



Land and Water Conservation Fund

LWCF

ASK: Fully Fund the LWCF at \$900 million

NWRA is part of a coalition of organizations working to increase funding for federal land acquisitions. The Refuge System is mandated to be strategically grown, but years of inadequate funding for land acquisition has resulted in the loss of many important habitats. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was created to ensure our nation's most treasured resources and natural areas are protected for future generations but without strong support from Congress, the program's full potential to protect refuges and other public lands will not be realized. The Obama Administration has made full funding for LWCF a top priority, now Congress must follow.

Background

The LWCF was established by Congress in 1965 to meet the nation's growing desire to preserve natural areas, culturally and historically significant landmarks, and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Act designated that a portion of receipts from offshore oil and gas leases be placed into a fund annually for state and local conservation, as well as for the protection of our national treasures such as national wildlife refuges, national parks and forests. The LWCF program has added millions of acres to all our public lands – approximately 1.5 million acres of the NWRS were acquired through the LWCF.

Despite LWCF's strong track record of success over the past 44 years, the program faces enormous challenges. Lands with significant historic, cultural, and wildlife values are rapidly being converted to other uses. Factors that are responsible for this trend include increasing land values, population growth, and the development of the rural-urban fringe. Yet, in the face of escalating development pressures, funding for the LWCF declined precipitously for years until recent funding increases brought revitalization into the program.

Funding History

LWCF is authorized at \$900 million annually, a level that has only been reached once during the program's 40-year history, and adjusted for inflation, would be north of \$3 billion. The program is divided into two distinct funding pots: State grants and Federal acquisition funds, with funding for land acquisition in the NWRS only a portion of that. Until FY 09, program funding followed a dramatic decline, with a total of only \$138 million in fiscal year (FY) 2008.

Full funding for LWCF is a goal of the Obama Administration and they hope to reach \$900 million by FY 2014. The Administration's request for FY 2011 is \$434 million, a \$100 million increase, with \$106 million specifically for strategic acquisitions for the NWRS.

The recorded balance in offshore oil revenues credited to, but not appropriated to, the LWCF is approaching **\$17 billion**. LWCF funding for federal land acquisition fell from \$445 million in FY 2001 to \$138 million in FY 2008.