

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 11, 2020

CONTACT: Justin Bartolomeo

(202) 400-0480

jbartolomeo@hdmk.org

Great American Outdoors Act Draws Widespread Support from Diverse Groups Across the Nation

850+ National, State and Local Organizations Write Congressional Leaders in Support of GAOA

WASHINGTON – Hundreds of groups representing state and regional tourism, local businesses, veterans groups, engineering and planning firms, conservation organizations, and the outdoor recreation industry are calling for Congress to pass the Great American Outdoors Act (S. 3422). The bill would fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and invest in critical repair needs in national parks and on other public lands.

“These treasured places also tell the stories that define and unite us as a nation,” more than 850 signatories wrote in a letter to congressional leadership. “Funds provided in this bill will secure these vital resources while preserving water quantity and quality, sustaining working landscapes and rural economies, increasing access for recreation for all Americans no matter where they live, and fueling the juggernaut of our outdoor economy.”

“The conservation of our lands and waters is not an optional amenity but the cornerstone of thriving economies,” said **Tom Cors, director of government relations for lands at The Nature Conservancy and a spokesman for the LWCF Coalition**. “Fully funding LWCF and addressing maintenance needs in national parks and on public lands will help protect important natural spaces, create jobs and expand outdoor recreation opportunities nationwide. The Great American Outdoors Act is the kind of effective, on-the-ground investment our economy will need as we work to recover from this crisis.”

“Investing in the restoration of park and public lands infrastructure—at a time when job creation is so important—can help sustain gateway communities and small businesses that are dependent on park tourism,” said **Marcia Argust, project director for The Pew Charitable Trusts’ restore America’s parks campaign**. “The Great American Outdoors Act will address critical repairs within our aging national parks, which will not only add American jobs but will ensure visitor access to, and recreation opportunities in, our nation’s most treasured resources.”

About the National Parks and Public Lands Maintenance Backlog

The National Park System is over 100 years old and its infrastructure—roads, trails, historic structures and artifacts, water and sewage systems, electrical systems, campgrounds, memorials, battlegrounds, seawalls—is aging and deteriorating. The agency can’t keep up with the pace of repairs and has a maintenance backlog estimated at nearly \$12 billion, with ¾ of that amount attributed to priority needs.

Bipartisan Restore Our Parks efforts in Congress would direct non-taxpayer monies over a five year period to tackle the most critical repairs within parks and other public lands agencies. Providing consistent annual funding to maintain parks and public lands is a smart investment, as they are proven economic

engines for adjacent towns and regions. Park visitor spending contributes over \$20 billion to local communities and generates over 326,000 jobs each year; addressing maintenance needs has the potential to create or support another 100,000 jobs.

About the Restore Our Parks Effort

The Restore Our Parks effort is supported by an informal coalition of national, state, and local organizations seeking to protect national park and public land resources by addressing the maintenance backlog. More than 3,000 national, state, and local organizations—elected officials, businesses, preservation advocates, contractors, engineer and design firms, conservation groups, tourism and marketing, the hotel and lodging industry, outdoor recreation interests—support dedicated resources for National Park Service deferred maintenance needs, and 82% of American voters support legislation to invest in park repairs. For more information, visit <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/restore-america-parks> and

About the Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is America's most important conservation program, responsible for protecting parks, wildlife refuges and recreation areas at the federal, state and local level. For 50 years, it has provided critical funding for land and water conservation projects, recreational construction and activities and the continued historic preservation of our nation's iconic landmarks from coast-to-coast.

LWCF does not use any taxpayer dollars – it is funded using a small portion of revenues from offshore oil and gas royalty payments. Outdoor recreation, conservation and historic preservation activities contribute more than \$778 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supporting 5.2 million jobs.

About the LWCF Coalition

The LWCF Coalition is the umbrella group of more than 1,000 state and local land owners, small businesses, ranchers, sportsmen, veterans, outdoor recreationists and conservation organizations working to protect America's public lands and safeguard our shared outdoor heritage for future generations.

The Coalition is united in its advocacy for full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will ensure the continued conservation of our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, wilderness, civil war battlefields, as well as state and local parks.

For more information on LWCF and the places in each state that have been protected using LWCF funds, visit www.lwcfcoalition.com