although 2018 is the 40th anniversary of the trail’s designation by Congress, the CDT is still incomplete, primarily because it can only be routed along highways and other paved roads where it traverses areas with no access to public land.

One such area is just outside of the town of Steamboat Springs, where a gap in protected public land ownership along the CDT corridor forces trail users to walk along Highway 40 for 14 miles. According to the letter, the proposed reroute would not only complete the 800-mile Colorado section of the CDT, but would also open up thousands of acres of prime elk habitat for sportsmen by providing access to lands owned by the Colorado State Land Board.

“Without LWCF,” the letter continues, “there is no obvious way to fund the willing sales necessary to create this protected public corridor, leaving this 40-year-old National Scenic Trail with no path to completion.”
Andrew and Emily Walker, owners of 7000 Feet Running Company in Salida, didn't hesitate to add their business to the letter. “We love the CDT, we love public lands, and without the incredible recreation opportunities they provide, we wouldn't have a business,” said the Walkers. “LWCF enjoys bipartisan support and helps protect Colorado’s special places – saving it should be a no-brainer, and we want our legislators to hear that.”

Colorado Senators Michael Bennet and Cory Gardner are both cosponsors of S. 569, a bill that would permanently reauthorize and fully fund LWCF. On the House side, Representatives Diana DeGette (D-CO-1), Jared Polis (D-CO-2), Mike Coffman (R-CO-6), and Ed Perlmutter (D-CO-7) are all cosponsors of H.R. 502, which would permanently reauthorize the legislation but does not require it to be fully funded. Scott Tipton (R-CO-3) recently announced his support for LWCF reauthorization, but has yet to sign on to the House bill supporting such. Republicans Ken Buck (CO-4) and Doug Lamborn (CO-5) have not yet expressed support for LWCF’s reauthorization.

Click [here](#) to read the letter.

**About the Continental Divide Trail**
The CDT is one of the world’s premiere long-distance trails, stretching 3,100 miles from Mexico to Canada along the Continental Divide. Designated by Congress in 1978, the CDT is the highest, most challenging and most remote of the 11 National Scenic Trails. It provides recreational opportunities ranging from hiking to horseback riding to hunting for thousands of visitors each year. While 95% of the CDT is located on public land, approximately 180 miles are still in need of protection.

**About the Continental Divide Trail Coalition**
The CDTC was founded in 2012 by volunteers and recreationists hoping to provide a unified voice for the Trail. Working hand-in-hand with the U.S. Forest Service and other federal land management agencies, the CDTC is a non-profit organization supporting stewardship of the CDT. The mission of the CDTC is to complete, promote and protect the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, a world-class national resource. For more information, please visit [continentaldividetrail.org](http://continentaldividetrail.org).

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