



July 16, 2020

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support the Great American Outdoors Act

Dear Representative:

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 the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). GAOA is a badly needed 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 provided 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 enhances access to 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parks and other public lands, which is suffering from neglected historic sites, crumbling roads and trails, and outdated visitor amenities.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 COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the devastating disparities that communities of color and underserved communities face, including access to nearby green spaces. The COVID-19 crisis has also heavily impacted the once-thriving but now hard-hit outdoor recreation sector, which has left [89% percent of outdoor businesses experiencing a decrease in revenue and 79% of outdoor businesses at risk of laying off or furloughing employees.](#) In light of the heightened importance of accessibility to outdoor areas for all of our communities and the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the tourism and travel industries, it is crucial that we make investments such as the Great American Outdoors Act. This funding will help



communities get back on their feet by providing a desperately needed stimulus to the outdoor recreation industry, protect our natural and cultural heritage, and enhance access to high quality and nearby green spaces.

For these reasons, LCV strongly urges you to vote YES on the Great American Outdoors Act. We will strongly consider including vote(s) on this bill in the 2020 *Scorecard*. 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