

The Land and Water Conservation Fund and America's sportsmen and women

A 50-year legacy of increased access and improved habitat

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INTRODUCTION

Ask any sportsman or woman what is important to their hunting and fishing experience and almost universally you will get one answer—access to quality places to hunt and fish. Unfettered access to publicly accessible places abundant in game and fish is what makes the American hunting and fishing experience unique.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of the nation’s most important tools for conserving wild and undeveloped places and the fish and wildlife they support. Established through a bipartisan act of Congress in 1964, the fund uses royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf for the purpose of safeguarding the nation’s natural areas, water resources, cultural heritage and for providing recreation opportunities to all Americans—including America’s 37 million hunters and anglers. The fund helps provide sportsmen’s access to millions of acres of public lands.

Since its inception 50 years ago, the LWCF has opened new lands for public access and helped create and strengthen quality habitat for big game species such as elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep, for waterfowl and upland game birds and for a host of fish including the iconic muskie and trout. Examples of the benefits of the LWCF to hunting and fishing resources can be found all across the United States. LWCF funds were used to acquire the 11,179-acre Devil’s Canyon Ranch in Wyoming, a premier

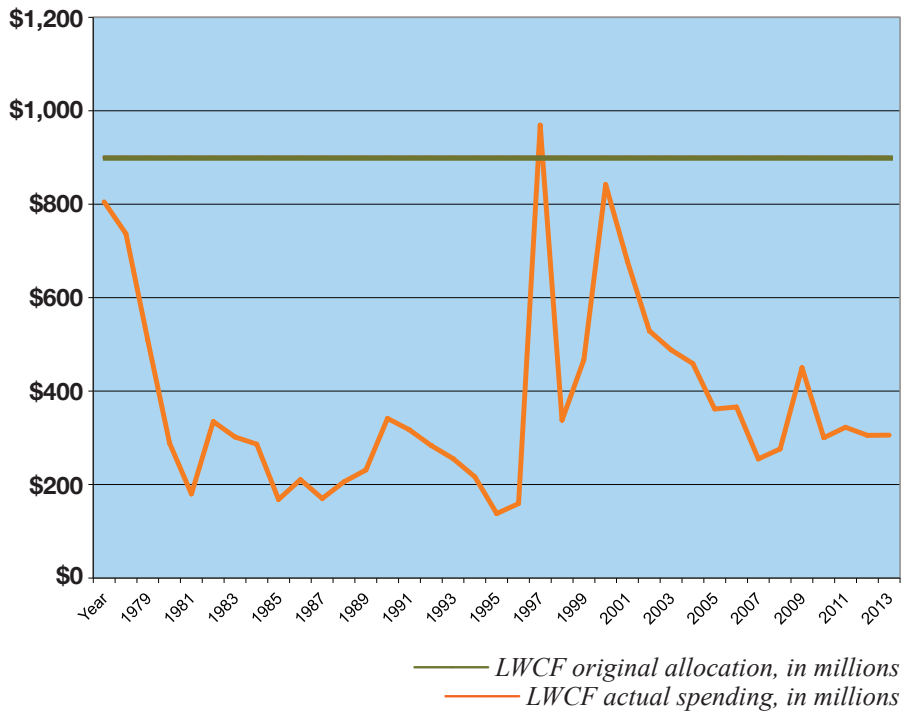
The Land and Water Conservation Fund is one of the nation’s most important tools for conserving wild and undeveloped places and the fish and wildlife they support.

hunting area with important herds of bighorn sheep, mule deer and elk; to protect the working forests around Wisconsin’s Chippewa Flowage, one of that state’s most pristine lakes and best



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service photo

LWCF Total Funding



trophy fisheries; to secure habit in the Dakota grasslands for more than 100 breeding birds, including 12 waterfowl species—a region that has been described as America’s “duck factory”; to protect the confluence of the Ohio and Tradewater Rivers in Kentucky—an action that is providing significant watershed and water quality improvement to the benefit of public hunting and fishing.

But the benefits of access to quality places to hunt and fish go far beyond simply positive experiences for sportsmen and women. These places create significant positive economic impacts that are felt both within hunting- and fishing-related businesses, such as outfitters and equipment retailers, and among locally based service industries such as hotels, restaurants and gas stations. According to a 2013 report by the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, the 37 million American sportsmen and women spent a combined total of approximately \$90 billion in 2011. These expenditures help create

and support hundreds of thousands of jobs at the local, state and national levels.

While the LWCF has had a significant positive impact on sporting opportunities and local economies, the fact is it can do more, and needs to. From 1978 onward, the LWCF was to be funded annually through \$900 million in annual royalties paid by energy companies. Unfortunately, the program has been fully funded only once since then. More than \$17 billion in funds that were supposed to be destined for LWCF have been diverted elsewhere to the detriment of many of the nation’s wild and undeveloped places and the public sporting opportunities they could potentially provide.

In April of 2014, 103 Western sporting groups, including groups as diverse as the Wyoming Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation, the Montana Sportsmen Alliance, the Idaho Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club collectively signed a letter to the chairs and ranking members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives appropriations committees, asking that they make full funding of the LWCF a priority. These organizations recognize, as do sporting organizations across the nation, the important role of the LWCF in securing quality hunting and fishing habitat and hunter and angler access.

This report was created by the nation’s foremost hunting and fishing organizations to provide a picture of the importance of the LWCF to America’s sportsmen and women. The case studies show some of the benefits of the LWCF to fish and wildlife habitat and to hunter and angler access across the country. The places and the voices of individual sportsmen and women makes clear the importance of the fund to the American sporting experience and to local communities throughout the nation. Moreover, this report makes clear the need to fully fund the LWCF so that the benefits of these wild places and productive habitats will continue for future generations of hunters and anglers.

Tenderfoot Creek in Montana’s Lewis and Clark National Forest is a classic Western game and fish resource. The creek rolls down 3,200 feet of elevation through the Little Belt Mountains in central Montana. The mountains are home to elk, mule deer, moose, black bear and other wildlife. The creek itself is a spectacular cold-water fishery, hosting rainbow, brook and brown trout, as well as native westslope cutthroat trout. Tenderfoot Creek is not only a great fishing stream; it is a major spawning tributary of the “Blue Ribbon” Smith River.

From a hunter and angler perspective, the creek and forest posed significant public access challenges because it lay within a checkerboard system of ownership, a remnant of the railroad land grant era of the late 19th Century. Alternating sections of land were most recently held by private owners and the U.S. Forest Service, which made habitat management and hunter and angler access to its fish and game resources difficult. Fortunately, the private owners wanted the lands conserved for future use by the public and agreed to sell their land holdings for conservation purposes rather than selling them to be developed as vacation properties. The Land and Water Conservation fund is providing the resources to help make that happen.

“This property has been a national priority for us to acquire and transfer to the Forest Service for several years now and we are very close to finishing it. It is a tremendous elk hunting area, and with the elimination of the checkerboard ownership, habitat management for many species should improve.” says Blake Henning, Vice President of Lands and Conservation with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, which led the effort to purchase the land along Tenderfoot Creek.



Tenderfoot Creek: MONTANA

Once the Tenderfoot Creek land purchase is complete, not only will it strengthen fish and wildlife in the Lewis and Clark National Forest and improve hunter and angler access, it will continue to make hunting and fishing a significant economic resource in Montana—a state that in 2011 saw 335,000 hunters and anglers spend, on average, \$2,954.

“Land purchases for conservation purposes in the Tenderfoot Creek watershed help secure one of the most vital sources of cold, clean water—as well as important spawning habitat—for wild trout in the Smith River, one of Montana’s most treasured fishing destinations,” says Bruce Farling, executive director of Montana Trout Unlimited. “The Tenderfoot Creek land purchases accomplish exactly what LWCF was intended for: protection of crucial fish and wildlife habitat for sustaining our nation’s rich outdoor traditions.”



WISCONSIN: Chippewa Flowage

photo by John Dettloff

The Chippewa Flowage in northwest Wisconsin is that state's third largest lake, covering 15,300 acres. Created in 1923 when the Chippewa River was dammed, it is a labyrinth of islands, points and bays with 233 miles of relatively undeveloped shoreline. The waters are home to a myriad of fish: in addition to world-record muskies, they abound in walleye, crappie, perch and bluegill. Smallmouth bass haunt the dark streams of the east; largemouth bass the weedier flats of the west. The surrounding glacial landscape of hills, valleys, and floating bogs is home to deer, black bear, beaver, bobcat and other wildlife. For an equivalent experience in wild and undeveloped lands, one would normally have to travel much farther north, to northern Minnesota or Canada.

But the Chippewa Flowage is not just a home to wildlife; it is also a working forest that supports both the timber and tourist industries. To ensure that this resource is preserved for the benefit of hunters, anglers, tourists and foresters, a public-private partnership completed a two-part purchase of an 18,179-acre easement surrounding the flowage. The second phase of the purchase of 10,082 acres was made possible, in part, by the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program

(FLP), more than half of which was paid for from the Land Water Conservation Fund. This easement assures that the property will not be developed, will remain in private hands, and will continue to be logged in a sustainable manner. It also creates a corridor to game-filled forests farther north.

According to John Dettloff, longtime fishing guide and owner of Indian Trail Resort: "Creating this easement to allow sportsmen access to the Chippewa Flowage will greatly help ensure that the public will be able to experience the natural beauty, peace and solitude, and bountiful hunting and fishing that the flowage has long been famous for."

Land and Water Conservation Fund investments like those associated with the Chippewa Flowage will also help pay high dividends because of the economic impact of hunting and fishing in Wisconsin. In 2011 alone, hunting and fishing-related trip and equipment expenditures there reached \$2.9 billion.



Dakota Grassland Conservation Area: NORTH DAKOTA, SOUTH DAKOTA

photo courtesy of Ducks Unlimited

The Dakota Grassland Conservation Area (DGCA) of North Dakota and South Dakota was created in 2011. Encompassing 240,000 acres of wetland and 1.7 million acres of grassland, the total boundary of the DGCA (including the Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area) is more than 29 million acres. In North Dakota this includes the 30-mile wide strip of the “Missouri Coteau.”

The hummocky surface of this rolling plain consists of abundant, glacially formed shallow ponds and closed drainages that are a virtual duck factory for the nation’s central flyway, which extends from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico. The “prairie potholes” of North Dakota comprise 7% of the nation’s waterfowl survey area, yet yield 20% of its breeding ducks. This includes priority sport species such as mallard, northern pintail, northern shoveler, gadwall and blue-winged teal. The DGCA also provides key habitat for migrant sport species that breed farther north like green-winged teal and snow geese, and for important upland game bird species including pheasant and grouse.

Faced with a steady reduction of potholes and grasslands as a result of farming activity, the DGCA strategy of “farm the best, conserve

the rest” is based upon the participation of private landowners who want to partner in the conservation of the landscape and a vibrant rural lifestyle. The purchase of conservation easements from farmers and ranchers willing to sell has been made possible in large part by the Land Water Conservation Fund, which, to date, has allocated \$20 million toward the conservation effort. Once fully procured, these easements will ensure perpetual protection of habitat for breeding and migrating waterfowl, and upland game-bird species.

“Grassland and wetland easements secured in the Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area are a significant part of the perpetually protected habitat base that sustains duck production for duck hunters and wildlife enthusiasts across America,” says Dr. Johann Walker, Director of Conservation, Ducks Unlimited (Dakotas and Montana).

Dave Nomsen of Pheasants Forever adds, “The Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area will ensure the upland hunters of tomorrow enjoy the Dakotas as they should be—full of pheasants.”



photo by Joe Robison

OHIO: Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

The Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex (ONWRC) is located in northwestern Ohio, about 15 miles east of Toledo, on the shores of Lake Erie. Created in 1961, the ONWRC is the pristine remnant of the Great Black Swamp and consists of three primary properties: the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge, and West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuge. The Complex encompasses coastal wetlands, islands, grasslands and woods that are managed for the resting, nesting and wintering of waterfowl and other migratory birds.

The shoreline of the basin of western Lake Erie, designated a “nearshore terrestrial ecosystem,” is home to the most diverse population of wildlife on the Great Lakes and also has the highest concentration of marshes. The bufflehead, common goldeneye, common merganser and ruddy duck are sample species of the hundreds of thousands of waterfowl that pass through each year on their fall migration, making the ONWRC a prime location for waterfowl hunting.

This valuable shoreline is, however, threatened with encroaching urbanization, agriculture, invasive species and diking. For this reason additional land acquisition is an important

and continuous process. Toward this end the Land Water Conservation Fund has contributed \$600,000 for expansion from the original 5,470 acres to the current 10,000. Without the conservation of this key ecosystem, hunting would suffer.

“Having these types of refuges along Western Lake Erie is very important to all waterfowl hunters in this region,” says Joseph Robison, avid hunter and member of Waterfowl USA, Southwestern Lake Erie Chapter. “Not only does the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge provide some good waterfowl hunting opportunities, it provides valuable wetland and wildlife habitat that Western Lake Erie is lacking. [It] provides a refuge that attracts waterfowl and holds them while also providing migrating waterfowl food in the fall and spring migrations.”

As a resource, the ONWRC helps contribute rich dividends to the region: It is estimated that hunting and wildlife viewing in the Lake Erie region brings in \$1.5 billion in retail sales and creates 50,000 jobs each year.

Missouri River: SOUTH DAKOTA

The Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR) in South Dakota runs in two sections for one hundred miles. The stream and island complexes found along these lengths of the MNRR provide quality habitat for many important fish and wildlife species.

The MNRR is a significant sport fishery for the region. “The Missouri River is a vital resource in South Dakota for both hunting and fishing, in addition to all of the other recreational uses of this system of reservoirs,” says Bret Afdahl of the South Dakota chapter of Walleyes Unlimited. “Anglers from all over South Dakota, the surrounding states and beyond travel to the ‘The River’ to fish. While walleye is the preferred target, the infinite variety of fish is one of the things that keep people coming back.”

The key to this critically important fishing and hunting resource is public access, and that’s where the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has played an important role. Monies from the LWCF have been used to help build recreational facilities along the MNRR over a four-decade period and to partner with groups such as Walleyes Unlimited to enhance the angler experience.



photo courtesy South Dakota Department of Tourism

“I look for projects where we can leverage our local tax funds with LWCF funds and partners like Walleyes Unlimited. We have been very successful with this approach and have added fishing piers to our waterfront to enhance public access to the river,” says Tom Farnsworth, director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Pierre, S.D.

The economic benefit of these expenditures can be measured in the vibrant sporting-based industries that exist in communities along the river. Says Afdahl, “From an economic standpoint, the Missouri River has an almost year-round impact on the state and the communities in close proximity to the river.”

Big River Corridor: KENTUCKY



The Big River Corridor is a 7,200-acre tract along the banks of the Tradewater River to its confluence with the Ohio River in western Kentucky. While a ‘conservation island’ in its own right, it creates a key link with the Shawnee National Forest and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois, the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area and Clark

River National Refuge in Kentucky. Designated as the Big River Wildlife Management Area and State Forest (BRWMA), it guarantees that this critical watershed of meadows, upland forests and bottomlands is protected from further encroachment by subdivisions, farmland and roads.

The BRWMA is also designed for recreational uses such as hunting, fishing, hiking and canoeing. In addition to sustainable lumbering, the BRWMA will be managed by

the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) to protect the water quality of this unique area and the 25 species of rare animals that depend on it. The mouth of the Tradewater serves as a spawning ground for the paddlefish and shovelnose sturgeon.

In a state where 94% of the land is held in private hands, the BRWMA will also provide an important opportunity for hunting on public lands. Deer and wild turkey abound there. Larry Sharp, a longtime hunter in the area says, “I don’t think you can hardly get out there in the spring but that you don’t hear a turkey sooner rather than later.” And Jason Lupardis, Kentucky wildlife biologist with the National Wild Turkey Federation, says of the BRWMA: “Turkey populations are good, but are only anticipated to get better with additional management.”

Originally purchased by the Nature Conservancy, the BRWMA was repurchased by the State of Kentucky with assistance from the Land Water Conservation Fund. In enabling access to public lands for recreation, this and related projects have had an important impact on local economies. “A significant percentage of our hunters are from out of state,” says Curt Devine, with the KDFWR.

photo courtesy Matt Lindler/National Wild Turkey Federation

The Legendary Ladder Buck

The Land and Water Conservation Fund has helped play an important role in turning the Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge into a quality game resource, especially for trophy white-tailed deer, a fact that Justin Lagneaux of Carencro, LA, discovered. Lagneaux started hunting the refuge in 2007, and while he had seen several large bucks during that period, they were nothing compared with what happened in January of 2009.



While scouting for a place to hunt, he found an area so thick in reforested growth that he literally had to crawl through thickets for 300 yards until he found an opening that was about 75 yards wide and composed of four-foot-high grass and briars. “There were 20 or so rubs around the opening

that were shredded from the ground to my shoulders. I just knew that’s where I had to be,” says Lagneaux.

There was only one problem. There were no trees to climb to get a good view of the opening and a ground blind would be out of the question due to a lack of visibility in the high grass and briars. But after thinking about it for a while, Lagneaux came up with a strategy.

“I took my six-foot painter’s ladder and slid my boat seat in the top hole. I set up about 5:45 next to a spruce tree, where I had great cover and could see the opening very well. As soon as I sat down I could hear deer running through the water behind me. When daybreak broke it got quiet.”

About an hour later, Lagneaux saw a black spot moving along the edge of the grass and thicket. It was the nose of a deer trying to wind him. Suddenly the deer started walking across the opening and all the 24-year-old hunter could see were the tall tines rising from the main beams on the buck’s antlers.

“He made his way across the opening and I lost him. About three minutes passed and I saw a little tree shaking back and forth. I looked through my binoculars and could see a rack rubbing the tree. I picked up my gun, got ready and made a grunt sound with my mouth, and to my surprise he lifted his head with his nose straight up in the air. My only shot was a neck shot so I took it. He instantly hit the ground.”

When Lagneaux reached the deer, he looked down at a 250-pound 13-point white-tailed deer. “I was beyond excited,” says Lagneaux.

The deer has become known in the area as the legendary “ladder buck” — a testament not only to Lagneaux’s hunting ability and ingenuity, but also to the sporting experience that the Land and Water Conservation Fund helps provide sportsmen and women.

LOUISIANA: Lake Ophelia Natl. Wildlife Refuge

Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge (LONWR) in eastern Louisiana was created in 1988 at the confluence of the Red and Mississippi Rivers. This part of the Mississippi River Valley was once a hardwood forest bottomland of 24 million acres but today less than 5 million acres remain as fragmented woodlands in a sea of agriculture. Of this, the 17,500-acre LONWR represents a mixture of habitats, including bayous, sloughs and pristine lakes (including its namesake, Lake Ophelia). And while most of the Refuge had been cleared by the 1970s, reforestation efforts have led to the rebound of native species such as oak, ash and gum. A portion of private cropland is also left unharvested and flooded for the benefit of wintering waterfowl. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been a significant contributor to this restoration effort.

Serving the Mississippi and Central flyways, the waterfowl most commonly found in the refuge are mallard, green-winged teal, gadwall, northern pintails and wood ducks. The bottomlands abound in bobcat, alligator, mink and otter. Endangered species include the newly reintroduced Louisiana black bear and the arctic peregrine falcon.

Hunting is a key management tool for the LONWR. In addition to waterfowl, turkey and small game, it is home to trophy white-tailed deer. “Participation in hunting opportunities provided for the general public at Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge has increased substantially over the years, especially for white-tailed deer,” says Brett Wehrle, refuge manager. “[It] has become a renowned destination for hunters due to the amount of trophy-sized bucks that it has produced.”



photo by John Hoffman courtesy of Ducks Unlimited



Pisgah National Forest: NORTH CAROLINA

photo by Frank Askew, Up-Close Outfitters

Pisgah National Forest straddles the eastern edge of the Great Smoky Mountains in western North Carolina. Comprised of the Pisgah, Grandfather and Appalachian Ranger Districts, its 500,000 acres of mile-high peaks and waterfalls is crisscrossed with white-water rivers and hiking trails. One of the “busiest forests in the country,” the 192,000-acre Grandfather District alone receives six million visitors a year.

The Pisgah is a hunting and fishing paradise where white-tailed deer and wild turkey abound. “With such a tremendous resource at our hands I feel privileged to be able to work and enjoy this awesome asset. The Pisgah is well managed and is gleaming with wildlife,” says Frank Askew, a local guide with Up-Close Outfitters.

A portion of the Grandfather District had been slated for housing development, but the timely purchase of 212 acres along Backbone Ridge assures that its dramatic view and wildlife corridor will be accessible to the public in perpetuity. Surrounded on three sides by public land, this purchase means that the entire length

of Backbone Ridge now lies within the national forest system, connecting scenic Blowing Rock to the east with the St John’s River Valley to the west. Long a top priority with the U.S. Forest Service, this addition was made available through public-private cooperation. Originally purchased by the non-profit Conservation Fund for \$12,000 per acre, the USFS acquired it for \$5,000 per acre, using monies from the Land Water Conservation Fund.

An additional dividend to sportsmen in the purchase of the Backbone Ridge block is the conservation of the headwaters of Racket Creek, an area of pristine streams that are home to native brook trout. Davidson Creek, which is in the Pisgah District and is now sheltered from major disturbances, has proved the sporting and economic value of protecting resources such as native trout. “The Davidson River is an important resource for anglers, outfitters and fly shops. Guide services from North Carolina as well as other states such as Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee bring clients,” says Chris Ellis, local chapter president for Trout Unlimited.



ALASKA: Misty Fjords

photo by Ed Toribio

Located on the southern tip of the Alaska Panhandle, Misty Fjords National Monument in Alaska's Tongass National Forest is a sportsmen's paradise that has often been referred to as the "Yosemite of the North." Its remote and wild setting of fjords, sea cliffs, active glaciers, rivers and rain forests is ideal habitat for all five northeastern Pacific species of salmon, grayling, Dolly Varden, brook, rainbow, steelhead and cutthroat trout. Almost half of all king salmon spawning and rearing streams in southeast Alaska are located there. It is also home to brown bear, black bear, black-tailed deer, moose and trophy mountain goats.

This broad range of wildlife exists in part because of Misty Fjords' isolation. There are no permanent roads and it can only be accessed with a float plane or by boat. It is one of only a few locations in the United States where hunters and anglers can engage in a truly wild outdoor experience. For sportsmen and women, keeping places like Misty Fjords National Monument wild is key to assuring that there will always be unspoiled places to hunt filled with abundant fish and game.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been a critical tool in the effort to keep Misty Fjords a wild place. It has been used to purchase privately held lands within the national monument that are located within prime coastal brown bear habitat and have a rich history of hunting and fishing. Acquiring these private lands, which had been homesteaded in the early 1900s, will help to prevent private development that would take away from the Alaska wilderness experience and potentially affect fish and game resources. It will also help to improve the sportsman experience by assuring unfettered access to fish and game.

"Learning that the Land and Water Conservation Fund acquired some prime brown and black bear habitat in a very scenic river valley in Southeast Alaska was good news to me. Putting this land back into the public domain will provide new hunting opportunities for me to take guests in a quest to fulfill their lifelong dream of harvesting an Alaskan bear," says Ed Toribio, a longtime resident of Alaska who is a professional guide and operator of Primo Expeditions.



Snake River Special Recreation Management Area: IDAHO

photo by Beverly Lane Smith

The Upper Snake/South Fork of the Snake River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) extends over 43,000 acres in southeastern Idaho. Snowmelt and springs in the Snake River corridor give rise to one of the nation's premier destination rivers, featuring outstanding fish habitat, water quality, scenic vistas and one of the West's most extensive cottonwood riparian forests. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study of Idaho's ecosystems rates this area as the most valuable, biologically diverse and unique ecosystem in the state.

The Upper Snake SRMA is also a blue-ribbon sports fishery, and home to the largest population of Yellowstone cutthroat trout outside of Yellowstone Park. Listed as a species of "greatest conservation need," healthy populations of the trout persist in the stretch of the South Fork of the Snake River from Palisade Dam to its confluence with the Henry's Fork.

Says Rob Van Kirk, a local angler and researcher with the Henry's Fork Foundation: "... the South Fork Snake River provides one of the few remaining opportunities for anglers to catch native cutthroat trout in a large river."

The Bureau of Land Management, using Land Water Conservation Fund monies, and assisted by The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy and the Teton Regional Land Trust, has acquired over 9,500 acres. An additional 10,200 acres (valued at \$17.6 million) have been protected by active conservation partners since 1991 from encroachment by residential subdivision and resort development. Through a combination of "in fee" and easement purchase, these lands include productive farms and ranches that will remain in private ownership. Undeveloped tracts are being managed for open space, wildlife and recreation.

"Stream access, water quality, fish habitat, restoration and native species are all equally imperative to maintaining stability for the natural world and our sport," says Bryan Gregson, a long-time angler, fishing guide and outdoor photographer on the Snake River system. "If we want to savor the simple ecstasies of angling for future generations, these resources must be safeguarded."

The 335,000 recreational visits to the SRMA each year pump \$20 million into the local economy.



Bear River Refuge: UTAH

photo courtesy of Ducks Unlimited

A true oasis in the desert, the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (BRMBR) is located west of Brigham City in northern Utah. It was founded in 1928 in large part to restore and protect the estuary around the mouth of the Bear River, the largest tributary to the Great Salt Lake. Located on the lake's northeast arm, the BRMBR covers 80,000 acres of marsh, open water, alkali mudflats and upland grassland. The 30 artificially created wetlands within the 5,000 acres of grasslands provide critical resting, nesting and breeding habitat for more than 200 species of migratory birds from the Central and Pacific flyways. A full 60% of the continent's cinnamon teal are bred here.

It was largely through the efforts of sportsmen and women that the BRMBR was founded. They rallied behind efforts to preserve the rapidly declining Bear River marshes by establishing the wildlife refuge. Today, efforts to protect the Bear River watershed and the marshes are a cooperative effort among sportsmen, farmers and ranchers, local citizens and government agencies. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has played a significant role in protecting the BRMBR through the purchase of wetland and riverfront property and conservation easements with willing sellers within the watershed.

For Utah's 400,000 hunters and anglers, the BRMBR offers a plethora of opportunities. Hunters take ducks, geese, tundra swan and pheasant; anglers ply the Bear River and designated canals for channel catfish or carp on a fly rod. These and other sporting opportunities provide a sizable contribution to Utah's economy—it's estimated that sportsmen and women spent more than a billion dollars in Utah in 2011.

Jeff Adams, chairman of the Willard Peak Chapter of Delta Waterfowl, hunts there with his son. "For us as waterfowl hunters and even bird watchers, the BRMBR is of unique importance as it is here that we share the outdoor traditions of our families and friends as we teach our youth the importance of marshlands, the wildlife who rely on them and the need for conservation so we can enjoy them and the harvest they provide not just today, but for future generations."

Increasing Public Access to Public Lands

One of the most pressing issues for America's sportsmen and women is a lack of available access to existing public lands and waters. Many public lands offer potentially high-quality hunting and fishing opportunities, yet they are inaccessible to the public because private lands block access. A 2004 report to the U.S. House Appropriations Committee concluded that more than 35 million acres of Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service land have inadequate access.

Efforts are underway in the Congress to remedy this problem. Bipartisan bills—such as the HUNT Act and Making Public Lands Public—have been introduced requiring federal land management agencies to identify parcels of landlocked public lands with hunting, fishing or other outdoor recreation potential, and then to provide access to those parcels through easements, rights-of-way or acquisitions from willing landowners. The bills would direct up to 1.5 percent or \$10 million of the annual authorized Land and Water Conservation Fund funding to be used to secure recreational public access to publicly held federal lands.

These proposals demonstrate the potential of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to further improve access to quality hunting and fishing resources. If the fund was fully funded, federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service would have \$13.5 million a year available for easements, rights-of-way or acquisitions. That would result in a significant expansion in the ability of America's hunters and anglers to access public lands and waters.



Broken Promise, Unmet Needs

For every access and habitat success story associated with the Land and Water Conservation Fund, there are many other projects throughout the United States that are stalled due to the failure to fully fund the program.

The 10,000 acre Bangtails and Madison River Projects in Montana are on hold due to a lack of funding. Both would expand protection of crucial habitat for elk and other game species thereby increasing hunting opportunities. The 350-acre Spring Creek Watershed Project in the Black Hills of South Dakota would improve access to wildlife including turkey, deer and elk in a national forest where more than 20 percent of the visitors come specifically to hunt and fish. Unfortunately, that project is stalled as well due to limited LWCF dollars. In Edmonds, Washington, efforts to repair and rehabilitate the aging 37-year-old Edmonds Fishing Pier, which has an estimated 100,000 visitors per year—many of whom are anglers and families—are stalled because they were turned down for LWCF funding in 2012, even though the pier was originally built using dollars from the fund.

No matter the location in the United States, it is the same story. The research has been done; the benefits to sportsmen and women are clear; there is widespread public support for the acquisition or expenditure; there are willing sellers and financial partners. The only missing detail is LWCF funding.

When Congress established the LWCF in 1964, it was a bipartisan commitment to the American people, including millions of sportsmen

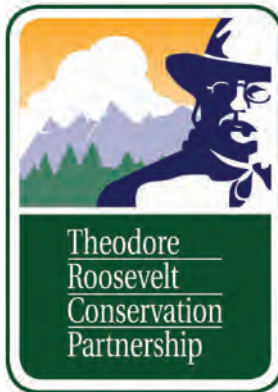
and women. Unfortunately, year after year that promise has been broken and the commitment has gone unmet.

When Congress established the LWCF in 1964, it was a bipartisan commitment to the American people, including millions of sportsmen and women. Unfortunately, year after year that promise has been broken and the commitment has gone unmet.

2014 is the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It is time for the U.S. Congress to keep its promise to the American people and fully fund the program. That would not only be a fitting tribute to the bipartisan spirit that originally created the fund, it would continue and expand the important work of the fund to enhance the nation's wildlife resources and expand access for American hunters and anglers.



photo by Tina Shaw / U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



For more information on the Land and Water Conservation Fund, go to: lwfccoalition.org