



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Republican Members
From: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Staff: Michelle Lane
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Date: Monday, February 9, 2026
Subject: Oversight Hearing titled “*All in for America250: Public-Private Partnerships Supporting America’s Semiquincentennial on our Public Lands*”

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will hold an oversight hearing titled “*All in for America250: Public-Private Partnerships Supporting America’s Semiquincentennial on our Public Lands*” on **Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 10:15 a.m., in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Sinclair Kouns (Sinclair.Kouns@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, February 9, 2026, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

I. KEY MESSAGES

- As America prepares to celebrate the 250th anniversary of its founding, or its semiquincentennial, public-private partnerships expertly combine resources and knowledge to organize commemorative events that honor public lands’ enduring role in shaping our nation’s identity and heritage.
- Congressionally chartered non-profits, like the National Park Foundation (NPF), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the National Forest Foundation (NFF), and the Foundation for America’s Public Lands (FAPL), serve as the official fundraising partners of their corresponding federal agencies.
- These Congressionally chartered foundations support public lands and historic sites by leveraging the power of private philanthropic dollars, along with taxpayer dollars, to enhance conservation, education, and recreation efforts.
- Matching federal appropriations with private donations increases the impact of taxpayer dollars, effectively multiplying the efficiency of federal funds through enhanced investments in restoration, education, and stewardship.

II. WITNESSES

- **Mr. Jeff Reinbold**, President & CEO, National Park Foundation, Washington, D.C.
- **Mr. Jeff Trandahl**, Executive Director & CEO, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Washington, D.C.
- **Mr. Dieter Fenkart-Froeschl**, President & CEO, National Forest Foundation, Washington, D.C.
- **Ms. I Ling Thompson**, CEO, Foundation for America's Public Lands, Washington, D.C.
- **Ms. Emily Chiles**, Director of Development, The Shenandoah National Park Trust, Charlottesville, VA
- **Mr. Will Glasco**, CEO, Preservation Virginia, Richmond, VA
- **Mr. Tim Whitehouse**, Executive Director, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Silver Spring, MD [*Minority Witness*]
- **Mr. Alan Spears**, Senior Director for Cultural Resources, National Parks Conservation Association, Washington, DC [*Minority Witness*]

III. BACKGROUND

Congressionally Chartered Foundations Supporting Public Lands

Public-private partnerships have played a critical role in protecting American heritage and conserving public lands.¹ Primarily through charters, Congress has enabled the creation of charitable and nonprofit corporations to supplement the work of federal land management agencies through fundraising and programmatic partnerships.² To date, Congress has chartered four foundations with a focus on public lands and natural resources—NPF,³ NFWF,⁴ NFF,⁵ and FAPL⁶—which collaborate to secure financial commitments and support federal conservation efforts. As 2026 marks America's semiquincentennial, federal land management agencies and non-profit partners are joining together to celebrate the landscapes and stories that define the nation's inspiring history.⁷

National Park Foundation

Established in 1967, NPF was the first of the Congressionally chartered, non-profit organizations supporting public lands.⁸ In 1864, 103 years before the establishment of NPF, President Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant, setting aside federal parkland for conservation and public use for the first time in American history.⁹ Less than a decade later, in 1872, Congress created Yellowstone

¹ See ERIC P. NARDI & EVA LIPIEC, CONG. RSCH. SERV., R44740, NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (NFWF): HISTORY, FUNCTION, AND FUNDING (Jan. 17, 2017), <https://www.crs.gov/reports/pdf/R44740/R44740.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ See *Our Mission & History*, NAT'L PARK FOUND., <https://www.nationalparks.org/our-mission-history>.

⁴ See *What We Do*, NAT'L FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUND., <https://www.nfwf.org/what-we-do>.

⁵ See *Who We Are*, NAT'L FOREST FOUND., <https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are>.

⁶ See *Our Work*, FOUND. FOR AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS, <https://americaslands.org/our-work/>.

⁷ See *Freedom 250*, U.S. DEP'T OF THE INTERIOR, <https://www.doi.gov/freedom250>. See also *USDS x Freedom 250*, U.S. DEP'T OF AGRICULTURE, <https://www.usda.gov/freedom250>.

⁸ See *Our Mission & History*, NAT'L PARK FOUND., <https://www.nationalparks.org/our-mission-history>.

⁹ *Id.*

National Park and placed it under the control of the Secretary of the Interior.¹⁰ By the early 20th century, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) was overseeing a large portfolio of protected areas without central or official leadership, prompting Congress to establish the National Park Service (NPS) in 1916 to manage these lands within DOI.¹¹

As NPS's official non-profit partner, NPF pursues a mission of “generat[ing] private support and build[ing] strategic partnerships to protect and enhance America’s national parks for present and future generations.”¹² NPF leverages federal funding by using annual appropriations (authorized at \$15 million per fiscal year) to match private donations, on at least a 1:1 basis, received from individuals, corporations, and other foundations to fund the protection and accessibility of the more than 430 units within the National Park System.¹³ In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, NPF raised \$287 million in revenue and provided \$81.4 million in grants and programmatic support to the National Park System.¹⁴ In 2022, Chairman Westerman led legislation successfully reauthorizing and increasing NPF’s authorization of appropriations.¹⁵

To achieve its mission, NPF supports landscape and wildlife conservation programs and projects, youth engagement and education programs, cultural and historical resource protection, outdoor exploration projects, resilience and sustainability programs, communities and workforce programs, and “parks of the future” initiatives.¹⁶ According to NPF, its “Open OutDoors for Kids” program connected over 2 million children to 84 park sites since 2011.¹⁷ NPF also works to develop a new generation of leaders in the conservation workforce, supporting 450 park partner organizations and granting over \$15 million to 280 service corps crews since 2018.¹⁸ NPF has also supported the construction of visitor centers at parks and monuments nationwide. Added to that are innovative NPF projects intended to reduce waste and conserve park resources, safeguarding enjoyable experiences on our public lands for generations to come.¹⁹

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

NFWF was chartered by Congress in 1984 to aid in the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plants, and ecosystems for current and future generations.²⁰ It has since grown to become the nation’s largest private conservation foundation, currently partnering with 15 federal agencies and more than 53 corporate entities and foundations.²¹ NFWF supports the work of the

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² See *Our Mission & History*, NAT’L PARK FOUND., <https://www.nationalparks.org/our-mission-history>.

¹³ See *National Park Foundation Applauds Passage of the National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act of 2022*, NAT’L PARK FOUND. (Dec. 23, 2022), <https://www.nationalparks.org/news-and-updates/press-releases/npf-applauds-passage-national-park-foundation-reauthorization-act-of-2022>. See also *National Park Foundation 2024 Annual Report*, NAT’L PARK FOUND. (July 2025), <https://annualreport.nationalparks.org/>.

¹⁴ *National Park Foundation 2024 Annual Report*, NAT’L PARK FOUND. (July 2025), <https://annualreport.nationalparks.org/>.

¹⁵ H.R. 7693 in the 117th Congress; <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7693>.

¹⁶ See *Areas of Work*, NAT’L PARK FOUND., <https://www.nationalparks.org/>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ See ERIC P. NARDI & EVA LIPIEC, CONG. RSCH. SERV., R44740, NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (NFWF): HISTORY, FUNCTION, AND FUNDING (Jan. 17, 2017), <https://www.crs.gov/reports/pdf/R44740/R44740.pdf>.

²¹ See *What We Do*, NAT’L FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUND., <https://www.nfwf.org/what-we-do>.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).²²

NFWF matches private dollars with federal funds (i.e., annual appropriations and agreements with federal agencies) and uses science-based conservation and competitive grant programs to direct those resources to projects that produce the greatest measurable results for wildlife.²³ In FY 2024, NFWF and its grantees invested \$1.4 billion in 982 conservation projects across all 50 states and U.S. territories.²⁴ Examples of these projects include ensuring that brook trout, lake sturgeon, and other native fish species in the Midwest can move freely between water bodies to complete their lifecycle and conserving two million acres of land to create new opportunities for Americans to enjoy hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping.²⁵

National Forest Foundation

Chartered by Congress in 1990,²⁶ NFF was created to “bring people together to restore and enhance National Forests and Grasslands” and support the work of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).²⁷ NFF’s mission is to “transform America’s love of nature into action for National Forests,” and its work centers around land and watershed restoration, wildlife resilience, and recreation enhancement.²⁸

NFF leverages federal funding by using close to \$3 million in annual appropriations to match non-federal donations from corporations, foundations, individuals, and state and local governments to support strategic projects.²⁹ In FY 2024, NFF raised over \$22 million from non-federal entities and invested \$63.5 million in National Forest System projects.³⁰ Through its grants and contracts, NFF assisted wildfire resiliency projects for 13,396 acres of land, completed 2,239 miles of work on trails, and conducted nationwide reforestation projects.³¹

Foundation for America’s Public Lands

FAPL was established by Congress in 2017 to serve as the official charitable partner of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).³² FAPL’s mission is to “foster strategic partnerships and generate private support to help connect more people and communities to public lands and

²² *Id.*

²³ See *Partnerships*, NAT’L FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUND., <https://www.nfwf.org/partnerships>. See also *FAQs*, NAT’L FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUND., <https://www.nfwf.org/apply-grant/application-information/faqs>.

²⁴ See *National Fish and Wildlife Foundation 2024 Annual Report*, NAT’L FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUND. (May 2025), <https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/annual-report-2024-web.pdf>.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ See National Forest Foundation Act, Pub. L. No. 101-593, 104 Stat. 2969 (1990).

²⁷ See *Who We Are*, NAT’L FOREST FOUND., <https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are>. See also ERIC P. NARDI AND EVA LIPIEC, CONG. RSCH. SERV., R44740, NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (NFWF): HISTORY, FUNCTION, AND FUNDING (Jan. 17, 2017), <https://www.crs.gov/reports/pdf/R44740/R44740.pdf>.

²⁸ See *Who We Are*, NAT’L FOREST FOUND., <https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are>.

²⁹ See *National Forest Foundation: 2024 Activities Report*, NAT’L FOREST FOUND. (Mar. 2025), <https://www.nationalforests.org/assets/desktops/NFF-2024-Activities-Report.pdf>.

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² See *Foundation for America’s Public Lands: Strategic Framework*, FOUND. FOR AMERICA’S PUBLIC LANDS, <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/foundation-for-americas-public-lands-strategic-framework>.

waters, today and for generations to come.”³³ Beginning its work in 2022, FAPL has focused on driving investments that create opportunities for recreation, strengthen local economies, and promote healthy landscapes for public enjoyment.³⁴

FAPL leverages federal funds and raises private donations to help raise awareness, increase access, and inspire stewardship of U.S. public lands and waters.³⁵ For example, in 2024, FAPL launched its Drought Resilience Fund, investing \$2.4 million to support cattle ranchers and local communities in mitigating severe drought challenges facing public lands in the Colorado River Basin.³⁶ Additionally, the Lands to Love Catalyst Fund focuses on supporting projects in need of “last mile” matching dollars to help unlock greater financing for initiatives ranging from outdoor classroom programs to rebuilding and improving trails.³⁷

Additional Organizations Supporting Federal Lands

In addition to the Congressionally chartered nonprofit foundations described above, other organizations make vital contributions to supporting America’s public lands. For example, most National Park System units are supported by individual “friends groups” or park partner organizations that are recognized by the NPS. These groups have their own organization, the National Park Friends Alliance, that collectively generated over \$1 billion of park-related revenues and 980,000 park volunteer hours in 2023 (most recent statistics available).³⁸ The Lincoln Presidential Foundation, for example, has been working with NPS and other organizations on the Lincoln Home Historic Site in preparation of the semiquincentennial.³⁹ Other entities, like the American Battlefield Trust⁴⁰, Shenandoah National Trust⁴¹, and Preservation Virginia⁴², work with private, and in some cases federal, dollars to protect America’s greatest places.

250th Anniversary of American Independence

On July 4, 2026, the U.S. will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.⁴³ By supplementing federal efforts to conserve landscapes and wildlife, NPF, NFWF, NFF, and FAPL have been integral to securing the prosperity of America’s public lands.⁴⁴ Throughout this historic year, and continuing in the years to follow, public-private partners and

³³ See *About Us*, FOUND. FOR AMERICA’S PUBLIC LANDS, <https://americaslands.org/about/>.

³⁴ *Id.* See also *Our Work*, FOUND. FOR AMERICA’S PUBLIC LANDS, <https://americaslands.org/our-work/>.

³⁵ See *Foundation for America’s Public Lands Launches First Grants to Boost Drought Resilience in the Colorado River Basin*, FOUND. FOR AMERICA’S PUBLIC LANDS (Sep. 12, 2024), <https://americaslands.org/foundation-for-americas-public-lands-launches-first-grants-to-boost-drought-resilience-in-the-colorado-river-basin/>.

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ See *Lands to Love*, FOUND. FOR AMERICA’S PUBLIC LANDS, <https://americaslands.org/lands-to-love/>. See also *Foundation for America’s Public Lands Awards \$600,000 to Connect Communities to Public Lands and Waters in Idaho and New Mexico*, FOUND. FOR AMERICA’S PUBLIC LANDS (Dec. 11, 2024), <https://americaslands.org/foundation-for-americas-public-lands-awards-600000-to-connect-communities-to-public-lands-and-waters-in-idaho-and-new-mexico/>.

³⁸ See, NATIONAL PARK FRIENDS ALL., <https://www.friendsalliance.org/>.

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ See AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST, <https://www.battlefields.org/>.

⁴¹ See Shenandoah National Park Trust, <https://www.snptrust.org/our-work/>

⁴² See Preservation Virginia, <https://preservationvirginia.org/>

⁴³ See *A milestone in the making*, AMERICA250, <https://america250.org/americas-250th/>.

⁴⁴ See ERIC P. NARDI & EVA LIPIEC, CONG. RSCH. SERV., R44740, NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (NFWF): HISTORY, FUNCTION, AND FUNDING (Jan. 17, 2017), <https://www.crs.gov/reports/pdf/R44740/R44740.pdf>.

federal agencies will support efforts to commemorate 250 years of American independence and advance public understanding of the nation's history and civic foundations. This will include highlighting the significance of America's public lands and the conservation of landscapes, sites, and stories central to the country's founding.⁴⁵ Commemorative events developed through these partnerships will continue leveraging private resources and expertise to engage the public and honor the enduring role of public lands in shaping our national identity and shared heritage.⁴⁶

IV. CONCLUSION

Public-private partnerships and Congressionally chartered foundations are central to conserving America's public lands and historical sites so that they remain well-maintained and accessible for generations to come. The nexus of federal appropriations and private donations multiplies the impact of taxpayer dollars and delivers tangible results, ranging from restoration and education to recreation and community engagement, across all 50 states. As America approaches the celebration of its 250th birthday, our federal agencies managing public lands, their corresponding non-profit partners, and local communities are coordinating programming at our national parks, monuments, and forests to celebrate the semiquincentennial by honoring our shared heritage and the landscapes that have defined our national identity.

⁴⁵ See *Freedom 250*, U.S. DEP'T OF THE INTERIOR, <https://www.doi.gov/freedom250>.

⁴⁶ See *About America250*, AMERICA250, <https://america250.org/about-america250/>.