



September 10, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson

Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune

Senate Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries

House Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer

Senate Minority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Reauthorizing the Legacy Restoration Fund following national park and public land devastation in 2026

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Leader Thune, and Leader Schumer:

Days ago, catastrophic flooding in Grand Canyon National Park claimed human lives, forced large-scale evacuations, destroyed critical infrastructure, and closed lodging and campgrounds throughout the park. As families grieve lost loved ones and emergency crews work on the ground, Congress must turn its attention to the broader challenges facing public lands. Floods, wildfires, severe storms, and acts of vandalism have damaged visitor facilities, historic structures, trails, bridges, and infrastructure across the country. National parks, forests, wetlands, and other federally managed lands already face \$46.2 billion in backlogged repairs, and destructive events in 2026 are adding to the burden.¹

While Congress cannot prevent disasters caused by nature and man, it can ensure land managers have the resources necessary to repair infrastructure when damage occurs. Congress should act before the end of the session to reauthorize the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF), a proven conservation program that repairs public lands infrastructure and reduces a growing backlog of maintenance needs.

The undersigned organizations represent a diverse coalition of oil and natural gas producers, energy workers, consumer advocates, economic development organizations, conservation advocates, outdoor recreation interests, sportsmen, businesses, and public lands users who share a commitment to maintaining America's landscapes for future generations. Together, our members support energy development, wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation, public access, and local economies that depend on healthy public lands.

¹ "The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA): Frequently Asked Questions," Laura B Comay, Carol Hardy Vincent, Congressional Research Service, August 28, 2026, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12888>.

Devastating events in 2026 exhibit why a dedicated source of funding through the LRF for public lands infrastructure remains essential. The following are select examples from this year:

- **Bryce Canyon National Park:** Heavy monsoon rain in August caused flash flooding along several trails, stranding hikers and prompting rescues. Flooding forced closure of the Wall Street, Bryce Connector, Peekaboo Loop, and Tropic trails while park officials assessed hazardous conditions, including washouts and debris-laden flows.²
- **Mount Rainier National Park:** Wildfires in and near the park in August forced closure of the Sunrise and White River roads, the Grand Park area, portions of the Wonderland and Northern Loop trails, and multiple backcountry camps, cutting off access to popular visitor destinations and wilderness areas.³
- **Everglades National Park:** The Highway 41 Fire in April burned more than 9,000 acres in and near the park, threatened structures, and prompted closures affecting visitor facilities, parking areas, waterways, and access in the Shark Valley/U.S. 41 area.⁴
- **Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park:** Mudslides in July buried stretches of East Portal Road under up to six feet of rock and mud, covered the East Portal campground and picnic area, and forced their closure for repairs.⁵
- **World War II Memorial, National Mall:** Vandals in August defaced the memorial with paint and introduced a substance into the fountain, requiring cleanup and repair at one of the nation's most significant memorials to American veterans.⁶
- **Federal Public Lands Nationwide:** As of late August, U.S. firefighters had responded to more than 52,000 wildfires that burned over 8.2 million acres across national parks, national forests, BLM lands, wildlife refuges, and surrounding communities, forcing closures of roads, trails, campgrounds, visitor facilities, and backcountry areas.⁷

Fortunately, Congress has begun reauthorizing the LRF. This summer, committees in both chambers advanced the Great American Outdoors Act 250 (H.R. 9250) and the America the Beautiful Act (S. 1547).^{8,9} Together, the bills have attracted support from nearly two-thirds of Congress, including 251 House co-sponsors and 70 Senate co-sponsors. Remarkably, those numbers are evenly split between Republicans and Democrats, demonstrating that maintaining America's national parks and public lands should rise above politics.

The LRF is the nation's largest public lands conservation program, directing up to \$1.9 billion annually from energy production on multiple-use public lands and waters toward deferred maintenance at national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and other public lands. Since 2021, the program has funded more than 1,600 projects and invested \$8.3 billion to improve trails,

² "11 Rescued After Flash Flooding at Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah," *Fox Weather*, <https://www.foxweather.com/weather-news/11-rescued-flash-flooding-bryce-canyon-national-park-utah>.

³ "Wildland Fire Information," Mount Rainier National Park, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/mora/learn/news/fire.htm>.

⁴ "Wildfire Burning in East Everglades National Park Area off U.S. 41," *WGCU Public Media*, April 28, 2026, <https://www.wgcu.org/environment/2026-04-28/wildfire-burning-in-2-500-acres-in-east-everglades-national-park-area-off-us-41>.

⁵ "Mudslides Force Closure of East Portal Road, Campground and Picnic Area," National Park Service, July 17, 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/blca/learn/news/mudslides-force-closure-of-east-portal-road-campground-and-picnic-area.htm>.

⁶ "World War II Memorial Vandalized with Paint and Bubbles," *Associated Press*, August 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/wwii-memorial-vandalized-paint-bubbles-ac1f767c2bfb81f0902b1914c2dfe252>.

⁷ "National Fire News," National Interagency Fire Center, <https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/nfn>.

⁸ Great American Outdoors Act 250, H.R. 9250, 119th Cong. (2025–2026), Congress.gov, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/9250?hl=hr+9250&s=1&r=1>.

⁹ America the Beautiful Act, S. 1547, 119th Cong. (2025–2026), Congress.gov, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/1547?hl=s+1547&s=2&r=16>.

campgrounds, visitor facilities, roads, water systems, wildlife habitat, and other infrastructure.^{10 11} Yet, congressional authority for the program expired last September.

It's important to note that the catastrophic flooding at Grand Canyon National Park reportedly damaged 40% of the Transcanyon Waterline, disrupting a \$208 million infrastructure modernization project primarily funded by the LRF.^{12 13}

America's national parks and public lands are not becoming less expensive to maintain. Every flood, fire, storm, damaged trail, failed utility system, deteriorating campground, and vandalized historic landmark adds to a maintenance challenge that affects visitors, local communities, outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, and the long-term stewardship of lands owned by the American people.

The legislation is ready. Bipartisan support exists. The need is undeniable. We respectfully urge Congress to quickly reauthorize the LRF and ensure this historic conservation program continues delivering results for America's public lands and protecting visitors.

Sincerely,

Western Energy Alliance
Boone and Crockett Club
COLAB
Energy Workforce & Technology Council
Gulf Energy Alliance
Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce
Independent Petroleum Association of America
International Association of Drilling Contractors
LA 1 Coalition
Morganza Action Coalition
Mule Deer Foundation
National Ocean Industries Association
The Great Outdoors Fund
Restore or Retreat
USA Energy Workers
U.S. Oil & Gas Association

¹⁰ "Great American Outdoors Act Project Data," U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.doi.gov/gaoa-project-data>.

¹¹ "Great American Outdoors Act: See How We Are Doing," U.S. Forest Service, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/14f1b88a54fe490c858c60238be67031/page/See-How-We-Are-Doing/>

¹² "Flash Flooding Causes Major Damage to the Grand Canyon's Critical Water Pipeline," *Associated Press*, August 31, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/grand-canyon-water-pipeline-repairs-flooding-305a0474e6833237d57c7287b4e27e39>.

¹³ "Agency Awards \$208M Contract to Overhaul Grand Canyon Waterline," *Engineering News-Record*, Michael Powell, May 18, 2023, <https://www.enr.com/articles/56475-agency-awards-208m-contract-to-overhaul-grand-canyon-waterline>.