

200 W. Willmott Avenue
Los Banos, CA 93635-5501



(209) 826-5188
Fax (209) 826-4984
Email: veronica@gwdwater.org

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May 29, 2020

The Honorable Cory Gardner
United States Senator, Colorado
354 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: S 3422 — SUPPORT

Dear Senator Gardner,

On behalf of the Grassland Water District, our Board of Directors, and our 2,500 landowners, we wish to thank you for introducing S 3422 and which inform you of our support for the measure.

The Grassland Water District (GWD) is a Central Valley Project refuge contractor and conveys water for habitat and wildlife purposes to state, federal and private wetlands in the Grasslands Ecological Area (GEA) in Merced County. The wetlands within the GEA make up the largest contiguous freshwater complex west of the Rocky Mountains and encompass over 240,000 acres of habitat and wildlife beneficial agriculture. The wetlands that GWD serves are designated as a critically important habitat area by two international treaties, numerous wildlife organizations and are recognized as among the five most important wetland ecosystems in North America.

Two thirds of the ecological area are privately owned, and the majority of these lands are managed as wetlands. Many of these private landowners have entered into conservation easement agreements with either federal or state agencies, permanently protecting this area as habitat for future generations. Of the remaining area, half is managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and half by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

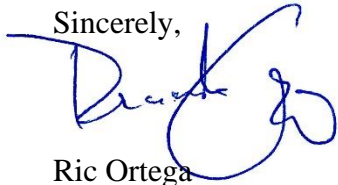
This landmark legislation would fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, as well as address the \$20 billion maintenance backlog on America's public lands and waters, including funding for agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management. Investments in operations and maintenance at our nation's wildlife refuges need significant increases, and we are pleased to see that your bill would provide necessary funding for these activities.

Further, during this difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic, one bright spot has been Americans' increased appreciation for time spent outside. S 3422 is major congressional proposal that could help our nation's economy, jobs and rural communities come back from this pandemic, and encourage Americans safely experience all the outdoors has to offer. The outdoors are bipartisan, and investing in LWCF means investing in local economies and creating thousands of jobs – both of which we desperately need right now to help the country bounce back from COVID-19.

We appreciate your leadership and understanding of the need for timely and collective efforts to address decades of neglect on our federal lands, to end the annual wrangling over the LWCF program, and to ensure investments are provided that support access to public lands and promote our traditional heritage of outdoor recreation, including hunting and angling.

We look forward to supporting your efforts in any way that we can as your measure moves forward through the congressional process.

Sincerely,



Ric Ortega
General Manager
Grassland Water District

Cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein, California
Senator Kamala Harris, California