

The Land and Water Conservation Fund State Assistance Program National Park Service

Background

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established in September 1964 by Public Law 88-578. It created a funding source for both Federal acquisition of park and recreation lands (by the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service) and matching grants to States (and to local subrecipient governments). It required States to agree to continue to use the lands for the park/recreational purposes for which they were originally granted funding. The LWCF Act also recognized the issue of changing land use needs over time, and set up an administrative process to grant exceptions and generally adapt to these changing needs.

Long Term Objectives

The LWCF state grant program has the following objectives:

- to assist in preserving, developing, and providing quality outdoor recreation resources to strengthen the health and vitality of our citizens.
- to encourage each State to meet new demands for outdoor recreation by leveraging an equal amount of State and local funds for every Federal dollar spent.
- to build a permanent legacy for future generations by ensuring that Fund-assisted parklands are not converted to other than public outdoor recreation uses unless approved by NPS and appropriate substitute lands are provided.

Funding

Sources of funding into the LWCF currently include:

- proceeds from the sale of surplus federal real property
- motorboat fuel taxes
- fees for recreation use of Federal lands
- Outer Continental Shelf revenues

Funding levels averaged about \$100 million through 1995 and to-date over 40,000 grants have been awarded totaling over \$3.7 billion. LWCF-funded projects are located in more than 98% of U.S. counties. After four years of zero funding, LWCF State appropriations were restored in 2000; peaking at \$140 million in 2002 - the largest amount available in more than 20 years. Recent funding, including for 2007, has been reduced to the \$30 million level.

In December 2006, Congress passed the Gulf Energy Security Act (HR 6111). As a result, beginning in FY 2009, a portion of proceeds from new Gulf oil leases will be available, without further appropriation, for LWCF State assistance grants pursuant to Title I, Section 105 of Pub. L. 109-432. According to Congressional Budget Office/Mineral Management Service estimates, \$27.5 million will be available through the provisions of this Act in FY 2009. Despite the uncertainties of regular appropriations for new grants beyond FY 2007, this legislation ensures the continuation of the LWCF grant program for the near future.

For more information: Michael D. Wilson, Chief, State and Local Assistance Programs, National Park Service; 202-354-6900; e-mail: michael_d_wilson@nps.gov; web: <http://www.nps.gov/lwcf>.