

American Rivers * Center for Biological Diversity * Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future
Clean Water Action * Defenders of Wildlife * Earth Day Network * Environmental and
Energy Study Institute * Environment America * Environmental Law & Policy Center
Land Trust Alliance * League of Conservation Voters * National Estuarine Research
Reserve Association * National Parks Conservation Association * National Wildlife
Federation * Natural Resources Defense Council * Oceana * Public Policy Virginia, Inc.
Sierra Club * Southern Alliance for Clean Energy * The Trust for Public Land
The Wilderness Society * Union of Concerned Scientists

November 23, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
361A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the millions of Americans we represent, we are writing to urge you to schedule and pass a tax package this Congress that reinstates and makes permanent the enhanced tax incentive for donations of conservation easements, extends the Section 1603 Treasury Grant Program for renewable energy development, and includes full and dedicated funding at \$900 million annually for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Each of these provisions have bipartisan support and are critical to protecting our lands and waters while moving our nation forward to a greener, clean energy future. Sound environmental decisions are sound financial decisions, and as such a tax package should include responsible provisions that do not harm our environment.

Reinstating and making permanent the enhanced tax incentive for donations of conservation easements by modest-income farmers, ranchers and family forest owners is very important to accomplish during this legislative session. The easement incentive opened the door to voluntary, landowner-led conservation on millions of acres of important wildlife habitat and scenic open space across the country, and increased conservation easement donations by a third, to over a million acres a year until it lapsed on January 1st. It can be even more effective, but only if landowners have the certainty of knowing it will be in place at the end of their going through the lengthy and expensive process of donating a conservation easement on their land. Legislation to do this, S. 812, has broad bipartisan support.

It is also critical to extend Section 1603 of Treasury Grant Program for renewable energy development in suitable areas. The Section 1603 Program authorized the Department of Treasury to issue grants, in lieu of existing renewable energy tax credits, to renewable

energy facilities that are placed in service or that commence construction by the end of 2010. If legislation to extend the Section 1603 deadline is not enacted during the lame duck session there will be devastating consequences for the renewable energy industry. Recent research shows extending this program for two years will create 65,000 jobs in the solar industry alone.

Providing full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) will help protect some of America's most important natural areas, from National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges, historic sites and battlefields to state and local parks, from working ranches and forests to national forests and BLM lands across the country. The program ensures clean water supplies, reductions in fire-fighting costs and continued access to our common heritage of natural areas for wildlife habitat and recreation.

Investing in LWCF is an important way to strengthen our economy. Outdoor recreation, much of which takes place on lands protected by LWCF, is vital to our nation's economy. Hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, paddling, camping, climbing, wildlife viewing, and other activities contribute \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy, support 6.5 million American jobs (1 out of every 20 jobs in the US), provide sustainable growth in rural communities and stimulate 8 percent of all consumer spending according to the Outdoor Industry Association. The stand alone bill to fully fund LWCF, S. 2747, has bipartisan support and includes 22 co-sponsors.

In conclusion, this is a historic opportunity for the Senate to provide full and dedicated funding at \$900 million annually for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), reinstate and makes permanent the enhanced tax incentive for donations of conservation easements, and extend the Section 1603 Treasury Grant Program for renewable energy development. These issues have bipartisan support and are critical to protecting our lands and waters while moving our nation forward to a greener, clean energy future. We look forward to working with you to enact tax legislation that includes each of these three critical natural resource provisions, and thank you for your continued conservation leadership.

Sincerely,

Bill Meadows
President
The Wilderness Society

Margie Alt
Executive Director
Environment America

Rand Wentworth
President
Land Trust Alliance

Kathleen Rogers
President
Earth Day Network

Rebecca Wodder
President
American Rivers

Michael Brune
Executive Director
Sierra Club

Rebecca Roth
Interim Executive Director
National Estuarine Research Reserve Association

Kieran Suckling
Executive Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Larry Schweiger
President
National Wildlife Federation

Jan Jarrett
CEO and President
Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture)

Will Rogers
President
The Trust for Public Land

Tom Kiernan
President
National Parks Conservation Association

Gene Karpinski
President
League of Conservation Voters

Andrew Sharpless
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Rodger Schlickeisen

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