Land and Water Conservation Fund, 2011-2014

Methods, Definitions, and Data Sources

July 2015

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.

Program	Agency	Fiscal Year	Projects	Dollars*	Acres**
Federal Land Acquisitions	Bureau of Land Management	2011	10	$16,060,000	11,404
Federal Land Acquisitions	Bureau of Land Management	2012	6	$18,969,480	7,806
Federal Land Acquisitions	Bureau of Land Management	2013	7	$12,136,000	6,714
Federal Land Acquisitions	Bureau of Land Management	2014	5	$14,129,000	18,540
Federal Land Acquisitions	Fish and Wildlife Service	2011	30	$33,224,000	33,653
Federal Land Acquisitions	Fish and Wildlife Service	2012	21	$32,213,200	16,491
Federal Land Acquisitions	Fish and Wildlife Service	2013	27	$32,165,000	42,979
Federal Land Acquisitions	Fish and Wildlife Service	2014	7	$35,071,000	50,078
Federal Land Acquisitions	National Park Service	2011	13	$32,776,000	32,095
Federal Land Acquisitions	National Park Service	2012	2	$30,511,100	43,477
Federal Land Acquisitions	National Park Service	2013	6	$19,915,000	27,188
Federal Land Acquisitions	National Park Service	2014	7	$16,567,000	3,499
State and Local Assistance	National Park Service	2011	186	$33,497,211	8,149
State and Local Assistance	National Park Service	2012	330	$47,030,822	3,037
State and Local Assistance	National Park Service	2013	133	$20,891,214	1,321
State and Local Assistance	National Park Service	2014	268	$22,879,692	4,508

	Agency		Fiscal Year	Projects	Dollars	Acres
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund	Fish and Wildlife Service		2011	30	$53,636,448	43,176
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund	Fish and Wildlife Service		2012	24	$23,501,649	21,417
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund	Fish and Wildlife Service		2013	22	$23,635,835	14,372
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund	Fish and Wildlife Service		2014	27	$27,400,000	35,351

* Dollars are underestimated for the State and Local Assistance program because of missing data for 104 of 917 projects.
** Acres are underestimated for the US FWS Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund program because of missing data for 12 of 103 projects.

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.

Program	Agency	Fiscal Year	Projects	Dollars	Acres
Federal Land Acquisitions	Forest Service	2011	5	$19,235,000	9,418
Federal Land Acquisitions	Forest Service	2012	30	$40,605,499	25,657
Federal Land Acquisitions	Forest Service	2013	20	$37,761,002	24,977
Federal Land Acquisitions	Forest Service	2014	3	$31,300,000	4,701
Forest Legacy Program	Forest Service	2011	9	$39,566,474	66,374
Forest Legacy Program	Forest Service	2012	13	$45,814,395	97,411
Forest Legacy Program	Forest Service	2013	16	$44,062,160	69,655
Forest Legacy Program	Forest Service	2014	19	$57,146,000	115,973

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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.