Background

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was created by Congress in 1965 to assist efforts at the federal, state and local levels to improve public land access and recreation, along with water and habitat protections.

The public has not always been aware of the range of LWCF projects, their benefits, or the distribution of projects and benefits across the United States. This visualization shows recent LWCF projects, acres, and public dollars organized by state and type of benefit for the federal fiscal years 2011 to 2014 (http://headwaterseconomics.org/dataviz/lwcf).

Headwaters Economics worked with various federal agencies in the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to create a comprehensive and accurate database for this analysis.

Assignment of LWCF Project Benefits

After acquiring project data from the federal agencies that oversee the various LWCF programs, Headwaters Economics assigned each project to a benefit category. These categories were arrived at after a close reading of project descriptions and assessment of the more common project types and purposes. They were discussed with and reviewed by agency data providers. The benefit categories are:

- **Access / Sportsmen**: Opens up new areas of public land for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities. Many LWCF projects secure strategic parcels and rights-of-way to enable new public access to previously restricted public lands.
- **Cultural / Historical**: Protects resources with important cultural and historical value, including paleontological, archaeological, prehistoric, and historic resources. Important sites, from the hallowed ground of Civil War battlefields to ancient petroglyphs, have been permanently protected through the LWCF.
- **Parks / Recreation**: Creates new recreational opportunities in cities, towns, and rural areas across the country. From urban ball fields to iconic wilderness areas, these projects protect open space and develop facilities to provide a wide range of new recreational opportunities.
- **Species / Habitat**: Protects important habitat for fish and wildlife species, supporting wildlife species recovery goals and healthy ecosystems.
- **Water**: Safeguards water resources, protecting the forests, rivers, and watersheds that provide communities with safe drinking water, water-based recreation opportunities, and important aquatic habitat.
- **Working Lands**: Supports traditional uses on working lands. Voluntary partnerships with farmers, ranchers, and foresters help sustain agricultural operations and conservation stewardship on private lands to ensure the long-term economic vitality of rural communities.
An LWCF project may support one or more of the identified benefits. In the data visualization, each category includes all projects that had that benefit. Project totals by benefit cannot be summed to arrive at the total number of LWCF projects for the study period.

**Methods**

This section describes data sources and decisions made during data processing. The term “dollars” indicates LWCF enacted funding and does not include matches or cost share amounts from non-LWCF sources. The term “acres” indicates the land area impacted by the LWCF project, not any remaining acres under consideration for future LWCF work.

**U.S. Department of the Interior**

The Department of Interior provided data for all projects funded by the following LWCF programs:

- U.S. Bureau of Land Management Federal Land Acquisitions,
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Land Acquisitions,
- U.S. National Park Service Federal Land Acquisitions
- U.S. National Park Service State and Local Assistance Program, and
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund.

Data for LWCF projects funded by the National Park Service State and Local Assistance Program was provided by the US DOI State and Local Assistance Program Office. Data for LWCF projects funded by the Federal Land Acquisitions Programs within the BLM, NPS, and FWS as well as projects funded by the FWS Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund were provided by the US DOI Policy, Management and Budget Office.

A summary of the LWCF data provided by the Department of Interior follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Dollars*</th>
<th>Acres**</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal Land Acquisitions</td>
<td>Bureau of Land Management</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Federal Land Acquisitions</td>
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<td>7,806</td>
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<td>Federal Land Acquisitions</td>
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<td>$12,136,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Land Acquisitions</td>
<td>Bureau of Land Management</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$14,129,000</td>
<td>18,540</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Land Acquisitions</td>
<td>Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$33,224,000</td>
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<td>Federal Land Acquisitions</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>Federal Land Acquisitions</td>
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<td>Federal Land Acquisitions</td>
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<td>$16,567,000</td>
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<td>National Park Service</td>
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<td>State and Local Assistance</td>
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<td>State and Local Assistance</td>
<td>National Park Service</td>
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<td>268</td>
<td>$22,879,692</td>
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</table>
Headwaters Economics identified 12 Federal Land Acquisition projects where multiple states were listed (for example: “ND; SD” for the “Dakota Tallgrass Prairie WMA”). In these cases, Headwaters Economics evenly divided the enacted dollars and acres among the states.

The majority of LWCF projects funded by the State and Local Assistance Program (784 of 917) were for facilities development or renovation. These projects were assigned to the "Parks / Recreation" benefit. The remaining 133 projects involved land acquisitions and were assigned to benefit categories based on the project descriptions.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Projects funded by the LWCF Forest Legacy Program were provided by staff at the USDA Forest Service Cooperative Forestry Office. Projects funded by the Forest Service Federal Land Acquisitions Program were provided by staff at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Easement Programs Division.

A summary of these data follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Dollars</th>
<th>Acres</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Forest Service</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>$57,146,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**ABOUT HEADWATERS ECONOMICS**

Headwaters Economics is an independent, nonprofit research group whose mission is to improve community development and land management decisions in the West.