July 27, 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

 On behalf of our organizations, representing local leaders, parks and conservation groups, civil engineers, and millions of supporters across the country, we write to you to express our strong support for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) administered by the National Park Service and funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

 As you continue to finalize the FY21 appropriations bill, we want to note that the House Committee on Appropriations, anticipating that LWCF receives full funding through the Great American Outdoors Act, recommended that the ORLP be funded at $100 million. We respectfully request that your subcommittee match that request in the FY 2021 Interior and Environment appropriations bill.

 Parks and green space have always played an essential role in our communities supporting public health, workforce development, local economies, the environment, and community cohesion. However, the coronavirus crisis has demonstrated that far too many communities do not have access to safe, healthy parks. The ORLP can address this issue while at the same time provide much-needed workforce development opportunities.

 The ORLP, a competitive grant program, complements the traditional formula State and Local Assistance Program through a nationally competitive process that focuses on the outdoor recreation needs of communities in ways that will encourage people to connect with the outdoors. Priority is given to shovel-ready projects involving public-private partnerships, underserved communities, and those that provide youth with employment or job training opportunities. This initiative leverages non-taxpayer dollars by awarding matching grants at a minimum of 1:1 ratio and allows states to put forward the projects they believe best meet the outdoor recreation needs of their communities.

 In its short existence the ORLP has improved accessibility of playgrounds, created parks on former brownfield sites and industrial lands, and developed dual-use spaces for recreation and green infrastructure storm water management that builds resilient communities.

 We are conscious and respectful of the federal budget challenges. The ORLP has been proven as a smart investment where funds can be leveraged effectively through public private partnerships. We look forward to working with you to provide more funding to urban communities where this public investment is critically needed.

Sincerely,

American Society of Civil Engineers

City Parks Alliance

National Recreation and Park Association

Sierra Club

The Wilderness Society

Trust for Public Land