May 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader, United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker, United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader, United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing local leaders, parks and conservation groups, and millions of supporters across the country, we write to urge you to include a one-time, historic investment for our local parks in any future economic stimulus or infrastructure package as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Parks and greenspace have always played an essential role in our communities, providing economic value, emotional and physical health benefits, and bringing people together. During the coronavirus pandemic, nature has taken on a whole new meaning for many of us, becoming the one place we go for exercise, fresh air, and respite from anxiety, and grief. But not everyone has equal access to the outdoors: in some communities parks may be too few and far between or too dangerous and rundown, and open space restricted by locked gates and “No Trespassing” signs. This crisis is demonstrating yet again that in too many communities, parks and accessible open space are still considered a privilege, when they should be a right.

A historic, one-time investment in local parks would stimulate job creation and economic activity, expand park access for the one-in-three Americans who do not have a close-to-home park, and provide the health and social benefits to underserved communities feeling the impacts of this crisis most acutely.

Parks are drivers of local economies: in 2017 alone, local parks and recreation agencies generated $166 billion in economic activity and supported more than 1.1 million jobs nationwide. A 2018 report showed that parks and recreation spending on operations creates 23 jobs for every million dollars spent and 16 jobs for every million dollars spent on capital improvements.

Congress can act swiftly to address this urgent need for jobs and parks by investing in the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) or Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR)


1 The Trust for Public Lands, “Parks on the clock: why we believe in the 10 minute-walk”  

2 George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis and NRPA, "The Economic Impact of Parks"  

3 George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis and NRPA, "The Economic Impact of Local Parks"  
programs which prioritize shovel-ready park development and acquisition projects that expand outdoor recreation opportunities in urban communities lacking sufficient close-to-home parks, engage public-private partnerships, and create jobs and help stimulate local economic development. This historic, one-time investment would complement the Great American Outdoors Act we support to fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Congress has consistently supported locally-driven parks and recreation programs through the annual appropriations process. Over the short existence of ORLP, projects in forty eight towns and cities in 29 different states have expanded close-to-home outdoor recreation access. Projects include improving accessibility of playgrounds, creating parks on former brownfield sites and industrial lands, and developing dual-use spaces for recreation and green infrastructure storm water management that builds resilient communities.

We thank you for bipartisan Congressional leadership in passing the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and most recently the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. These measures are providing critical funding to meet the immediate needs of communities bearing the brunt of this pandemic. As Congress prepares a package that will stimulate the economy, create jobs, and provide communities with the support they need we appreciate your inclusion of increased funding for local parks.

Sincerely,

National Supporters
America Walks
American Hiking Society
American Planning Association
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Society of Landscape Architects
American Trails
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood
City Parks Alliance
City Parks Foundation
Clean Water Action
Collaboration of Regional Trail Initiatives
Green Schoolyards America
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Hispanic Access Foundation
Latino Outdoors
League of Conservation Voters
National League of Cities
National Parks Conservation Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Outdoor Afro
Outdoor Alliance
Outdoor Industry Association
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
REI Co-op
Sierra Club
The Trust for Public Land
The Wilderness Society
US Conference of Mayors
Vet Voice Foundation
Wilderness Inquiry
Winter Wildlands Alliance
World Urban Parks

Regional and Local Supporters
Active San Gabriel Valley
Akron Parks Collaborative
Alliance for Infrastructure Reuse and Redevelopment (AIRR)
Anchorage Park Foundation
Appalachian Mountain Club Auburn Area
Recreation & Park District
Austin Parks Foundation
Avonworth Community Park
Big City Mountaineers
Brightline Defense
Broadway Mall Association
Bronx River Alliance
Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy
Buffalo Olmstead Parks Conservancy
Butler County, PA
California Geographic Alliance
Cc:
Sen. Shelby, Chair of Committee on Appropriations
Sen. Leahy, Ranking Member of Committee on Appropriations
Rep. Lowey, Chairwoman of Committee on Appropriations
Rep. Granger, Ranking Member of Committee on Appropriations
Sen. Murkowski, Chair of Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies & Chairman of Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Sen. Udall, Ranking Member of Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Rep. McCollum, Chair of Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Rep. Joyce, Ranking Member of Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Sen. Manchin, Ranking Member of Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Rep. Grijalva, Chair of Natural Resources Committee
Rep. Bishop, Ranking Member of Natural Resources Committee