

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
U.S. Senate Minority Leader
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader
H-204 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2017

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing sportsmen and women, outdoor businesses, natural resources professionals, and other conservationists, we write to urge your support for a new bipartisan budget agreement that provides relief from impending sequestration cuts and allows for strong annual funding of natural resources conservation in the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations process. The outdoor recreation economy, which encompasses both hunting and fishing as well as purchases of gear, vehicles and accessories related to all categories of outdoor recreation, is a dynamic catalyst of economic activity throughout the United States. Each year, the outdoor recreation economy generates \$887 billion in consumer spending and supports 7.6 million American jobs. Similarly, the outdoor recreation economy is thriving due to small, rural communities adjacent to public lands that support this economic powerhouse across the nation. Both the hunting and fishing industries, as well as the much broader outdoor recreation economy, depend upon healthy natural resources, clean air and water, sustainable fish and wildlife populations and intact and accessible public lands facilities in order to thrive. By funding conservation, Congress will be providing the investment necessary to ensure the outdoor recreation economy continues to grow, creating not only American jobs in communities across the nation, but uniquely American experiences afield for millions.

Since 1977, the percentage of the federal budget devoted to Function 300 – Environment and Natural Resources, has been cut in half to only one percent of the total federal budget, a trend that has negatively impacted recreational access, fish and wildlife habitat, and the health of our nation's public lands and private working lands. With the expiration of the bipartisan budget agreement of 2015 approaching at the end of September, we are also concerned about the return of dramatic sequestration cuts. If this erosion continues, the American outdoors that so many of our members, employees and partners hold dear, and that underlie an essential national economic sector, will suffer. The U.S. Forest Service will have fewer resources to manage forests and forest health; the Bureau of Land Management would be forced to close campgrounds and limit recreational access points; National Wildlife Refuges may need to curtail hunting and fishing opportunities; and the Natural Resources Conservation Service will conserve fewer acres of our nation's agricultural heartland.

As Congress rightly focuses its attention on economic health and job creation, a bipartisan commitment to reinvesting in the American outdoors and the critical infrastructure of an \$887 billion economic sector makes great sense. Our organizations urge your support for healthy funding levels for the agencies and programs that provide the foundation for our great American outdoor recreation economy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society
American Fly Fishing Trade Association
American Sportfishing Association
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Archery Trade Association
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
B.A.S.S. LLC
Delta Waterfowl
Fly Fishers International
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation
Hispanic Access Foundation
Izaak Walton League of America
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Deer Alliance
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Refuge Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Grouse Partnership
Outdoor Industry Association
Pheasants Forever
Pope & Young Club
Public Lands Foundation
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Snook & Gamefish Foundation
Student Conservation Association
The Conservation Fund
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
The Trust for Public Land
The Wildlife Society
Trout Unlimited
Union Sportsmen's Alliance
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi