

Coburn Amendment #3466- Allow LWCF funds to be used to address the federal lands deferred maintenance backlog

Coburn Amendment #3466 would allow Land and Water Conservation Fund(LWCF) funds to be used to address the \$20 billion+ deferred maintenance backlog

Congress continues to spend \$100's of millions of dollars acquiring more land despite a massive deferred maintenance backlog on the land we already own

- The federal government owns about 650 million acres of land, which equates to about 29 percent of all the land in the United States.¹
- Despite accumulating maintenance needs on our existing federal lands base, the federal government continues to purchase additional land every year, primarily through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- The LWCF uses revenues from oil and gas leasing in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) to fund land acquisition for the four federal lands agencies,² along with state assistance grants for “recreational planning, acquiring recreational lands and waters, and developing outdoor recreational facilities.”³
- Annual funding for LWCF has fluctuated between \$255 and \$529 million over the last 10 years, averaging \$380 million for land acquisition annually. The LWCF acquisitions includes purchasing land on the US Virgin Islands for more than \$1 million per acre and Montana lands for \$500,000 per acre
- **Inexplicably, the LWCF funds cannot be used to tend to the urgent maintenance needs for the existing federal land base – they can only be used to expand it.**
- Meanwhile, the deferred maintenance backlog on federal lands has grown to more than \$20 billion.⁴
- Acquiring hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of land every year not only comes with commensurate maintenance responsibilities, but it also spreads the resources to take care of these needs even further.

Coburn amendment #3466 would begin to address this problem of misplaced priorities by simply make addressing the maintenance backlog an eligible activity for LWCF funding

¹ Ross W. Gorte, “Federal Land Management Agencies: Background on Land and Resources Management,” Congressional Research Service, February 9, 2009.

² National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service

³ Carol Hardy Vincent, “Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues,” Congressional Research Service, March 5, 2013.

⁴ Email from Congressional Research Service to the office of Senator Tom Coburn, April 6, 2012.