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Subject: Fiscal Year 2022 Land and Water Conservation Fund Project Nominations

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs, and WO Staff Directors

REPLY DUE OCTOBER 9, 2020

I am requesting project nominations for fiscal year (FY) 2022 Land and Water Conservation Fund land acquisition projects. Land acquisition provides a vital opportunity for the Forest Service to protect important lands to support wise stewardship of National Forests and Grasslands and help create more vibrant local economies for our customers. Congress recognized the importance of this program by permanently authorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund in 2019 in Public Law 116-9.

The Great American Outdoors Act (Act), which would significantly increase the funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, is currently under consideration by Congress. Because the Act is under consideration in Congress, there is no limit to the number of projects any region can submit in FY 2022. If the Act passes, this guidance may need to be revised.

Land acquisition should be viewed as part of the larger strategy to create a resilient and productive system of forests and grasslands that provide economic and environmental stability to communities across America. Land acquisition is a key strategic tool for furthering Agency and Administration initiatives particularly for recreation and public access, rural prosperity and economic development, and restoration and watershed protection. Central to Agency success and that of Land and Water Conservation Fund is our work with partners and our neighbors. More than ever, the support of landowners, local elected officials, stakeholders, and citizens is vital to ensure the success of any proposed land acquisition.

All information regarding the FY 2022 prioritization process is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/LWCF/>.

Please see the [Pinyon folder \(https://usfs.box.com/s/eu3tcz1p2jcex14odty1na2atnr9ndec\)](https://usfs.box.com/s/eu3tcz1p2jcex14odty1na2atnr9ndec) for the Land and Water Conservation Fund Criteria and Guidance document, the Land Acquisition Proposal Template, and a version of the proposal template with instructions. Project submissions must include maps which meet the legislative mapping requirements outlined in interim directive 1510-2011-1. Updated project lists and support letters from members of Congress, local officials, partners and stakeholders are strongly encouraged for the national competition. One page of photos is optional. Regions will be invited to upload completed proposals to a Pinyon folder to be shared later.

For each criterion that requires a written narrative, information should include how the tract(s) proposed for acquisition supports the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Strategic Goal of



Ensuring Productive and Sustainable Use of our National Forest Lands and the scoring criteria laid out in the referenced guidance document. Of importance for the FY 2022 nomination process is demonstrating that land acquisitions are supported by local, state and Congressional elected officials, contribute to local economies, increase recreation access, contribute to effective and efficient stewardship of national forests, and help deliver excellent customer service.

The FY 2022 Land and Water Conservation Fund evaluation process is a two-stage process which is competitive and merit-based. Using the Land and Water Conservation Fund Criteria and Guidance, regions first evaluate projects and then send projects in ranked order to the Washington Office (WO) for review by a national panel. The national panel which is comprised of an interdisciplinary team with expertise in the criteria will review each Region's nominated projects using the National Scoring Criteria to create a prioritized project list. This project list is reviewed by Agency leadership and forwarded to the Office of Management and Budget through the USDA.

In addition, there are new criteria for evaluating projects established by the 2019 Dingell Act that will be part of the ranking process this year. These include the urgency of the project, the geographic location of the project, and how the project would contribute to the integrity of the landscape. These are included in the enclosed revised Criteria and the Fact Sheet template.

Consult with the WO about the need to submit or resubmit tracts or projects from previous years given the status of the proposed FY 2021 land acquisition budget.

As you develop your nominations, consider the following Agency objectives and policy concerning landownership adjustment. For guidelines refer to Forest Service Manual 5402, 5403, 5420.2, 5420.3 and 5421.34, including:

1. Give priority to acquisitions that would consolidate National Forest System lands within existing National Forest boundaries (Forest Service Manual 5403.1, Policy 1 and 11), providing there is no indication of opposition to the acquisition of the property;
2. Nominate properties as free of encumbrances as possible. Avoid acquisitions subject to special conditions or covenants that limit the rights of the United States to manage the lands for National Forest purposes (Forest Service Manual 5403.1, Policy 22);
3. Acquisitions should meet goals and objectives of Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Service Manual 5403.1, Policy 11); and
4. Nominations with outstanding mineral estates must be identified in the fact sheet.

FY 2022 Land and Water Conservation Fund land acquisition project nominations are due to the WO by October 9, 2020. Please carefully review each project nomination to ensure the accuracy of the data in the submission. Your care in submitting accurate and thorough project nomination information ensures the Forest Service land acquisition program's continued credibility with Congress and our many stakeholders. For additional information, please contact Barbara A. Johnson, National Land Acquisition Program Manager, at (202) 380-7

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cc: Regional Directors of Lands; Greg C. Smith; Gregory D. Smith; Barbara A. Johnson