LWCF PERMANENTLY REAUTHORIZED AS PUBLIC LANDS PACKAGE BECOMES LAW

GOLDEN, Co. (Mar. 12, 2019) – Today, President Trump signed the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act into law. This far-reaching public lands bill, which includes permanent reauthorization for the highly successful Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), arrived on the President’s desk late last month after being passed by large bipartisan majorities in the Senate and House.

Under the new law, the highly successful LWCF will continue to protect our parks, trails and rivers in perpetuity, giving the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) a fighting chance to be completed in the coming years.

“We are thrilled that LWCF has finally been permanently reauthorized,” said Teresa Martinez, Executive Director of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC). "Over the last half a century, LWCF has been absolutely vital in protecting some of our nation’s most treasured places, and it will be the critical tool in our efforts to complete the Continental Divide Trail. To see this program become a permanent part of our toolkit is to see our country commit to protecting our natural resources, cultural heritage, and the health of our communities."

Permanent reauthorization of LWCF has long been championed by communities, businesses, and individuals across the country; LWCF has protected land and enhanced communities in every state without costing taxpayers any money. In Congress, a bipartisan group of legislators worked for years to pass such a sweeping public lands package, including many who represent states and districts along the CDT.

“We are grateful to work with so many champions of our public lands along the CDT,” said Martinez. “Legislators from both sides of the aisle understand how important public lands are to those of us who call the Rocky Mountain West home, and they worked hard over the last several years to get this bill across the finish line.”

Although permanent reauthorization of LWCF represents an important step forward, advocates and legislators alike continue to stress the need to guarantee full, dedicated funding for the program. This need was thrown into sharp relief yesterday with the release of the President’s 2020 Budget Request, which included drastic cuts to LWCF and undermined White House claims of support for the program.

“Today we celebrate an enormous victory for the CDT and important places across the country,” said Martinez. “Thank you to everyone who called, wrote, and emailed your legislators to communicate how much this historic public lands package means to you. Your voice does make a difference, and tomorrow, we get back to work to fight to ensure strong funding for LWCF.”

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 150 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 partner 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.

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