

June 10, 2020

Colorado Canyons supports Great American Outdoors Act

The Great American Outdoors Act offers much-needed certainty for our public lands.

The Great American Outdoors Act, Senate Bill 3422, is expected to come before the Senate in the very near future, and we at Colorado Canyons Association wholeheartedly support the legislation.

This bipartisan bill is being co-sponsored by both of our Colorado senators, Cory Gardner and Michael Bennet. The Great American Outdoors Act will provide permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), as well as money for maintenance of our national parks and public lands. In fact, one priority of this bill is the designation of \$1.9 billion toward the backlog of deferred maintenance of our present public lands for at least five years.

Money for the LWCF comes from offshore oil and gas drilling, not individual taxpayers. In the past, the amount of LWCF funds available has varied year to year due to Congress re-appropriating LWCF funds for other uses. The LWCF has also been allowed to expire, which eliminated funding entirely until it was reauthorized 18 months ago. This irregularity in funding has not only reduced the monies available for our public lands but added inconsistency to the planning process for the protection and maintenance of our public lands. This inconsistency has also compromised the acquisition of additional access for users, recreational opportunities on public lands, connectivity and construction of our trail systems, improvements to local parks and provisions for protecting wildlife habitat.

The positive impact of the LWCF has been immense. For instance, in our local communities, the LWCF has helped fund the following projects:

- Vega Reservoir State Park
- Fruita Swimming Pool
- Highline Reservoir Maintenance Building
- Orchard Mesa Lions Club Park and Veterans Park

- Jim Robb Colorado River State Park Connected Lakes Section
- Blue Heron Section of the Riverfront Trail
- McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA)
- Dominguez-Escalante NCA
- Gunnison Gorge NCA

The contributions by the LWCF are varied and consequently the types of projects that have benefited our community are quite different in nature, thus benefitting a myriad of users.

Colorado Canyons Association fosters community stewardship, education and awareness of our National Conservation Lands and supports the continuation of these valuable LWCF projects now and in the future. The Great American Outdoors Act will provide the funding for projects such as these, as well as much-needed money for maintenance of public lands.

KATIE STEELE, Board Chair

SARAH McCALL, Executive Director

Colorado Canyons Association