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Testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Honorable Jimmy Panetta CA-20

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Although new Congress, I keenly understand the importance of the Appropriations Committee's annual check on our nation's priorities through the power of the purse. I am grateful to appear before you today to talk about the important Interior Department programs that preserve and protect our natural resources.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is the only federal program for the conservation and promotion of National Parks, forests, and Bureau of Land Management lands and increases access for hunting, fishing, and other types of outdoor recreation. Every year the LWCF receives \$900 million in royalties from oil and gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf, to create new parks and provide state matching grants for recreation development.

In my congressional district, federal grants have allowed the Los Padres National Forest, Ventana Wilderness, Pinnacles National Park, and the Ellicott Slough National Wildlife Refuge to purchase land inholdings and provide better access to the public. The continuity of land

holdings allows for more efficient management on the federal level. In order for LWCF to provide sufficient funding to federal and state projects, it is crucial to appropriate no less than \$475M in discretionary funding.

Another program that requires important funding is the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Recreation Resources Management account. Funds are utilized to support trail and road maintenance, engage young audiences, protect visitor safety, and promote public health. Overall these programs improve recreational access and overall experience for visitors, hunters and anglers. Also small businesses such as guides and outfitters benefit through the processing of commercial recreation permits for visitors. In order to maintain a safe and engaging experience in the vast BLM areas, I recommend appropriating \$69.4M this fiscal year.

The BLM National Landscape Conservation System is tasked with safeguarding the nation's cultural legacy by conserving, protecting, and restoring lands that are culturally, ecologically, and scientifically significant landscapes for coming generations. National Conservation Lands include more than 30 million acres of National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness Area and other congressionally designated areas. Not only do these conserved lands provide thousands of jobs for Americans but they provide recreational opportunities for the public to experience wildlife, wilderness and open space near cities.

In my congressional district, we have Ford Ord National Monument and the coastline is part of the California Coastal National Monument, which spans 1,100 miles along the California coast. BLM's National Landscape Conservation System protects an estimated 200,000 breeding seabirds and thousands of marine mammals within this Monument. Ford Ord National Monument has a rich military history that dates back to the Spanish Missionaries in the 1770s.

From World War I to the early 1990s, the area served as a military training ground for the brave men and women that served our Nation. This National Monument attracts not only veterans but scientists who are interested in the rich diversity of rare and unique species of plants that can only be found in the Ford Ord area.

The investment in expanding recreational opportunities has generated \$646 billion in the outdoor recreation sector and has supported 6.1 million jobs. In California alone, outdoor recreation supports over 700,000 jobs and generated \$27 billion in wages and salaries. I encourage the Committee to fund the BLM National Landscape Conservation System as no less than \$80M in FY18.

Although it is important to invest in our Nation's natural landscapes for the public, it is equally important to invest in the Nation's response to disturbances such as wildfires. In the late summer of 2016, my district was devastated by the Soberanes fire near Big Sur. It took thousands of firefighters months to contain this expansive wildfire that consumed more than 130,000 acres and cost more than \$200 million, making it the most expensive wildfire in U.S. history. As well as fighting fires, we need to recognize that once the federal government makes investments in anti-fire protections, like federally established fire breaks, it is imperative that they be federally maintained. I recommend that the Wildland Fire Management in the Forest Service receive no less than \$2.7 billion for both fighting wildfires and for anti-fire protections, like federally established fire breaks.