



Media Advisory: Sportsmen's groups urge keeping land and water conservation funding in transportation bill

Tele news conference set for Thursday, May 24, at 11 a.m. EDT

Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever will partner with South Dakota farmer, ranchers and sportsmen in a telephone news conference on Thursday, May 24, to spotlight the opportunity to secure land and water conservation funding in the final transportation bill by the reauthorization deadline of June 30.

The House and Senate are currently debating two versions of a transportation bill in the hope of finding agreement on one final package. The Senate's version of the transportation bill (S. 1813) ensures that the funds authorized for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) are spent for their intended purpose in each of the next two years, and permanently commits 1.5 percent of LWCF to projects that provide public access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation. This was added to the Senate bill during floor consideration in March, passing with an overwhelming 76-22 bipartisan vote.

Securing this funding will be vital for areas like the Prairie Pothole Region, one of the country's most at-risk landscapes, but also an area well known to sportsmen for its importance for migratory waterfowl and for upland birds. LWCF has also helped provide access for hunting and fishing at hundreds of national wildlife refuges, national forests and national recreation areas, as well as state parks and wildlife management areas.

The teleconference will give reporters a chance to hear about the opportunity to secure additional funding for habitat conservation and

outdoor recreation access, and will provide an example of the areas that would benefit from funding.

Who: National conservation groups and Dakota sportsmen and landowners **What:** Telephone news conference on land and water conservation funding **When:** Thursday, May 24, 11 a.m. EDT/10 a.m. CDT/9 a.m. MDT **Where:** Dial 800-621-4410, passcode 6758331# **Additional Resources:** [Dakota Grasslands Project Fact Sheet](#) (PDF) [Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area](#) (PDF) For high-resolution images, please contact [Becky Jones Mahlum](#)



PF, Sportsmen's Groups Urge Keeping Land and Water Conservation Funding in Transportation Bill

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- May 23 -

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Rehan Nana (651) 209-4973 Rnana@pheasantsforever.org

Pheasants Forever is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of pheasants, quail and other wildlife populations in North America through habitat improvement, land management, public awareness and education. Such efforts benefit landowners and wildlife alike.



QF, Sportsmen's Groups Urge Keeping Land and Water Conservation Funding in Transportation Bill

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Sportsmen's Groups Urge Keeping Land and Water Conservation Funding in

Transportation Bill

by Pheasants Forever on May 22, 2012

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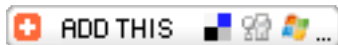
When: Thursday, May 24, 11am EDT/10am CDT/9am MDT

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THE **OUTDOOR WIRE**
The Outdoor Industry's Daily Transactions Newsletter

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF
KEEPING YOU POSTED

Wednesday, May 23, 2012



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Contact:

Becky Jones Mahlum (701) 355-3507; Jodi Stemler (703) 915-



Roundup of top hunting, fishing, and conservation issues

Posted on May 24, 2012

OK, so if you want to call this a lazy blog, be my guest. But here are a half-dozen items that have occupied my attention the past week. I figure they're worth sharing with other dear browsers (that's a hunting pun, get it?) interested in outdoors debate around the country.

ISSUE OF THE WEEK: LWCF

First, a little advocacy. The federal Land and Water Conservation Fund is under attack in the U.S. House, again. There are too many congressmen who criticize LWCF and wish to eviscerate its funding, even though every American has benefitted from the program the past (nearly) 50 years. Here's how the LWCF Coalition describes the program.

"Created by Congress in 1965, the Land and Water Conservation Fund was a bipartisan commitment to safeguard natural areas, water resources and our cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans...

"It was a simple idea: use revenues from the depletion of one natural resource – offshore oil and gas – to support the conservation of another precious resource – our land and water. Every year, \$900 million in royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf are put into this fund. The money is intended to create and protect national parks, areas around rivers and lakes, national forests, and national wildlife refuges from

development, and to provide matching grants for state and local parks and recreation projects.

“Yet, nearly every year, Congress breaks its own promise to the American people and diverts much of this funding to uses other than conserving our most important lands and waters.”

Congress, politicians not keeping promises? Ignoring a charter to fund their own projects? I can't believe that's possible. If, like me, you think that behavior sucks, then check out the [Coalition's website](#) and follow its Take Action button. The website has the most up-to-date information including factsheets, state specific information, and more details on that Take Action page.

Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited and other conservation groups are putting on a full-court press with the media for LWCF beginning today (May 24), and I'll try to keep you posted on those efforts at this blog.



Transportation Bill Land and Water Conservation Funding Provisions Important to Sportsmen

Pierre, SD — May 24, 2012 — Leaders representing sportsmen's interests, including Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, a [South Dakota](#) farmer/rancher, and the former Secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, joined today to call on Congress to maintain funding for land and water conservation programs as they debate a final transportation authorization bill. In a teleconference, the groups described the urgent need to protect precious wetlands and native prairies in the [Dakota Grasslands Conservation](#) Area as an example of why this funding is critical to fish and wildlife conservation in addition to sportsmen's access to public lands.

"Protecting the best of what's left in the [Prairie Pothole Region \(PPR\)](#) can be our greatest legacy. Tools like the [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) will help us meet the landowners' needs on the ground and leverage the significant private and state dollars invested in the region," said John Cooper, former Secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. "The conservation funding provisions in the Senate-passed transportation bill have strong bipartisan support and will have a tremendous impact here in the grasslands, as well as in the Flint Hills of [Kansas](#), the Everglades headwaters in [Florida](#), or along the Snake River in [Idaho](#). These precious areas protect important fish and wildlife [habitat](#) and provide great [hunting](#) and fishing."

A House and Senate conference committee is currently debating two versions of a transportation bill in the hope of finding agreement on one final package before the current authorization expires on June 30th. The Senate's version of the bill (S. 1813) ensures the funds authorized for the LWCF are spent for their intended purpose in each of the next two years and permanently commits 1.5 percent of LWCF funds to projects that provide public access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation. The LWCF funding provision was passed as an amendment on the Senate floor by an overwhelming 76-22 bipartisan vote. Securing this funding will be vital for areas like the Prairie Pothole Region, one of the country's most at-risk landscapes as well as an area well known to sportsmen for its importance to [migratory waterfowl](#) and for upland birds.

"The [Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area](#) project would accelerate the conservation of native prairie and wetlands within the PPR of North and South Dakota. The PPR was formed by glaciers 10,000 years ago and is one of the world's most productive breeding grounds for waterfowl and other wetland and grassland birds," said Paul Schmidt, chief conservation officer with Ducks Unlimited. "We need to act quickly to protect this severely threatened ecosystem while preserving the working landscape of ranching and livestock operations. Passing this transportation bill with dependable funding for LWCF will make a tremendous impact."

Conserving native prairie and wetlands in the region is a priority for

South Dakota farmer and rancher, Jim Faulstich. "As a rancher, I'm very concerned about the conversion of grass to crops," Faulstich said. "We need to take a holistic approach to landscape management and care for our natural resources or we will all lose in so many ways, now and for future generations. We have proven this over time in our own family operation."

Securing the funding for LWCF within the transportation bill will impact areas around the country that are important to sportsmen and women, from the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Florida and Georgia, to the John Day Headwaters in the Malheur National Forest of Oregon. Since its creation, LWCF has also helped to provide access for hunting and fishing at hundreds of national wildlife refuges, national forests and national recreation areas, as well as state parks and wildlife management areas across the country.

"The Dakota Grasslands is just one example of why we need to make sure Congress finalizes a transportation bill this year and that it retains the LWCF provisions. This program has done so much good for hunters and anglers in giving us places to go, while protecting important habitat for fish and wildlife," said Dave Nomsen, Vice President of Government Affairs with Pheasants Forever.

Media Contact:

Jodi Stemler

703-915-1386

Jodi@StemlerConsulting.com

www.lwcfcoalition.org

Briefing materials, a recording of the teleconference, and high-resolution images will be available on DropBox, please contact jodi@stemlerconsulting.com for an invitation to join the folder.

More details about the Land and Water Conservation Fund including state-specific information are available at www.lwcfcoalition.org.

Hunters, anglers and recreation users who care about the Dakota Grasslands are invited to let their social networks know that

preserving this special area depends on funds from LWCF to protect land through easements and purchase. Go to WhyWeLoveLWCF.org for details.



Release also ran on local/regional chapter webpages including Iowa PF, Colorado PF, Minnesota PF, Indiana PF, Plymouth County PF, Ida County PF, Johnson County PF, Washtenaw Chapter, (did not include clips in this file).

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Today's teleconference highlights the urgent need to protect precious wetlands and native prairies in the Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area



Photo credit Jim Ringelman, Ducks Unlimited

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TRANSPORTATION BILL LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUNDING PROVISIONS IMPORTANT TO SPORTSMEN

Posted Thu, 05/24/2012 - 1:23pm by Lyn

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Outdoor News

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by Ducks Unlimited on May 24, 2012

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Any views or opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect

those of Outdoor Hub. Comments on this article reflect the sole opinions of their writers.



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Pierre, SD: Leaders representing sportsmen's interests, including Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, a South Dakota farmer/rancher, and the former Secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, joined today to call on Congress to maintain funding for land and water conservation programs as they debate a final transportation authorization bill. In a teleconference, the groups described the urgent need to protect precious wetlands and native prairies in the Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area as an example of why this funding is critical to fish and wildlife conservation in addition to sportsmen's access to public lands. "Protecting the best of what's left in the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) can be our greatest legacy. Tools like the Land and Water Conservation Fund will help us meet the landowners' needs on the ground and leverage the significant private and state dollars invested in the region," said John Cooper, former Secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. "The conservation funding provisions in the Senate-passed transportation bill have strong bipartisan support and will have a tremendous impact here in the grasslands, as well as in the Flint Hills of Kansas, the Everglades headwaters in Florida, or along the Snake River in Idaho. These precious areas protect important fish and wildlife habitat and provide great hunting and fishing." A House and Senate conference committee is currently debating two versions of a transportation bill in the hope of finding agreement on one final package before the current authorization expires on June 30th. The Senate's version of the bill (S. 1813) ensures the funds authorized for the LWCF are spent for their intended purpose in each of the next two years and permanently commits 1.5 percent of LWCF funds to projects that provide public access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation. The LWCF funding provision was passed as an amendment on the Senate floor by an overwhelming 76-22 bipartisan vote. Securing this funding will be vital for areas like the Prairie Pothole Region, one of the country's most at-risk landscapes as well as an area well known to sportsmen for its importance to migratory waterfowl and for upland birds. "The Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area project would accelerate the conservation of native prairie and wetlands within the PPR of North and South Dakota. The PPR was formed by glaciers 10,000 years ago and is one of the world's most productive breeding grounds for waterfowl and other wetland and grassland birds," said Paul Schmidt, chief conservation officer with Ducks Unlimited. "We need to act quickly to protect this severely threatened ecosystem while preserving the working landscape of ranching and livestock operations. Passing this transportation bill with dependable funding for LWCF will make a tremendous impact." Conserving native prairie and wetlands in the region is a priority for South Dakota farmer and rancher, Jim Faulstich. "As a rancher, I'm

very concerned about the conversion of grass to crops,” Faulstich said. “We need to take a holistic approach to landscape management and care for our natural resources or we will all lose in so many ways, now and for future generations. We have proven this over time in our own family operation.” Securing the funding for LWCF within the transportation bill will impact areas around the country that are important to sportsmen and women, from the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Florida and Georgia, to the John Day Headwaters in the Malheur National Forest of Oregon. Since its creation, LWCF has also helped to provide access for hunting and fishing at hundreds of national wildlife refuges, national forests and national recreation areas, as well as state parks and wildlife management areas across the country. “The Dakota Grasslands is just one example of why we need to make sure Congress finalizes a transportation bill this year and that it retains the LWCF provisions. This program has done so much good for hunters and anglers in giving us places to go, while protecting important habitat for fish and wildlife,” said Dave Nomsen, Vice President of Government Affairs with Pheasants Forever.

More details about the Land and Water Conservation Fund including state-specific information are available at www.lwcfcoalition.org.

Hunters, anglers and recreation users who care about the Dakota Grasslands are invited to let their social networks know that preserving this special area depends on funds from LWCF to protect land through easements and purchase. Go to WhyWeLoveLWCF.org for details



KFYR-TV NEWS STORIES

Securing Land and Water Conservation Funds

Retha Colclasure | 5/24/2012



Conservation groups in North and South Dakota want to make sure federal funding comes their way by the end of June. The House and Senate are working on versions of a transportation bill that, so far, contains funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

That money would almost double the funding available for grassland and wetland conservation programs in the Dakotas.

"We actually have 900 landowners on the waiting list to participate in some of these conservation programs and we just don't have the money available to address that. Having a new source of money coming in would add an opportunity to work with those folks," said Jim Ringelman with Ducks Unlimited.

Ringelman says the money isn't coming from a tax. Instead, it's from money that's already being collected from offshore drilling fees.



Published May 27, 2012, 12:00 AM

Conservation leaders seek stable funding from offshore oil revenues

Known as LWCF, for short, the Land and Water Conservation Fund results from legislation passed in the late 1960s mandating that a portion of the revenues from offshore oil-drilling operations go into government coffers for protecting land and water resources across the country. Problem is, Congress historically has diverted the funds.

By: **Brad Dokken**, Grand Forks Herald

Conservationists and leaders from Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever are calling on Congress to ensure proceeds from an offshore oil revenue account go to the conservation initiatives it is supposed to fund.

That could happen if a House-Senate conference committee approves a provision in the transportation bill now being debated in Washington.

In a conference call Thursday, leaders from the two conservation groups, along with a retired South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks director and others, talked about the importance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Known as LWCF, for short, the fund results from legislation passed in the late 1960s mandating that a portion of the revenues from offshore oil-drilling operations go into government coffers for protecting land and water resources across the country.

Problem is, Congress historically has diverted the funds.

As part of the 1960s legislation, the conservation fund is supposed to receive \$900 million annually from offshore oil revenues. But as conference call participants explained Thursday, the fund rarely receives more than \$350 million and in some years, as little as \$125

million.

According to John Cooper, former secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, the remainder of the money ends up in the general treasury with little accountability for how it is spent.

“They’re not taxpayer dollars,” Cooper said. “These are funds specifically set aside by Congress to be used for natural resources conservation and protection.”

The Senate version of the transportation bill now being debated in conference committee would ensure that happens by authorizing the fund receives \$700 million annually for the next two years. The Senate’s transportation bill also would permanently commit 1.5 percent of the fund for projects to improve access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation.

Time is of the essence because the current authorization is set to expire June 30.

“What we’re trying to do today is make sure Congress understands the importance of this provision the Senate put into the transportation bill,” Cooper said.

Preserving prairie

Paul Schmidt, conservation director for Ducks Unlimited, said the fund is especially important to the Prairie Pothole Region of the Dakotas and neighboring states because it would benefit the Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area project. The Prairie Pothole Region is widely known as “North America’s duck factory.”

The Dakota Grasslands project, administered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, aims to conserve 240,000 acres of wetlands and 1.7 million acres of grasslands in the Dakotas through voluntary easements from willing landowners. The easements would prevent wetland drainage and working up the prairie, but landowners would retain all other use and access rights.

Schmidt said more than 70 percent of the native prairie in the

Dakotas has been plowed or converted to cropland and continues to be lost at about 130,000 acres annually.

“If those rates increase as expected, one-half of the remaining native prairie will be lost in the next 34 years,” Schmidt said. “In absence of action, the skies will no longer be filled with the waterfowl and other birds we cherish.”

Dave Nomsen, vice president of government affairs for Pheasants Forever, said a fully funded Land and Water Conservation Fund would be a good first step in reversing the decline in prairie and wetland habitats.

“It’s incredibly important we attack this problem right now,” Nomsen said, and “help the landowners do good things for soil, wildlife and conservation.”

Dokken reports on outdoors. Reach him at (701) 780-1148; (800) 477-6572, ext. 148; or send email to bdokken@gfherald.com.

This article also ran in The Jamestown Sun, The Dickinson Press, Refinery News and a link to Jamestown story in FindLaw Legal Pulse.



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<http://www.outdoornews.com/Minnesota/>

Groups seek hike in Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars

BY TIM SPIELMAN ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Posted on May 31, 2012



Washington — Each year, Congress sets aside money

derived from royalties paid by companies that drill for off-shore oil and gas, for conservation and public recreation purposes. And each year, conservation groups and others wonder where it all went.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund, established in the 1960s, is the destination for \$900 million each year. Usually, however, the vast majority of that funding is diverted elsewhere, according to the Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition.

This time around, conservation groups are more optimistic, as a Senate bill would assure \$700 million each of the next two years would be spent for the intended purposes, with a portion likely used to protect Dakota prairie wetlands and grasslands in permanent easements, a need considered dire by groups like Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited.

Members of those groups talked last Thursday about the need to protect the Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area, which includes the heralded Prairie Pothole Region.

“The Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area project would accelerate the conservation of native prairie and wetlands within the PPR of North and South Dakota,” said Paul Schmidt, chief conservation officer with DU. “We need to act quickly to protect this severely threatened ecosystem while preserving the working landscape of ranching and livestock operations.”

The loss of wetlands and grasslands in the eastern Dakotas where some of the Midwest’s favorite game birds are produced hasn’t shown signs of slowing, and for a number of good reasons, according to John Cooper, former secretary of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department. Commodity prices remain high, advancements in crop

technology make plants more hearty, and federal farm policy takes much of the risk away from agricultural producers.

“In my 40 years of experience, I don’t know if we’ve been at a more critical time in wetlands and grasslands conservation in the Prairie Pothole Region,” Cooper said during a conference call.

The LWCF has a broad range of uses, everything from creating state parks and trails to preserving wildlife habitat to protecting historical sites. Partnerships are formed, and groups and agencies match each fund dollar with one of their own. Dave Nomsen, government affairs vice president with Pheasants Forever, said permanent easements in the prairie region of the Dakotas are just one of the many options.

According to a press statement from the LWCF Coalition, “The House and Senate are currently in negotiations to iron out the differences between two versions of a Transportation bill in the hope of finding agreement on a final bill before June 30.

“The Senate’s version of the bill ensures that funds authorized for the Land and Water Conservation Fund are used for their intended purposes in each of the next two years and permanently commits 1.5 percent of

LWCF to ‘making public lands public’ projects that provide public access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation.”

The coalition also points out the following:

- LWCF is already paid for, in that each year \$900 million is deposited into the LWCF from the billions of dollars the

- Treasury Department collects from off-shore drilling and other federal energy revenue sources.
- The Senate language expressly states that any land bought with LWCF dollars will be from willing sellers.
 - Senate language would make more land available to the public.

ABOUT THE DAKOTA GRASSLANDS PROJECT

An ambitious project involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, private landowners, state game and fish agencies, and conservation organizations, the Dakota Grassland Conservation Area project seeks to conserve 240,000 acres of wetlands and 1.7 million acres of grasslands, primarily through easements purchased from landowners.

Such easements would protect the native prairies and wetlands from drainage and conversion to agriculture, but land owners would retain access and usage rights.

Schmidt said the easements are a popular option for landowners in the Dakotas – if the funds are available.

Currently, he said, there's a backlog of 900 landowners seeking wetland or grassland easements, which includes a total of about 400,000 acres. In North Dakota and South Dakota today, more than 5,000 landowners have sold perpetual easements to the USFWS, including nearly 1 million acres.

The DGCA, officials say, is an extension of President Obama's "America's Great Outdoors" initiative.

MORE ABOUT LWCF

A bump to \$700 million for the next couple years would be considered significant, given past levels far below that amount.

In fact, according to the LWCF Coalition, “In 2011, the Department of the Interior collected approximately \$6.5 billion from offshore energy production, but only \$301 million went toward LWCF and the programs LWCF funds.”

However, the coalition says, “Despite chronic underfunding, LWCF has had positive conservation and recreation impacts throughout our country. Over its 46-year history, LWCF has protected land in every state and supported over 41,000 state and local park projects.”

IN MINNESOTA

According to the Minnesota DNR, the state has received almost \$70 million through the LWCF since 1965. These days, half of that money is used to supplement state funding for three grant programs available to local units of government; the other half is allocated to state agencies for statewide facilities, including state parks, historical interpretive sites, state trails, wildlife management areas, and water access sites.

Each federal dollar must be matched by an LGU or state dollar.

“In general, LWCF money spent by the state has to be (used for) part of the state outdoor recreation program,” according to Audrey Mularie, a DNR grant manager.

The LWCF Coalition says another \$100 million has been spent by federal agencies on national parks, forests, and refuges in the state.

For federal fiscal year 2011, the state of Minnesota received about \$650,000 for use by state agencies and local units of government, which typically use the funds to acquire and

develop parks, playgrounds, and other outdoor recreational facilities.

StarTribune |

Dennis Anderson: Dakota Grasslands hang in balance

Article by: [DENNIS ANDERSON](#) , Star Tribune Updated: June 8, 2012 - 7:04 AM

A lot in the Dakotas rides on, of all things, a transportation bill President Obama must sign by the end of the month.



You needn't pay very close attention nowadays to share the notion that, rather than pressing ahead determinedly toward some good end, following a plan, we, as a people, lurch instead from crisis to crisis, unsure exactly where we're headed, and less so where we'll end up.

This is particularly true in matters of the environment, not least the transformation, ongoing, to marginal croplands of the nation's last

best grasslands and the Dakota ecosystems they support, the alterations enriching a relative few at great public expense, and cost.

An attempt now to still that process and preserve some of these irreplaceable lands, and with them critical components of the nation's natural heritage, is caught up in a congressional conference committee whose main charge -- go figure -- is deciding how much will be spent on roads and bridges.

At issue are two versions of a federal transportation bill, one passed by the House, the other by the Senate, the latter better by half, measured by what good it could do not only for yellow warblers, least flycatchers, eastern phoebes, ducks, pheasants and other prairie wildlife, but also for the health and long-term stability of the Dakotas - - held together as they traditionally have been by vast expanses of big bluestem, Indian grass, western wheatgrass and sideoats grama, among other grasses and grass-like plants.

Some background:

The Land and Water Conservations Fund (LWCF) was created by Congress in 1965. Its intention was to employ a portion of revenues gained from the sale of offshore oil and gas leases to pay for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation nationwide, including state, local and national parks and trails.

Revenues diverted to the LWCF for these projects were supposed to total \$900 million annually. But that has rarely happened. Instead, Congress has leached most of the cash each year for other purposes. Since 1965, some \$17 billion has gone missing.

Now a conversion of interests hopes the Senate's transportation bill triumphs over the House's in key ways as the conference committee assigned to resolve differences between the two races to finish its work. A final bill must pass both chambers and be signed by President Obama by the end of the month, when authorization under the current transportation law runs out.

Unmentioned in the House bill is the LWCF. But the Senate funds it at \$700 million in each of the next two years, with the money destined for conservation projects nationwide. Among them, the Obama

administration has assured, will be the Dakota Grasslands Project, whose goal is to preserve, primarily through conservation easements gained from willing landowners (of whom there are hundreds waiting), 240,000 acres of wetlands and 1.7 million acres of grasslands.

Everyone in the conservation community supports the plan, chief among them Ducks Unlimited, which has committed \$50 million over the next 10 years to the grasslands project, provided reasonable allocations from the LWCF are made. Also lining up to help, cash in hand, are The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever and other groups.

But much bigger forces -- the massive construction-industry lobby and election year politics, to name two -- are in play as a final bill is shaped that could spend more than \$50 billion a year.

Including the LWCF portion in any final measure should be a no-brainer. The money is already paid into the fund by oil and gas leases, and the needs are many, not least reclamation of the Gulf Coast after the BP spill, which also is included, via a separate component, in the Senate bill.

It's possible something good might happen soon. Or not: House negotiators might dig in their heels on these and other conservation and environment portions of the two bills, and no bill will be agreed upon, with the current law extended instead.

Should that occur, bigger crises surely await, the even more costly future reclamation of these lost Dakota prairies among them.

Dennis Anderson • danderson@startribune.com



<http://www.ducks.org/news-media/gulf-coast-sportsmens-groups-to-discuss-conservation-in-transportation-bill>

Media Advisory: Gulf Coast Sportsmen's groups to discuss conservation in Transportation Bill

Press teleconference scheduled for Wednesday, June 6, at 10 a.m. CDT

Gulf Coast Sportsmen's groups will discuss land and water conservation and gulf restoration in the Transportation Bill during a press teleconference scheduled for Wednesday, June 6, 2012, at 10 a.m. (CDT).

WHO: Jim Martin, conservation director, Berkley Conservation Institute Paul Schmidt, chief conservation officer, Ducks Unlimited Chris Macaluso, coastal outreach coordinator, Louisiana Wildlife Federation

WHAT: Telephone news conference on land and water conservation funding The U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate are currently reconciling two versions of a transportation bill as they work to reach agreement on a final package by the June 30 reauthorization deadline. The Senate's version of the Transportation Bill (S. 1813) includes a provision focused on land conservation and Gulf Coast restoration funding added during floor consideration in March by an overwhelming 76-22 bipartisan vote. The provision ensures that the funds authorized for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) are spent for their intended purpose in each of the next two years and permanently commits 1.5 percent of LWCF to projects that provide public access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation. S. 1813 also includes the RESTORE Act, which directs 80 percent of penalties from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill towards Gulf Coast and Mississippi River Delta restoration.

These two initiatives will work hand in hand to conserve the Gulf Coast region's precious fish and wildlife habitat and maintain its legacy as a "sportsman's paradise." This teleconference will give reporters a chance to hear about the opportunity to secure funding for habitat conservation and outdoor recreation access and will provide examples of the areas that would benefit from funding.

WHEN: Wednesday, June 6, 2012 11 a.m. EDT/10 a.m. CDT/9 a.m. MDT

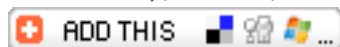
WHERE: Dial 1-800-404-8174

CONTACT: Jodi Stemler (703) 915-1386



<http://www.theoutdoorwire.com/story/1338972721m97p02606xp>

Wednesday, June 6, 2012



Gulf Coast Sportsmen's Groups to Discuss Land and Water Conservation in Transportation Bill

Who: Jim Martin, Conservation Director, Berkley Conservation Institute

Paul Schmidt, Chief Conservation Officer, Ducks Unlimited

Chris Macaluso, Coastal Outreach Coordinator, Louisiana Wildlife Federation

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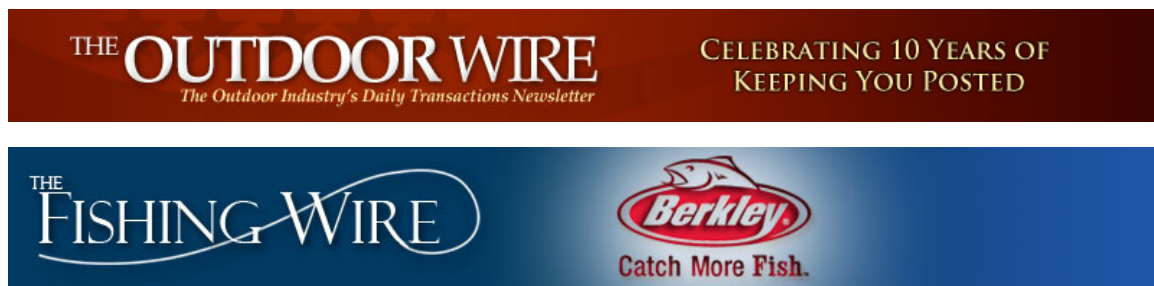
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Where: Dial 1-800-404-8174

Contact: Jodi Stemler (703) 915-1386



The same feature ran in both The Outdoor Wire and The Fishing Wire – daily combined distribution of tens of thousands in the outdoor, fishing and hunting industries. Jim's feature is one everybody reads even if they just scroll through the list of releases.

FEATURE

LWCF, Restore and The Transportation Bill

Over the next thirty days, Congress will be pulling together the House and Senate versions of the Transportation Bill. It's not just

a bill to keep the nation moving, it's a bill that actually has a lot to do with whether or not we have public places to hunt, fish and enjoy the outdoors.

It's also key in determining the future of the vital lands and waters of the Gulf of Mexico region. That's because the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), first created in the 1960s takes a portion of the money derived from oil development and turns it to preserving wild lands. None of which comes from individual taxpayers. It's money realized from development of the oil and gas resources of the nation.

Nearly \$900 million dollars annually has historically been earmarked for LWCF. Washington being Washington, however, much of that money has been diverted to other uses.

According to outdoor conservation leaders with Ducks Unlimited, the Berkley Conservation Institute and the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, that diversion has taken up to twenty billion dollars away from the goal of improving wildlife areas.



More than fifteen million wintering waterfowl call the Gulf Coast region home (above), but the coastal marshes and areas like Wax Lake (below) are equally essential for the survival of the entire region. Photos courtesy of Ducks Unlimited (top) and Vanishing Paradise (below).



Today, they say, the permanent allocation of the majority of those LWCF funds is essential to preserve the Gulf Coast region

and its booming fisheries, abundant wildlife and essential marshlands and coastal barriers.

The Senate version (S. 1813) of the Transportation bill also earmarks 1.5 percent of the LWCF to permanently be used to provide public access and preservation of hunting and fishing lands. S. 1813 also includes the RESTORE Act, a measure mandating the dedication of 80 percent of Clean Water Act penalties from the 2012 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill be directed to funding Gulf Coast and Mississippi River Delta restoration.

In a conference call yesterday, representatives from Ducks Unlimited, the Berkley Conservation Institute and the Louisiana Wildlife Federation briefed reporters on the importance of getting the Transportation approved- with those dedicated fundings in S.1813 intact.

"The Gulf Coast region, in particular the wetlands, barrier islands and bayous around the mouth of the Mississippi River in Louisiana, is a true sportsmen's paradise," said Jim Martin, conservation director for the Berkley Conservation Institute. "But few realize that many of the best public hunting and fishing opportunities in the great national wildlife refuges in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida were protected by funds generated from the offshore oil and gas development in the Gulf through the LWCF."

Paul Schmidt, chief conservation officer for Ducks Unlimited, says the RESTORE and LWCF funds, used in tandem, can protect and promote the Gulf of Mexico region. With the funds, Schmidt says, "Congress could finally make the commitment to conservation that this region's waterfowl, wildlife, hunters and anglers deserve."

But they're not political idealists. They know bipartisanship isn't common in Washington.

But they contend the overwhelmingly bipartisan support for LWCF and RESTORE in the Senate (76-22) prove that conservation may contribute to gradually reducing the toxic

political atmosphere in Washington and simultaneously protecting lands essential to the survival of our wildlife and our wild lands.

"If the Transportation bill passes with the LWCF and RESTORE provisions," says Berkley's Martin, "it's a great victory for sportsmen. If it doesn't....."

Having seen the damage caused by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill firsthand, it doesn't take much imagination for me to visualize the result of not protecting the region.

It's not just the twenty three billion dollar per year in revenues to the five-state region, it's the potential loss of habitat for the more than 15 million ducks and geese that winter in the region and the loss of fisheries that are among the world's finest - fresh and saltwater. Today, the Gulf of Mexico seems to be fine, but 2010 taught us that it takes monitoring of our existing resources and restoration of threatened land to keep things that way.

"Passing the RESTORE Act and including funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund will ensure that conservation and restoration extend from the coastline and inland to the areas less impacted by the oil spill but still precious to sportsmen," says Chris Macaluso, coastal outreach coordinator with the Louisiana Wildlife Federation. "Fishing's never been better in my lifetime, but the habitat must be protected."

The current authorization of the Transportation Bill expires June 30. Once again, it seems it will take the collective voices of outdoorsmen to prompt Congress to do the right thing. As the Berkley Conservation Institute's Jim Martin pointed out at the end of the conference call, "we may only have one big shot to make this bill the law of the land."

As always, we'll keep you posted.



The release ran in both The Outdoor Wire and The Fishing Wire.

Thursday, June 7, 2012

Conservation Leaders Urge Land and Water Conservation and RESTORE Act Passage

BATON ROUGE, La. - June 6, 2012 - Key sportsmen's groups in the Gulf Coast region called on Congress today to maintain provisions for funding land conservation and Gulf Coast restoration in their negotiations on a final transportation authorization bill. In a teleconference, representatives of the Berkley Conservation Institute (PureFishing), Ducks Unlimited and the Louisiana Wildlife Federation outlined the critical importance of ensuring that the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the RESTORE Act provision included in the Senate's version of the bill are retained during conference negotiations.

"The Gulf Coast region, in particular the wetlands, barrier islands and bayous around the mouth of the Mississippi River in Louisiana, is a true sportsmen's paradise," said Jim Martin, conservation director for the Berkley Conservation Institute. "But what few realize is that many of the best public hunting and fishing opportunities in the great national wildlife refuges in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida were protected by funds generated from the offshore oil and gas development in the Gulf through the LWCF."

"The Gulf Coast ecosystem has been greatly impacted by oil and gas development that has been used by the entire nation for decades," commented Paul Schmidt, chief conservation officer for Ducks Unlimited. "The LWCF is the logical compensation for those impacts and, working in tandem with the RESTORE Act, we might have the means to significantly advance protection and

restoration of the Gulf region's unique and precious habitats. Within the transportation negotiations, Congress could finally make the commitment to conservation that this region's waterfowl, wildlife, hunters and anglers deserve."

A House and Senate conference committee is currently debating two versions of a transportation bill in the hope of finding agreement on one final package before the current authorization expires on June 30. The Senate's version of the bill (S. 1813) ensures the funds authorized for LWCF are spent for their intended purpose in each of the next two years and permanently commits 1.5 percent of LWCF funds to projects that provide public access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation. S. 1813 also includes the RESTORE Act that directs 80 percent of Clean Water Act penalties from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill toward Gulf Coast and Mississippi River Delta restoration. The LWCF/RESTORE provision was passed as an amendment on the Senate floor by an overwhelming 76-22 bipartisan vote.

"What is important to note is that passing the RESTORE Act and including funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund will ensure that conservation and restoration extend from the coastline and inland to the areas less impacted by the oil spill but still precious to sportsmen," noted Chris Macaluso, coastal outreach coordinator with the Louisiana Wildlife Federation.

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Briefing materials, a recording of the teleconference hosted today and high-resolution images will be available on Dropbox. Please contactjodi@stemlerconsulting.com for an invitation to access the folder.

More details about the Land and Water Conservation Fund, including state-specific information, are available at www.lwcfcoalition.org.

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Contact:

Andi Cooper
(601) 956-1936
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Sportsmen Urge Passage of Transportation Bill with Land and Water Conservation Fund and RESTORE Act

by Ducks Unlimited on June 6, 2012



Key sportsmen's groups in the [Gulf Coast region](#) called on Congress today to maintain provisions for funding land conservation and Gulf Coast restoration in their negotiations on a final transportation authorization bill. In a teleconference, representatives of the Berkley Conservation Institute (PureFishing), Ducks Unlimited and the Louisiana Wildlife Federation outlined the critical importance of ensuring that the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the [RESTORE Act](#) provision included in the Senate's version of the bill are retained during conference negotiations.

"The Gulf Coast region, in particular the wetlands, barrier islands and bayous around the mouth of the Mississippi River in Louisiana, is a true sportsmen's paradise," said Jim Martin, conservation director for the Berkley Conservation Institute. "But what few realize is that many of the best public hunting and fishing opportunities in the great national wildlife refuges in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida were protected by funds generated from the offshore oil and gas development in the Gulf through the LWCF."

"The Gulf Coast ecosystem has been greatly impacted by oil and gas development that has been used by the entire nation for decades," commented Paul Schmidt, chief conservation officer for Ducks Unlimited. "The LWCF is the logical compensation for those impacts and, working in tandem with the [RESTORE Act](#), we might have the means to significantly advance protection and restoration of the Gulf region's unique and precious habitats. Within the transportation negotiations, Congress could finally make the commitment to conservation that this region's waterfowl, wildlife, hunters and anglers deserve."

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Gulf Coast sportsmen urge passage of transport bill with LWCF and RESTORE funding Gulf Coast sportsmen urge passage of transportation

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