

Ben Ray Luján celebrates passage of Great American Outdoors Act

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WASHINGTON D.C. —U.S. House Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M., issued this statement celebrating the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act – landmark conservation legislation to fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and restore our National Park System:

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“The Great American Outdoors Act fully funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million annually and creates the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund. This will provide funding to the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Education to fix buildings, trails, roads, and other public infrastructure in need of repair over the next five years. The legislation has already passed the U.S. Senate.

“The Great American Outdoors Act is landmark legislation that will fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, restore our National Park System, and bolster access to our cherished public lands in New Mexico and across the nation. As our communities continue to address the current public health crisis, this legislation will provide a much-needed boost to our outdoor economy and support thousands of jobs in New Mexico,” Luján said. “As New Mexicans, we take pride in our public lands and natural resources, and I’m glad that Congress has taken action to protect our lands for generations to come.”

“Today, because of the support of Congressional park champions like Representative Luján, our national parks, public lands and communities across New Mexico and the country will finally get the support they so desperately need and deserve,” Theresa Pierno, President and CEO of the National Parks Conservation Association, said. “For too long our national parks have been underfunded and understaffed while also dealing with billions of dollars in needed repairs, from the aging water systems at Grand Canyon to crumbling buildings at Carlsbad Caverns. But now, because of the leadership of Representative Luján and other Congressional champions, our country’s most treasured places can continue to welcome millions of visitors and protect the natural and cultural resources that help tell our nation’s history, for years to come.”

“Passing the Great American Outdoors Act is a major victory for public lands in New Mexico and throughout the country,” Mark Allison, Executive Director for New Mexico Wild, said. “The LWCF supports projects big and small, from the maintenance of national monuments to the construction of playground equipment in our community parks. As New Mexicans look forward to a brighter future, our entire congressional delegation seriously delivered with this historic bill. This legislation both recognizes New Mexicans’ desire for quality outdoor experiences and invests desperately needed resources in our communities as they struggle to recover from the havoc wreaked by the global pandemic.”

Today’s [July 22] bipartisan House passage of the ‘Great American Outdoors Act’ gets us to the very brink of fully and permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund so it can serve its full potential for our country and communities,” Jamie Williams, President of The Wilderness Society, said. “After years of leadership and support from long-term and recent

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champions in both chambers of Congress, the 'Great American Outdoors Act' is now heading to the president's desk with a tidal wave of momentum. Once signed, this historic bill will finally keep the 55-year-old promise of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to strengthen our communities through investment in our parks and public lands."