



June 19, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

Thank you for your recent visit to New Hampshire and for taking the time to speak with the Forest Society's Public Policy Manager Matt Leahy regarding the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We are a 116 year old forestry organization and land trust whose mission is to protect the state's most important landscapes while promoting the wise use of its renewable natural resources. As you probably saw during your visit, it is a deeply beautiful state. Our forested landscapes, however, provide more than aesthetic values. They have helped to shape the economic, environmental and cultural history that we in New Hampshire rightly cherish. Furthermore, the working forests here are not only the foundation to the state's forest economy but play a central role in cleaning the air we breathe and filtering the water we drink.

The LWCF has been enormously important in achieving those outcomes. It has provided funding to help protect some of New Hampshire's most special places, like the White Mountain National Forest, and ensure recreational access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. The Forest Legacy Program (FLP), one of the key programs funded under the LWCF, has been especially important to the state. By helping to protect working forests, FLP is supporting timber sector jobs and sustainable forest operations while enhancing wildlife habitat, water quality and recreation at places such as Connecticut Lakes in Coos County and Pillsbury-Sunapee Highlands in Grafton, Sullivan and Merrimack Counties. The FLP has leveraged \$46 million in federal funds to invest \$67 million in New Hampshire's forests, while protecting air and water quality, wildlife habitat, access for recreation and other public benefits provided by forests.

These benefits are why the Forest Society is deeply concerned with the Administration's FY 2018 budget for the LWCF. The budget makes drastic and damaging cuts to the program, most notably in the zeroing out of funding for the Forest Legacy Program. This proposal goes against the commitment Congress made to the American public that a small portion of revenues from offshore drilling would go to natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation programs. Furthermore, it is important to note that historically, annual appropriations for LWCF have usually fallen far short of the authorized level of \$900 million per year. Eliminating funds for FLP further exacerbates this trend.

While a member of Congress, you were a prominent supporter of the LWCF and worked to secure both full funding and permanent authorization for it. Because of this leadership, I would ask you to reconsider the Administration's current position on the program. In addition, I would encourage you to plan a return trip to New Hampshire. Viewing the lands the LWCF has helped to protect and learning about the unmet resource protection needs here will reinforce why the program must be fully funded. Thank you for consideration of these requests. Please let me know if you would like to further discuss them.

Sincerely,

Jane A. Difley  
President/Forester



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