

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4012

As Passed House:

March 5, 1999

Brief Description: Requesting Congress to pass legislation to restore and revitalize federal funding for the land and water conservation fund.

Sponsors: Representatives Regala, Eickmeyer, Buck, Clements, Anderson, Veloria and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/24/99 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/5/99, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Petitioning the President and Congress of the United States to restore full funding to the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and to provide funding for state level fish and wildlife management.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Buck, Republican Co-Chair; Regala, Democratic Co-Chair; Anderson, Democratic Vice Chair; Sump, Republican Vice Chair; G. Chandler; Clements; Doumit; Eickmeyer; Pennington; Rockefeller and Stensen.

Staff: Carole Richmond (786-7114).

Background:

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was created in 1964 for two purposes: (1) to fund land acquisition for the four principal federal land management agencies (the National Park Service, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management in the Department of Interior), and (2) to provide matching funds to states for outdoor recreation projects.

Revenues for the fund are derived primarily from royalties on oil and gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf, federal outdoor recreation user fees, the federal motorboat fuel tax, and surplus property sales. Congress has authorized an annual revenue stream of \$900 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, but this amount has never been fully funded. Funds must be appropriated before they can be spent. If appropriations are not made, the revenues are spent on other programs. In recent years, no funding at all has gone to the state and local portion of the program.

Unsuccessful attempts have been made in the past to permanently appropriate the fund's revenues, rather than make them subject to annual congressional appropriations. Several proposals have been introduced in the 106 Congress to provide permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and related measures.

Summary of Bill:

Washington contains a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities and many Washington residents are actively involved in outdoor recreation. Outdoor recreation is also important to the state's economy. The state's population is one of the fastest growing in the United States and demand for outdoor recreation is rising.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund has funded the acquisition of millions of acres of park land, water resources, wildlife habitat, and open space, and the development of 37,000 state and local projects across the nation. Washington and other states lack adequate funding for fish and wildlife protection and management, especially for species which are not hunted or fished.

Congress is petitioned to restore and revitalize federal funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and to create a new dedicated fund for state level fish and wildlife management.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Teaming with Wildlife has the potential to raise \$30 to \$35 million per year for Washington. Funding is needed for non-game programs to avoid future listings of fish and wildlife as threatened or endangered. A coalition of conservation and recreation interests in Washington identified significant unmet needs in the areas of conservation, education, and recreation. Land and Water Conservation Fund monies should be provided to states and cities. This is good public policy.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Tom Buckley, Teaming with Wildlife; Steve Pozzanghera, Washington Department of State and Wildlife; Joe LaTourrette, American For Our Heritage & Recreation; Barbara Fahey, city of Everett; and Bill Robinson, Trout Unlimited.