

# CHAPTER ONE

## Overview and Purpose

The **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** was enacted into law in 1965 (P.L. 88-578) to enhance recreational opportunities; acquire parks and open spaces; protect wilderness, wetlands, and refuges; and preserve wildlife habitat.

Each year the LWCF is credited with over \$900 million from federal oil and gas lease revenues from the Outer Continental Shelf, on the premise that some of the revenues from non-renewable resource production should be used to permanently protect other natural and recreational resources.

Unfortunately, only a fraction of that amount has been appropriated by the Congress for utilization by the program.

### The LWCF has two components:

A federal program funds the purchase of land and water areas for conservation and recreation purposes via the major federal land management agencies – the USFS, USFWS, BLM, and NPS.

A state grants program provides matching funds, administered by a state liaison (KDWPT for Kansas) for planning, acquisition, and development of land and water areas for state and local parks and recreation facilities.

### Statewide Planning Requirement

In order to preserve, develop and assure accessibility to quality outdoor recreation resources each state is required by the **Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (LWCF)** to maintain on file with the National Park Service an approved document illustrating how it has, and expects to, address various outdoor recreation issues – if it wishes to remain eligible for LWCF funds.

The focus of this report is on assessing the state’s current outdoor recreation amenity inventory and estimating optimal levels of supply; based on both innovative and published research, opinions of practicing professionals and elicited input from identified user groups, associations and the general public. This inquiry includes a detailed proximity analysis at the local level of public supply. It is enhanced by the examination of participation and demographic trends.

The report strives to illustrate where access to recreation experiences is adequate or in need of enhancement – to define gaps in service or identify outdoor experience deserts.

**The State of Kansas has received over \$50 million in 50% matching LWCF dollars, resulting in over 700 different projects at the state and local level.**



The AGO Initiative is allied with the purposes of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in that its implementation calls for the reinvestment of revenues from oil and gas extraction into the permanent protection of parks, open spaces, wildlife habitat, and access for recreational activities ... potentially re-framing and reinvigorating the LWCF.

AGO consists of five conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives.

**Landscapes** – the protection of America’s large, rural landscapes – including a larger role for private landowners.

**Recreation** – the support of outdoor recreation access and opportunities to connect Americans to the outdoors.

**Rivers** – the restoration of our country’s rich legacy of rivers and waterways.

**Urban** – the improved access of city-dwelling Americans to a new generation of great urban parks and green spaces.

**Youth** – the development of the next generation of environmental stewards.

### America’s Great Outdoors Initiative

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed a [memorandum](#) establishing the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative (AGO) to promote a 21st century approach to conservation and outdoor recreation. The AGO tasked federal agencies with developing a new conservation agenda to bring together state, local and private partners nationwide. The AGO Initiative recognizes three major core elements:

#### Connecting Americans to the Great Outdoors.

Research supports the widely held opinion that spending time in natural settings improves one’s overall quality of life. Direct benefits to users include enhanced mental and physical health, but the overall benefits are more extensive – indirect benefits extend to communities and regions in the form of notable economic impacts, as the outdoor industry currently supports over 6 million American jobs and approximately \$650 billion in outdoor recreation spending each year ([Outdoor Foundation Report – 2012](#)).

Dozens of public forums around the nation inquired about recreational use of the outdoors and found that Americans want to reconnect – or connect for the first time – with our streams, our prairies, our woodlands and mountains.

#### Conserving and Restoring America’s Great Outdoors.

AGO aims to more effectively align and leverage resources to advance community-driven conservation efforts. Anticipated conservation and restoration outcomes include:

- Accessible parks or green spaces for our children
- A new generation of great urban parks and open spaces
- River restorations and recreational blueways

#### Working Together for America’s Great Outdoors.

Americans have called for better collaboration between the public and private sectors. AGO is working to improve coordination among federal agencies and establish meaningful partnerships that enable regions and communities to achieve more collectively than they could individually.