

United States Senate

November 6, 2020

The Honorable David L. Bernhardt
Secretary
United States Department of Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 202

Dear Secretary Bernhardt and Secretary Perdue:

I am writing to you regarding the Department of the Interior's and Forest Service's failure to meet the statutory requirement to submit a list of Land and Water Conservation projects to the Senate today. Ninety four days ago, the President signed the bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act into law, which required the Department to submit a list by November 2nd. The Department of the Interior and Forest Service missed this statutory deadline. This is unacceptable and must be corrected immediately. I urge the Department and Forest Service to uphold its role in administering LWCF and provide the project list to Congress.

When the Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law, I called on the Department of the Interior and Forest Service to work quickly to ensure it was ready to meet this deadline. With three months of notice, and years' worth of backlogged projects sitting on the shelf, it's disappointing that the Department of Interior and Forest Service were not able to produce a list. Congress has made it clear, with bipartisan support, that the Land and Water Conservation Fund should be fully funded, and that the Department should move aggressively to identify new projects to put the funding to good work.

Every day that passes runs a risk that a local stakeholder, a private landowner, or another partner may not be able to keep their lands, matching funds, or other resources available for a project. LWCF is meant to be a reliable stream of funding that takes the guesswork out of conservation, access, and outdoor recreation projects. If our land management agencies can't meet statutory deadlines to determine how funding should be allocated, local stakeholders may no longer be available by the time the Department and Forest Service makes up their mind. The clock is ticking, and the public needs to know it can count on the Department and Forest Service to be reliable partners in protecting our most important landscapes.

Montana relies on Land and Water Conservation Fund projects to protect public access to public lands, to provide new outdoor recreation opportunities in our towns, and to work with private landowners to make sure the landscapes that fuel our outdoor recreation economy are available for future generations. I stand ready to work with you to put the full, mandatory funding Congress has provided for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Tester