

America'sVoice

CONSERVATION • RECREATION • PRESERVATION

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

The Honorable John Boehner
US House of Representatives
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Speaker Boehner:

We are organizations representing millions of members with diverse interests who are united behind a shared belief that our country's natural, outdoor recreation and historic resources are an essential foundation for the American economy and for the health and well-being of the American people. We believe, as those who preceded us believed-- that the care and stewardship of these resources is not a luxury but our obligation to the next generations of Americans. The cuts and program eliminations in natural resource, conservation, and historic preservation programs proposed in recent appropriations legislation and the uncertainty over re-authorization of the Farm Bill and its Conservation Title jeopardize this generation's ability to live up to that obligation.

Like you, we are concerned about our nation's fiscal health. Conservation, recreation, and historic preservation programs should not be exempt from scrutiny. But all natural resource spending amounts to slightly more than 1% of the federal budget, and this proportion has steadily declined in recent years. Investments in natural resources, outdoor recreation and historic preservation did not cause the federal budget deficit, and even the most drastic cuts to these programs cannot fix the deficit. Thus, we believe that it is necessary to address the structural causes of the deficit in a comprehensive way rather than trying to balance the federal budget by simply cutting discretionary spending including spending for conservation and the environment.

Rather than compounding our deficit problems, America's lands and waters produce exceptional economic value and jobs in communities across the country. Federal programs that enable conservation of public and private land and water, recreation, fish and wildlife, and historic preservation are essential investments that support a very large outdoor recreation industry, agriculture and forestry, safe and plentiful water resources, urban restoration, and protection of communities from storms and droughts all of which have large and quantifiable economic benefits. Federal conservation programs also provide opportunities for healthy activities in the outdoors including hunting and fishing and a sense of belonging to our historically rich and remarkably beautiful nation. As a broad community of taxpayers and voters who care about these benefits to America and its people, we stand ready to work with you to address our nation's economic and fiscal challenges. We ask, however, that you find a balanced and sustainable path forward that recognizes the importance of investing in conservation, opportunities for outdoor recreation, and historic preservation as a means of ensuring a prosperous and healthy future for America.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you.