



## EDITORIAL: House Panel Plunders Funds From National Parks

By Olympian Editorial Board  
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Teddy Roosevelt, a Republican and the nation's 26th president, would be ashamed of his party's actions this week to eliminate 100 percent of the Land and Water Conservation Fund's (LWCF) federal appropriation. Roosevelt not only created five new national parks during his two terms in office, he also enacted the Antiquities Act, enabling presidents to establish national monuments and authorizing to date about a quarter of the nearly 400 areas in the national park system.

On Tuesday, House Republicans thumbed their nose at Roosevelt and every other American who likes to hunt, fish, hike, paddle or just stand in awe of our spectacular public lands.

A House Appropriations Subcommittee, on which 3rd District Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler serves, diverted the entire \$900 million designated for the LWCF, leaving nothing for the nation's premier outdoors protection program.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund, created in 1965, was a simple and elegant idea: when oil and gas are extracted from American land, it belongs to all citizens, so a small portion of those revenues should be reinvested in something of lasting value to everyone — open space.

As we deplete one natural resource, we replenish another without using a single taxpayer dollar.

The LWCF collects roughly \$900 million annually from the offshore oil and gas drilling royalties and those funds have not only added five million acres to national parks, wildlife refuges and national forests, but has also provided essential public recreation and conservation grants to communities across the country.

Unfortunately, Congress has raided this fund every year, diverting the money into deficit reduction, leaving only a small portion for parks and land conservation. In 2007, the LWCF received only \$155 million.

Next year, if the House Republicans have their way, it will get nothing. Zero.

Rep. Denny Heck D-Olympia, opposes the cut. “Eliminating the Land and Water Conservation Fund will cost us jobs in outdoor recreation and tourism. It’ll also make it harder to access and enjoy the natural beauty of our state. This is a bad, partisan idea which the full U.S. House should reject,” he said.

Joanna Grist, executive director of the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition, said, “LWCF has been one of the most important and effective conservation tools for Washington state and cutting all spending for it would be a real disservice to a public, which has time and time again voiced its support for federal, state and local land conservation.”

Many South Sound projects would terminate without matching grants from the LWCF to cities and counties.

Nearly 50 years ago, federal lawmakers thought they created a fail-safe source of funding to maintain and enhance access to public lands for outdoor recreational activities, something this Congress apparently does not value.

It’s important to note that this drastically reduced funding level is a direct result of sequestration. It’s a preview of what sequestration looks like if it isn’t replaced. These cuts could continue for years.

Fortunately, the House bill might not get far. The Senate’s 2014 budget, authored by Budget chairwoman Patty Murray, includes full funding of \$900 million for the LWCF. President Barack Obama’s budget went further to propose a slight increase.

Our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will thank us for protecting working forests and farms, expanding outdoor recreation opportunities and conserving access to public lands. Such a legacy for future generations is a bargain for a tiny piece of oil and gas drilling royalties.