



The Honorable Max Baucus  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 2051-

The Honorable Jon Tester  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 2051-

November 20, 2009

November 20, 2009

Dear Senator Baucus:

Dear Senator Tester:

I am writing you on behalf of the Montana Recreation and Parks Association as that organizations president. Our membership represents 24 communities across Montana from Browning to Glendive, Hamilton to Havre. Although our membership is relatively small, we touch the lives of all Montanas by providing safe and enjoyable city parks, state parks and access onto federal lands.

**As public entities concerned with conserving Montana's natural, recreational, and cultural resources and heritage, we are writing to thank you for your conservation leadership and to urge your support for full and dedicated funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). We appreciate your bold leadership and vision as an original cosponsor of S. 2747, The Land and Water Conservation Authorization and Funding Act of 2009. This measure will finally ensure the necessary level of federal investment in parks, trails, refuges, forests, and large landscape conservation in Montana and across the nation.**

Over 1,200 LWCF state assistance grants have benefited state and local community parks across the state supporting close-to-home recreation and public health. Some recent LWCF 'stateside' grants included park and facilities enhancements at Hardin School Tennis Courts, Gallatin County Regional Park, Big Sandy Park, City of Havre Skate Board Park, and Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park.

The LWCF is a visionary and bipartisan program. It was created by Congress in 1965 and is authorized to receive \$900 million annually in federal revenues from

oil and gas leasing of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). It made good economic and environmental sense in 1965, and it remains good sense today, to reinvest a small fraction of federal leasing revenues in permanent natural resource protection.

Despite this decades-old promise, the LWCF program has been chronically under funded. It has received full funding only once in its history and in recent years has steadily declined to a low in appropriated funding of \$155 million in 2008. Full and dedicated funding is needed for the LWCF to fulfill its congressionally mandated purpose. The “state-side” portion of LWCF has been reduced even more, with only \$200,000 coming to Montana during the last cycle. These stateside funds are critical to maintaining our local community recreation infrastructure.

Increasingly, it is recognized that a healthy environment and abundant recreational opportunity not only promote human health and quality of life, but also are good for the economy. Today, outdoor recreation activities generate \$2.5 billion in revenues annually to Montana’s economy and support 34,000 jobs. Over 950,000 people hunt, fish or watch wildlife in Montana each year, spending over \$1.1 billion on wildlife-related recreation. Moreover, economists increasingly recognize the importance of the scenic and recreational benefits of nearby public lands in attracting visitors, new residents and businesses, bolstering local economies even during difficult economic times. Whether it is a visit to a local playground or an outing to a national park, getting outdoors connects families, promotes a healthy lifestyle, and builds community.

**We appreciate your leadership on S. 2747 to protect Montana’s most treasured landscapes, strengthen our local economies, and ensure the future of our natural, cultural, and recreation heritage.**

Sincerely,

Douglas Habermann, President  
Montana Recreation and Parks Association  
2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings, MT 59105  
406-247-2954  
frankenhabe@gmail.com