

May 8, 2025

The Honorable Steve Daines
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Sheehy
United States Senate
G55 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



The Honorable Ryan Zinke
United States House of Representatives
512 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Troy Downing
United States House of Representatives
1529 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Delivered via email.

Dear Senator Daines, Senator Sheehy, Representative Zinke, and Representative Downing,

On behalf of the thousands of supporters of the Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund, I am writing with deep concern about the threat facing the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Montana's public lands in the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

As you know, Montana has long benefited from LWCF investments — over \$649 million over the past five decades — which have protected working lands, improved access for sportsmen, enhanced local parks and ballfields, and strengthened rural economies — all at no cost to taxpayers.¹ LWCF enjoys broad bipartisan support and was permanently funded through the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020. That legacy is now in jeopardy.

The White House's FY26 budget proposal outlines sweeping cuts to the Interior Department and U.S. Forest Service, totaling more than \$5 billion.² These cuts include:

- A \$1.2 billion reduction in the National Park Service budget
- The disposal of national forests and park sites
- Elimination of national monument protections
- \$783 million in Forest Service cuts, including land sales
- A rollback of tribal programs, species conservation, and private land conservation

Amid this dismantling of federal conservation efforts, LWCF funding is particularly vulnerable. Congress already rescinded \$94 million in LWCF dollars last year.³ We cannot afford further erosion, especially when so many Montana projects are in the pipeline — projects in the

¹ The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Coalition, "Montana State Fact Sheet," February 27, 2025, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a60299ff7c508c3c05f2e1/t/67d2fd8ece31b165a3f01c86/1741880719332/Montana+Fact+sheet+2.27.25.pdf>.

² The White House Office of Management and Budget, "Fiscal Year 2026 Discretionary Budget Request," May 2, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Fiscal-Year-2026-Discretionary-Budget-Request.pdf>.

³ LWCF Coalition, "Montana State Fact Sheet."

Blackfoot River Watershed, Lolo National Forest, the Rocky Mountain Front, and beyond. In fact, the FY25 LWCF project list includes over \$50 million in Montana-specific investments.⁴

We respectfully urge you to:

- Defend LWCF's full \$900 million in funding in the President's FY26 Budget Request;
- Push back against cuts to public land management agencies and the privatization or sale of public lands; and
- Protect Montana's access to hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation, which generate over \$3.4 billion annually for our economy.⁵

Montanans value our land, water, and way of life. The proposed cuts do not reflect those values. We ask you to stand up for LWCF and fight to preserve the legacy of conservation, access, and stewardship that Montana has helped lead.

Thank you for your consideration and continued service.

Sincerely,



Whitney Tawney
Executive Director
Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund

⁴ [Ibid.](#)

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. "Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2023," November 20, 2024, <https://www.bea.gov/news/2024/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2023>.