

America's Voice for Conservation, Recreation and Preservation

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
United States House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 2051

February 14, 2017

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

As members of the America's Voice for Conservation, Recreation and Preservation (AVCRP) coalition, we write to respectfully request the strongest possible funding levels relative to fiscal year 2018 for all budget function allocations that support the conservation of America's wildlife, lands, water, cultural resources, and their associated economic and recreational benefits. Further, our coalition is strongly opposed to the reinstatement of sequestration and urge your leadership in crafting a new budget deal that avoids sequestration.

The AVCRP includes organizations and businesses that represent millions of members who support funding for America's wildlife and other natural and cultural resources. We are united by a shared belief that our nation's natural, outdoor recreational heritage and historic resources are entrusted to us and future generations for the benefit of all Americans to enjoy. These resources are an essential foundation for the American economy. We believe, as those who preceded us believed, that the care and stewardship of these resources is a birthright we need to invest in today and in the future.

As Congress begins the Fiscal Year 2018 budget process, we want to emphasize the importance of enhancing our nation's outdoor heritage. America's wildlife, lands and waters produce exceptional economic value and jobs in communities across the country. Every year, more than \$107 billion in revenue and 9.4 million domestic jobs are supported by the outdoor recreation, natural resource conservation, and historic preservation economy. Annually, the outdoor recreation industry generates more than \$646 billion in economic activity on public and private lands. This translates to important jobs and other economic drivers in communities across the nation, from the local shop owner selling hunting, angling and outdoor recreation equipment to the small-town gas station supplying fuel for tourists heading to the local historic site. This results in a shared economy that is truly American-based and unexportable.

Unfortunately, the federal budget has continued to fund Function 300, the portion that sustains the conservation, outdoor recreation, and preservation economy, to only slightly more than one percent of the federal budget; further, this portion of the budget is steadily declining and was sequestered as a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011. Federal funds dedicated to Function 300 support national parks, wildlife refuges, cultural resources, forests and recreation sites; working lands such as farmland and ranches; safe and plentiful water resources; marine and coastal ecosystems; urban restoration; naturally-occurring

infrastructure, such as marshes and wetlands that clean our water and protect our communities from storms and droughts—all of which have large and quantifiable economic benefits.

We encourage you, as our leaders in Congress, to work with the Budget and Appropriations Committee chairs and ranking members, as well as White House leadership and staff, to identify a path forward that will build on the achievements past congressional leaders made for our outdoor and cultural heritage.

As the FY2018 budget process moves forward, members of the AVCRP coalition look forward to working with you to avoid sequestration and support the strongest possible funding levels for America's wildlife, lands, and waters.

Sincerely,