



Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.



Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

# Healthy Parks, Healthy People

More Nevadans are heading outside. It's time to invest in our open spaces by fully funding the Land & Water Conservation Fund.

*A surge in visitors to public lands across Nevada during the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated just how much we crave the outdoors. With visitor numbers expected to remain high, we need to create more opportunities for outdoor recreation and better protect the ones we have. This means fully and permanently funding America's most important conservation program: the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).*

## Time outdoors is vital for our health

Staying indoors takes its toll on our mental and physical health.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that time spent in green spaces reduces anxiety and depression, improves concentration and memory, and helps keep our immune systems healthy.

## Park visitation has soared during the pandemic

With lockdowns in effect across Nevada, thousands have headed outdoors for respite.

- In March 2020, Lake Mead saw Saturday crowds of up to 40,000 visitors – double the usual visitation for this time of year – prompting the closure of beaches and other facilities.
- In May, Sand Harbor on Lake Tahoe saw 81 percent more visitors than May 2019, and Spooner Lake 96 percent more. At South Fork State Recreation Area, visitation more than doubled.
- With hiking trails often reaching capacity as early as mid-morning, Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area was forced to close trails, picnic areas and campgrounds.



Hikers in Pine Creek Canyon.



Sand Harbor, Lake Tahoe-Nevada State Park.

<sup>1</sup> For a full list of sources, visit <https://environmentnevada.org/page/nve/lwcf-factsheet-sources>

## Access to the outdoors requires funding public lands

Surging demand for outdoor recreation during the pandemic reflects the public's desire for more open spaces, while also placing new demands on public lands.

- Park staff have had to take on new responsibilities during the pandemic, including extra patrols, sanitation duties and enforcement of health regulations.
- This surge in visitors comes as parks already lack the funding necessary to build and maintain infrastructure able to accommodate demand for the outdoors. Nevada's national parks alone have a maintenance funding shortfall of more than \$160 million, and its state parks nearly \$9 million.

## To expand outdoor access, fully fund the Land & Water Conservation Fund

The Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is America's most important federal funding program for public lands. LWCF uses offshore drilling royalties to fund land purchases by the National Park Service and other federal agencies. It has also channeled billions of dollars into more than 41,000 state and local park projects, including hiking trails, bike paths, campgrounds and other outdoor facilities.

LWCF is authorized to accrue \$900 million annually to make available for conservation projects. But Congress has historically siphoned off much of this money to fill budget holes elsewhere. In total, less than half of the \$40.9 billion accrued in the fund since 1965 has been used for the purposes for which it was intended. If LWCF were to receive full funding, roughly twice as much money could flow toward protecting Nevada's vital outdoor areas.

## LWCF has protected some of Nevada's most treasured places

Many of the open spaces Nevadans enjoy have been protected with LWCF funding. More than \$104 million in LWCF grants have enabled the purchase and maintenance of public lands across Nevada, including:

- **Lake Tahoe-Nevada State Park.** A total of more than \$7 million from LWCF has helped pay for land acquisitions and the construction and maintenance of facilities at Sand Harbor and Spooner Lake.
- **Washoe Lake State Park.** \$2.8 million from LWCF funded the initial purchase of land and the development of boating facilities, campgrounds and other amenities.
- **Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.** More than \$26 million in LWCF grants has funded land acquisitions, conservation efforts and public access to outdoor recreation in the forest.
- LWCF grants totaling over \$45 million have supported **local and regional parks**, including Sunset Regional Park, Galena Creek Park, Lorenzi Park and the Springs Preserve.

## Funding for parks supports our outdoor economy

The surge in demand for access to public lands can also help support Nevada's economic recovery. Outdoor recreation generates \$12.6 billion in consumer spending in Nevada, 87,000 jobs, and \$1.1 billion in state and local tax revenue every year.



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