

RESOLUTION 19-10839

**(A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PERMANENT,
FULL FUNDING OF THE LAND AND WATER
CONSERVATION FUND.)**

WHEREAS, The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), established by Congress in 1964, is one of the most successful government programs in preserving our country's precious natural and cultural resources and improving equitable access to the outdoors in urban and rural communities, which is essential to Montana's health, culture, economic opportunity and the future of our children and grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, LWCF has been instrumental in creating opportunities for Montanans in urban, suburban, and rural areas to get outdoors. It has been a critical tool in conserving and investing in national parks and historic sites; national wildlife refuges and monuments; watersheds; working forests; wildlife areas; and state and local parks, trails, multi-use open space and athletic fields; and

WHEREAS, LWCF is based on the simple premise that as we extract natural resources that belong to our nation – offshore oil and gas – we should in turn protect and invest in onshore resources for future generations; and

WHEREAS, LWCF takes a portion of royalties from offshore oil and gas development and invests that money in protecting America's important public lands for future generations-be that an iconic national park or a community playground; and

WHEREAS, though LWCF is authorized to receive \$900 million annually, this cap has been met only twice during the program's nearly five decades of existence and, instead of being fully funded, nearly every year Congress diverts much of this funding to other purposes; and

WHEREAS, despite receiving only a fraction of its intended funding over the last 53 years, LWCF has led to the protection of land in every state and nearly every county, has improved access to these public lands, and has provided matching grants for the creation of more than 41,000 state and local park projects; and

WHEREAS, LWCF supports and maintains the economic asset that our federal, state and local public lands represent. Hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, paddling and other outdoor recreation activities contribute a total of \$7.1 billion annually to the Montana's economy and support 71,000 jobs in our state (source: Outdoor Industry Association, 2017). Whether manufacturing, retail or service related, most of these jobs are sustainable resource or tourism-based jobs and cannot be exported; and

WHEREAS, Montana has received more than 775 stateside LWCF grants to local governments and state parks, including 41 LWCF grants for a total of \$1,801,236.04 in Billings alone, totaling over \$597 million statewide and touching nearly all of the state's counties; and

WHEREAS, over the last 53 years, LWCF funding has contributed to the enhancement of local parks and recreational opportunities that are part of the fabric of Billings, including the development of several important city parks, including a popular skate park and tennis courts, acquisition of riverfront access, improvements to the City Par 3 Golf Course, and creation of pedestrian, hiking, & biking trails, as well as the protection of iconic landscapes across Montana; and

WHEREAS, the parks, trails, and recreation projects dependent upon LWCF funding are green spaces that contribute to the health and well-being of Billings families; and

WHEREAS, Billings City Staff applied and was one of seven community applications received from eligible sponsors statewide by State Parks for a 2019 LWCF grant for needed improvements to the Central Parks Tennis Courts. And, due to limited funding Montana State Parks received for LWCF, Billings' grant is delayed and will advance through the process with the Fall 2020 funding received; and

WHEREAS, at current funding levels, LWCF does not keep up with demand. There is \$27 billion in unmet demand by state and local governments nationwide. Unfunded projects are then funded entirely by state and local budgets or have to go on hold.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BILLINGS, MONTANA: that the Billings City Council expresses support for and urges Congress to act swiftly to enact full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund given the important contributions it makes to our Nation's, Montana's, and Billings' health, well-being, economic opportunity and access to our nation's natural treasures; and:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution shall be forwarded to the entire Montana Congressional Delegation to show support for the full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the City Council of the City of Billings, Montana, on the 9th day of December, 2019.

CITY OF BILLINGS

By:

William A. Cole

William A. Cole, Mayor

ATTEST:

By:

Denise R. Bohman
Denise R. Bohman, City Clerk

