

**File Code:** 5420**Date:****Route To:****Subject:** Fiscal Year 2026 Land and Water Conservation Fund Project Nominations**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs, and WO Directors**REPLY DUE SEPTEMBER 27, 2024**

Land acquisition is a strategic tool to advance both the Forest Service 10-Year Wildfire Crisis Strategy and Equity Action Plan, as well as our commitment to expand public access to recreation. With funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the Forest Service consolidates landownership and conserves new lands, within and adjacent to forest boundaries, to support multiple resource objectives. The LWCF Land Acquisition program was designated a Justice40 initiative given its contributions to rural economic development and other vital benefits to Justice40 or underserved communities. Through acquisition of wilderness inholdings and recreation access parcels, the LWCF program also delivers essential recreation and public access benefits, a continued Administration priority in fiscal year (FY) 2026.

Congress affirmed LWCF's value by permanently authorizing and increasing its funding through the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020. The LWCF program is a key part of the

Administration's America the Beautiful initiative to preserve 30 percent of the Nation's lands and waters by 2030. Support from local communities, landowners, non-governmental organizations, Tribes, local elected officials, and local environmental justice organizations is vital to ensure the success of any proposed land acquisition.

Please review the enclosed updated LWCF Core Criteria and Guidance document to ensure your project nomination addresses the most recent evaluation criteria. All information regarding the FY 2026 project evaluation and prioritization process will be available on the [Forest Service LWCF](#) site. Although partially complete packages were in the past accepted, only complete packages will be considered for FY 2026 and beyond.

If you have any questions, please contact Barbara A. Johnson, National Land Acquisition Program Manager, at (202) 380-7270 or Barbara.A.Johnson@usda.gov.

CHRISTOPHER B. FRENCH
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Enclosure

cc: Elrand Denson; Kay Wiand; Barbara Johnson

