Land and Water Conservation Fund

Giving Back to You and Your Community

South Dakota, Prairie Pothole Region. Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Preserving the Ranching Way of Life

Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area, North and South Dakotas

The Prairie Pothole Region is an area of tallgrass and midgrass prairie in the north-central tier of the United States containing thousands of shallow, seasonal wetlands known as potholes. These potholes, which serve as a water source for livestock and provide important habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife during spring snowmelt, are under constant threat from conversion to crop production. A successful conservation easement program in the Prairie Pothole region, supported by the Land and Water Conservation Fund, is helping preserve the ranching tradition, support the rural economy and protect important habitat for wildlife in an area known as "America's duck factory."

The Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area project was created to conserve the native prairie and wetlands within portions of the Prairie Pothole region of North and South Dakota. Partners in the Dakota Grasslands project include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), private landowners, state fish and game agencies and conservation organizations. To date, more than 5,000 landowners have partnered with FWS to place land under perpetual easements, which preclude land conversion and the draining of potholes but permit the landowner to retain all other rights of use and access. This easement program is putting Land and Water Conservation Fund resources to work to protect important wildlife habitat while supporting the continued operation of the region's traditional livestock and ranching enterprises.

Private landowners are important stewards of our nation's lands and waters. Farmers, ranchers and foresters often partner with government agencies through voluntary conservation agreements to help preserve water quality, wildlife habitat and recreational access on their lands. Interest in partnering with agencies through the Land and Water Conservation Fund far outstrips available funding. Landowner interest in the LWCF-funded Forest Legacy Program illustrates the scale of the gap: Over the past five years, states have requested about $200 million per year to support easements on private working lands, but annual appropriations have averaged less than $57 million to support the program.[4]

880,000 JOBS are created through recreation activities on your federal lands[1]

For every **$1** spent on the LWCF, communities receive **$4** in **ECONOMIC BENEFIT**[2]

The LWCF has invested in community projects for **EVERY COUNTY** in the United States[3]

The LWCF uses **ZERO TAXPAYER DOLLARS**

ABOUT Land and Water Conservation Fund

Using zero taxpayer dollars, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) uses earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing to help preserve our history and protect our lands. The LWCF is a balanced approach between using and preserving our natural resources, while giving back to American communities.

Working Forests Build Local Economies

The Paul C. Jones Working Forest, Massachusetts

W.D. Cowls Inc., distributed tree seedlings at Amherst Sustainability Festival.
Photo: Courtesy of Larry Kelley

In partnership with Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, the Kestrel Land Trust and the Franklin Land Trust, the Forest Legacy Program provided $5 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund toward the acquisition of a conservation easement in the 3,486-acre Brushy Mountain project in Franklin County, Massachusetts. The conservation easement, covering the 5.4 square-mile converted forest, was acquired from W.D. Cowls, Inc., a family-owned timberland business since 1741. Although the conservation easement prohibits residential and commercial development, W.D. Cowls, Inc., will continue to own the land and manage its timber operations, keeping jobs in the woods.

The benefits from Massachusetts' largest single-owner conservation easement are varied and wide-reaching. Protecting the working forest from development preserves a large, critical block of contiguous forest that will continue to provide jobs in sustainable forestry, protect habitat for a variety of wildlife, maintain valuable biodiversity, and guarantee public access for hunting, fishing and hiking.

Conservation of this forest and its nearby wetlands will protect drinking water and air quality for the local schools, town centers and state recreation areas. Paul Jones Working Forest offers several recreational opportunities and spectacular scenery for the densely populated Pioneer Valley region of Massachusetts and the more than 600,000 people who live within 30 miles of the Working Forest.

About the Forest Legacy Program

Since 1990, the Forest Legacy Program, a program of the U.S. Forest Service funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, has provided financial incentives to landowners to protect important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to development and other non-forest uses. The Forest Legacy Program partners with states, local governments, forest landowners and other partners to maintain working forests that conserve important commodity as well as non-commodity forest resources and protect scenic, cultural, wildlife and recreational resources, riparian areas, and other ecological values. The Forest Legacy Program encourages and supports acquisitions of conservation easements on a voluntary basis from interested landowners.

[1] Federal Interagency Council on Recreation, Fact Sheet on Outdoor Recreation: Jobs and Income, 2014.

[2] The Trust for Public Land, Return on the Investment from the Land & Water Conservation Fund, 2010.

[3] LWCF NPS Grant Program, http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/lwcf/history.html, retrieved 2014.

[4] Our Land, Our Water, Our Heritage: America Depends on the Land and Water Conservation Fund, http://www.lwcfcoalition.org/files/FLP_Factsheet.pdf, retrieved 2014.

Inspecting seedling planting, Plumas National Forest, CA.
Photo: U.S. Forest Service