February 14, 2017

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

As members of the America’s Voice for Conservation, Recreation and Preservation (AVCRP) coalition, we write to respectfully request the strongest possible funding levels relative to fiscal year 2018 for all budget function allocations that support the conservation of America’s wildlife, fisheries, lands, waters, cultural resources, and their associated economic and recreational benefits. Further, our coalition is strongly opposed to the reinstatement of sequestration and urge your leadership in crafting a new budget deal that avoids sequestration.

The AVCRP includes organizations and businesses that represent millions of members who support funding for America’s wildlife, fisheries, and other natural and cultural resources. We are united by a shared belief that our nation’s natural, outdoor recreational heritage and historic resources are entrusted to us and future generations for the benefit of all Americans to enjoy. These resources are an essential foundation for the American economy. We believe, as those who preceded us believed, that the care and stewardship of these resources is a birthright we need to invest in today and in the future.

As Congress begins the Fiscal Year 2018 budget process, we want to emphasize the importance of enhancing our nation’s outdoor heritage. America’s wildlife, fisheries, lands and waters produce exceptional economic value and jobs in communities across the country. Every year, more than $107 billion in revenue and 9.4 million domestic jobs are supported by the outdoor recreation, natural resources conservation, and historic preservation economy. Annually, the outdoor recreation industry generates more than $646 billion in economic activity on public and private lands. This translates to important jobs and other economic drivers in communities across the nation, from the local shop owner selling hunting, angling and outdoor recreation equipment to the small-town gas station supplying fuel for tourists heading to the local historic site. This results in a shared economy that is truly American-based and unexportable.
Unfortunately, the federal budget has continued to fund the Function 300 — Natural Resources and Environment, the portion that sustains the conservation, outdoor recreation, and preservation economy, to only slightly more than one percent of the federal budget. Further, this portion of the budget is steadily declining and was sequestrated as a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011. Federal funds dedicated to Function 300 support national parks, wildlife refuges, cultural resources, forests and recreation sites; working lands such as farmland and ranches; safe and plentiful water resources; marine and coastal ecosystems; urban restoration; naturally-occurring infrastructure, such as marshes and wetlands that clean our water and protect our communities from storms and droughts — all of which have large and quantifiable economic benefits.

We encourage you, as our leaders in Congress, to work with the Budget and Appropriations Committee chairs and ranking members, as well as White House leadership and staff, to identify a path forward that will sustain our outdoor and cultural heritage.

As the FY2018 budget process moves forward, members of the AVCRP coalition look forward to working with you to avoid sequestration and support the strongest possible funding levels for America’s wildlife, fisheries, lands, waters, and historic and cultural resources.

Sincerely,

American Anthropological Association  
American Cultural Resources Association  
American Fisheries Society  
American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
American Forests  
American Sportfishing Association  
Archery Trade Association  
Association of Zoos & Aquariums  
B.A.S.S. LLC  
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers  
Blue Goose Alliance  
Coalition for American Heritage  
Delta Waterfowl  
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation  
Hispanic Access Foundation  
Izaak Walton League of America  
National Association of RC&D Councils  
National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers  
National Audubon Society  
National Deer Alliance  
National Parks Conservation Association  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
National Wildlife Federation  
National Wildlife Refuge Association  
Outdoor Alliance  
Outdoor Industry Association  
Pheasants Forever  
Pope & Young Club  
Preservation Action  
Public Lands Foundation  
Quail Forever  
Quality Deer Management Association  
Society for American Archaeology  
Society for Historical Archaeology  
Student Conservation Association  
The Conservation Fund  
The Corps Network  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wilderness Society  
The Wildlife Society  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Trout Unlimited  
Wildlife Management Institute  

State, local, and regional nonprofits and organizations  
Agua Fria Open Space Alliance, Inc.  
American Anthropological Association  
American Society of Landscape Architects
Audubon Alaska
Audubon Connecticut
Audubon Florida
Audubon Maryland-DC
Audubon New Mexico
Audubon New York
Audubon North Carolina
Audubon Rockies
Audubon Vermont
Avian Research and Conservation Institute of Florida
Bayou Land Conservancy
Beaver Creek Wetlands Association
Bethel Land Trust of Connecticut
Big Muddy Workshop, Inc.
Big Oaks Conservation Society (Friends of Big Oaks NWR)
Blue Mountain Land Trust
Bodega Land Trust
Broad River Watershed Association
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Chicago Wilderness
Cleveland County Audubon Society
Coastal Wildlife Rescue Society
Colorado Open Lands
Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation
Conservation Land Group
Conservation Trust for North Carolina
Conserve Southwest Utah
Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology
Cragmoor Conservancy, Inc.
Crow Canyon Archaeological Center
Deschutes Land Trust
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
Eastern Sierra Land Trust
Forest Trust
Friends of Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Back Bay
Friends of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, Inc.
Friends of Bombay Hook
Friends of Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Coastal South Carolina
Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Heinz Refuge
Friends of High Plains Refuge Complex
Friends of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, Inc.
Friends of Maga Ta Hohpi Waterfowl Production Area
Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Friends of Organ Mountains - Desert Peaks
Friends of Pendills Creek Hatchery
Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands
Friends of Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Rappahannock National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Salton Sea State Recreation Area
Friends of Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges
Friends of Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Friends of Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges and Wetlands
Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Carr Refuge
Friends of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Ironwood Forest
Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument
Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp
Friends Of the Morris Wetland Management District
The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County
The Land Conservancy of New Jersey
The Moore Charitable Foundation
The Ohio Environmental Council
The Trust for Public Land
The Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
The Vital Ground Foundation
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust, Inc.
West Central Ohio Land Conservancy
Westchester Land Trust
Western New York Land Conservancy
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
Western Reserve Land Conservancy
Western Resource Advocates
Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association
Wildlife Mississippi
Wintonbury Land Trust