

September 28, 2019

The Honorable Jon Tester
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steven Daines
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Greg Gianforte
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Tester and Daines and Representative Gianforte,

As business owners and managers, we understand firsthand the vital role public lands play in Montana. Public lands help attract talented workers to our state and bring customers through our doors. They provide clean air and water, and places to play for our friends, families, and neighbors. And for many of us, public lands and the recreational opportunities they provide are the number one factor enabling us to build strong businesses as Montana's outdoor recreation economy continues to expand. Put another way – many of our businesses wouldn't exist without public lands.

That's why we were thrilled earlier this year by news of the passage of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act – in no small part because it permanently reauthorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund. LWCF has benefited countless Montanans over the last 55 years, protecting and enhancing the wild landscapes, cultural heritage, and recreation destinations that make our state such an incredible place to live and work. We thank you for your unified support of the Dingell Act, and commend Senators Tester and Daines for your bipartisan leadership in ensuring that passage of this legislation was a priority for the Senate during the 116th Congress.

But while permanent reauthorization of LWCF was an important step forward, the Dingell Act didn't include any provision for a dedicated funding stream for LWCF – *and a fund with no funding isn't the victory our public lands deserve.*

When LWCF was created in 1964, your predecessors in Congress called for \$900 million of federal oil and gas leasing revenues to be dedicated annually to this vital program. Yet almost every year since, Congress has broken that promise, diverting much of this funding to other uses. More than \$22 billion has been diverted from LWCF over the past half-century - \$22 billion that was promised to Americans to provide recreation opportunities in local, regional, and national parks; protect wildlife habitat and

pristine headwaters; and connect trail networks spanning from remote forests to our downtown bike paths.

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is just one example of the broken promise of LWCF. Despite decades of work by dedicated federal land management agency personnel, non-profit partners, volunteers, and residents of trailside communities, the trail remains incomplete due to gaps in protected public land ownership along the trail corridor. More than one hundred miles of dangerous road walks remain where there is nowhere else for the trail to be routed. Without LWCF funding, there is no obvious way to fund the willing sales necessary to create a protected public corridor, leaving what should be a world-class recreational resource with no path to completion.

A program as vital as LWCF shouldn't be subject to the political whims of the day. That's why we're asking you to do all you can to pass S. 1081 and H.R. 3195, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act. Now more than ever, as exploding visitation and continued population growth put more and more pressure on jewels like the Crown of the Continent and the Greater Yellowstone – the last intact ecosystem in the lower 48 – Montanans need the tool of LWCF to protect public land access, critical drinking water supplies, and community resources. Without the certainty of funding, the delicate collaboration between willing sellers, non-profit partners, and government agencies that is required to make conservation acquisitions successful simply can't happen.

LWCF funding has protected iconic places in Montana like Helena National Forest, the Upper Missouri River, and Glacier National Park. Partners have used \$620 million of LWCF funding to leverage hundreds of millions more in state, local, and private matching funds to contribute to the betterment of Montana and well-being of its citizens. Just imagine how much more we could have accomplished together with \$22 billion more.

Today, in honor of National Public Lands Day, we are calling on you to act to provide permanent, dedicated full funding for LWCF. As business owners, constituents, and passionate supporters of Montana's special places, we don't want to see another dollar diverted away from our public lands.

Sincerely,

Kurt Valiton
Vigilante Shuttles & Tours
Helena

Courtney Crowell
Physician
Helena

Michael Potts
Slainte Butte America Pub
Butte

Grant Bronk
LaPa Grill
Helena

Riley Tubbs
Ten Mile Creek Brewery
Helena

James C. Gervais
Stokes Market/True Value
Anaconda

Paul Mabie
Oddfellow Inn & Farm
Helena

Alan Michaud
Mountain Ranch House
Helena

Mary Ann Johnston
Anaconda Chamber of
Commerce
Anaconda

Pattie Weatherston
Three Bears Motel
Lincoln

Becky Garland
Action Realty of Lincoln
Lincoln

Scott Brown
The Base Camp
Billings and Helena

Randy Hafer
High Plains Architects
Billings

Yve Bardwell & Maggie Carr
Dropstone Outfitting
Choteau

Bill Stoddart
NorthFork Financial
Bozeman

Teresa Larson
Recreation Equipment, Inc.
Bozeman

Greg Findley
Detour, LLC
Bozeman

Ken Sinay
Yellowstone Safari Company
Bozeman

Ryan Holm, Dana Gleason, and
Renee Sippel-Baker
Mystery Ranch
Bozeman

Larry Shotland
Shotland Tax Consulting
Bozeman

Cory Lawrence
Off the Beaten Path LLC
Bozeman

Robert Keith
Beartooth Group
Bozeman

Lance Trebesch
TicketPrinting.com
Bozeman

Kelly Ramirez
Prismatic
Bozeman

Mark Albrecht
Gallatin Veterinary Hospital
Bozeman

Spencer Williams
West Paw Design
Bozeman

Ali Knapp
Wisetail
Bozeman

Mike England
Outside Media Group
Bozeman

Jeff Batton
HomeStake Venture Partners
Bozeman

Eric Becker
Geyser Whitewater Expeditions
Gallatin Gateway

Kate Ketschek
Revolution House Media
Big Sky

Marne Hayes
MHayes Consulting
Big Sky

Dan Vermillion
Sweetwater Travel Company
Livingston

Dale Sexton
Timber Trails
Livingston

Mark Schurke
Base Camp Bigfork
Bigfork

Blake Nicolazzo
Bonfire Brands
Missoula

Alex Philp
N-SITE LLC
Missoula

Jeff Wright
Montana Outdoors Foundation
Missoula

Reed Gregerson
The ZaneRay Group
Whitefish