

# THE GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS



The bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act (S. 3422/H.R. 7092) invests in the repair of national park and public lands infrastructure and in protecting and providing recreational access through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to national, state, and local parks, forests, wildlife areas, and other public lands. These investments are critical to reigniting local economies across the nation, creating jobs, helping small businesses get back on their feet, and providing urgently needed stimulus to the outdoor recreation industry that generates more than 5.2 million American jobs and contributes \$778 billion in national economic output each year.<sup>1</sup>

### LWCF Benefits

- LWCF funds have had a direct impact on growing the outdoor recreation economy by **increasing recreational access to public lands in every state and county in America**. Increased public access to our national parks, forests, refuges, local and state parks, and other public lands means increased seasonal visitation and tourism and thus more spending in local communities.
- A just-released economic analysis shows that **every \$1 million invested in LWCF could support between 16.8 and 30.8 jobs**.<sup>2</sup>
- Additionally, research on the impact of the LWCF shows that \$1 spent generates \$4 in economic value from natural resource goods and services alone.<sup>3</sup>
- In state and local parks alone, LWCF spending is critical to sustaining the \$166 billion in economic activity, \$87 billion in value added, and more than 1.1 million jobs these parks generate.<sup>4</sup>

### National Park Benefits

- The **National Park Service** (NPS) reports over 325 million visits each year (FY2019 data). Over \$20 billion in direct visitor spending is disseminated each year to local communities adjacent to national park sites.<sup>5</sup>
- Visitor spending at stores, hotels, gas stations and restaurants supports 341,000 annual jobs, contributes to tax revenue and over \$40 billion in total national economic output from national park visitors.<sup>6</sup>
- The National Park System is second only to the Department of Defense in the amount of federal infrastructure it manages. In total, the agency is responsible for protecting and managing over 75,000 assets, which include roads and bridges, trails, historic buildings, employee housing, wastewater and electrical systems, military fortifications, monuments and memorials, and seawalls.
- NPS estimates that national park funding in the GAO Act could support 100,000 job-years, \$6.5 billion in labor income, \$17.5 billion in economic output, and contribute \$9.6 billion to the US GDP.<sup>7</sup>

## Other Public Land Benefits

- Spending from visitors to our **National Wildlife Refuges** generates \$3.2 billion each year and more than 40,000 jobs.<sup>8</sup>
- Outdoor recreation on **Bureau of Land Management** lands support 47,000 jobs and add \$6.8 billion to the American economy. In FY 2021, it is estimated that the BLM will provide recreation opportunities for more than 72 million visitors.<sup>9</sup>
- Recreation retailers, outfitters, and guides benefit from our **National Forest** system, which generates \$9.5 billion for local and state economies.<sup>10</sup> The Forest Service is one of the country's largest recreation providers, managing 10,000 campgrounds, 159,000 miles of trails, 750 rental cabins, 2,000 trailheads, 130 visitor centers, 2,150 day-use and boating and fishing sites, and day-to-day information and permit sales.
- According to a 2018 analysis, Forest Service resource management investments in program areas such as infrastructure construction and maintenance, firefighting, ecosystem restoration, research and development, fuels treatments, Job Corps, salaries, etc. contributed 136,450 jobs across the nation; or 19 jobs per \$1 million invested.<sup>11</sup>
- Providing sportsmen's access through LWCF and funding maintenance on public lands supports America's hunters, anglers, and target shooters who contribute \$119 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supporting 1.6 million jobs.<sup>12</sup>
- Protecting working forests through the LWCF's Forest Legacy Program keeps mills in operation, generating jobs in the woods and capital in rural communities. Working forests support more than 2.4 million jobs and contribute \$115 billion toward the GDP.<sup>13</sup>
- In all 50 states and U.S. territories, our national, state, and local parks, forests, wildlife areas, and other public lands provide clean drinking water, disaster risk reduction, point and nonpoint source remediation, coastal resiliency, carbon sequestration, and public land improvements, typically at a significant cost savings. For example, within the four-state Highlands region (CT, NY, NJ, PA) a \$55 million LWCF investment protected water supplies for 2 million residents of northern New Jersey. Continued conservation in the Highlands is a key strategy in the effort to avoid long-term water treatment costs estimated at \$50 billion.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis, FY2017

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341554349\\_Employment\\_Impacts\\_of\\_Conservation\\_Spending](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341554349_Employment_Impacts_of_Conservation_Spending)

<sup>3</sup> The Trust for Public Land: <https://www.tpl.org/return-investment-land-and-water-conservation-fund>

<sup>4</sup> National Recreation and Park Association: <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-study-summary-2020.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/2019-visitation-numbers.htm>

<sup>6</sup> National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.portman.senate.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/2020.06.04%20-%20GAOA%20Economic%20Impact%20NPS\\_CLEARED.pdf](https://www.portman.senate.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/2020.06.04%20-%20GAOA%20Economic%20Impact%20NPS_CLEARED.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> US Fish and Wildlife Service: <https://www.fws.gov/economics/divisionpublications/>

<sup>9</sup> Bureau of Land Management: <https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/SoundInvest2019-6pages-FINAL-083019.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> US Forest Service: <https://www.fs.fed.us/emc/economics/documents/at-a-glance/benefits-to-people/nfs/BTP-NationalForestSystem.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> US Forest Service

<sup>12</sup> Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation: [http://congressionalsportsmen.org/uploads/home/CSF\\_Sportsmens\\_Economic\\_Impact\\_Infographic.pdf](http://congressionalsportsmen.org/uploads/home/CSF_Sportsmens_Economic_Impact_Infographic.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> National Association of Forest Owners: <https://nafoalliance.org/issues/working-forests/>

<sup>14</sup> Sierra Club: [https://www.highlands.state.nj.us/master/draft\\_plan\\_comments/11711.pdf](https://www.highlands.state.nj.us/master/draft_plan_comments/11711.pdf)

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