AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

Agenda Item: Land and Water Conservation Fund Letter

Action Requested: Other Ratification of BOCC Signature

Parties to the Agreement:

Term Begins: **Term Ends:** **Grant Contract #:**

Summary:

Ratification of BOCC signature on BOCC letter regarding Land and Water Conservation Fund

Fiscal Impact:

Submitted by: Liz Mense **Submitter's Email Address:** EMense@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date:

County Attorney Review: ◉ Required ○ Not Required

Comments:
ok db 8/29/18

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\dBaumgarten Discharge Date: 8/29/2018 Certificate of Insurance Required Yes ○ No ◉

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reveiwed by: GUNCOUNTY1\mbirnie Discharge Date: 8/29/2018

◉ Consent Agenda ○ Regular Agenda ○ Worksession Time Allotted: 0

Agenda Date: 9/4/2018

Revised April 2015

Gunnison County
COLORADO

Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners
Phone: (970) 641–0248 • Fax: (970) 641–3061
Email: bocc@gunnisoncounty.org • www.GunnisonCounty.org

To whom it may concern:

Public lands are arguably America's greatest idea and our greatest treasure. Our template for preservation has been replicated throughout the world. Gunnison County is over 80% public lands. These public lands support our healthy communities, protect our natural environment, attract businesses and talent, provide outdoor recreation opportunities and are critical to our agricultural community and developed water rights.

Public lands are major drivers behind Colorado's robust outdoor recreation economy. The Outdoor Industry Association reports that outdoor recreation generates $13.2 billion in consumer spending in Colorado, supports 125,000 jobs which generate $4.2 billion in wages and salaries, and produces $994 million annually in state and local tax revenue. Additionally, the Census Bureau reports that over 2.2 million people hunt, fish, or enjoy wildlife-watching in Colorado, contributing $3 billion in annual wildlife recreation spending to the state economy. That revenue funds schools, health care, public safety and transportation infrastructure – priorities of the current administration.

The federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a relatively little-known program created 50 years ago, provides critical help in preserving our land and our way of life.
Funded through offshore gas royalties, the Land and Water Conservation Fund can generate up to $900 million every year and has enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress, as well as support from sportsmen, forest managers, landowners, conservationists and county commissioners, since its inception.

Public lands managed within Gunnison County consist of National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, state, local government and not for profit organizations like the Crested Butte Land Trust. Colorado continues to see dramatic wildfire impacts. Our first responders are fighting larger, hotter fires and it is imperative that we have Land and Water Conservation funding that helps manage forests for fire prevention and recovery after an incident.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has invested over $268 million in Colorado, leading to the protection of important landscapes like Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park/Curecanti National Recreation Area here in Gunnison County. LWCF funds were used to add 2,500 acres of protected land to Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The addition of this property will guarantee future access to the Red Rock Canyon area of the park, a destination for anglers and other backcountry users. This acquisition will also allow the Park Service to better preserve the viewshed from the visitor center and the popular South Rim Road, the main route through the park. Lastly, the property also creates potential opportunities for National Park Service to provide water to the South Rim, reducing operational costs of hauling water to meet visitor and staff needs.

Gunnison County is a top destination for hunters, anglers, hikers, river users, mountain bikers, backpackers, motorized users, campers, skiers and other outdoor enthusiasts. The Land and Water Conservation Fund plays a key role in protecting and providing access to such recreational opportunities locally and across the state – and our economy benefits, accordingly.

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It's not just Colorado, the Land and Water Conservation Fund benefits almost every county in the nation, supporting over 41,000 projects with matching grants to help states and local communities to protect parks, critical wildlife habitat, and watersheds; create recreational projects and fishing and hunting access; and conserve working farms, ranches and forest lands that enhance local economies.

Simply put, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a program that works. Yet Congress has broken its promise to the American people nearly every year, diverting much of the LWCF funding to uses other than conserving our most important lands and waters.

Because of this longtime funding diversion, there is a substantial backlog of national public lands still vulnerable to development such as the Florida Everglades, Civil War battlefields and other precious places like the Upper Rio Grande here in Colorado. State governments also report needing $27 billion in Land and Water Conservation Funds for eligible local parks and recreation projects.

Congress now has the opportunity to reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Our U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and Cory Gardner understand the value of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and have been playing leadership roles to reauthorize it. We need them to continue the fight. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is too important to our Western way of life and to the outdoor recreation industry that helps drive our economy to not reauthorize.

Sincerely,

Phil Chamberland, Chairperson

Jonathan Houck, Vice Chair

John Messner, Commissioner