

Outdoors for All Act

Codifies the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) to increase access to outdoor recreation opportunities in cities and towns.

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Background

Parks and outdoor spaces in cities and towns can spur economic growth, mitigate the effects of climate change, and increase equitable access to nature. In 2017 alone, local parks generated more than \$166 billion in economic activity and supported more than 1.1 million jobs nationwide.¹ Additionally, local parks improve community health and climate resilience by managing storm water, mitigating flooding, absorbing air pollution, filtering rain water, and increasing tree coverage.² Tree coverage can also reduce “urban heat islands,” but unfortunately, low-income neighborhoods and communities of Black, Indigenous, and people of color tend to have far fewer trees than wealthier, predominantly white neighborhoods do.³

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership

Established by Congress in 2014 and administered by the National Park Service, ORLP is funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as a nationally competitive grant program that delivers funding to cities and towns of 30,000 or more residents to increase access to the outdoors. With eligible cities in all 50 states, ORLP creates and improves state and locally-owned parks and other outdoor recreation areas, prioritizing grants in underserved communities. The LWCF has strong bipartisan support, and was permanently and fully funded at \$900 million a year by the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020. ORLP, however, is a discretionary program under the LWCF, putting this funding for underserved communities at risk. For example, in January 2021, a Secretarial order aimed to divert all \$150 million of FY20 and FY21 ORLP funds. Though eventually reverted, this attack demonstrated the need to codify the program and protect it from future threats.

Quick Facts:

- Currently, one in three people living in the U.S. do not live within a half mile of a quality local park.⁴
- A 2018 report showed that parks and recreation spending creates 16-23 jobs for every million dollars spent.¹
- Urban trees in the U.S. alone offset the amount of carbon equivalent to removing 19 million cars from the road for a year.⁵
- Tree and vegetation coverage can reduce “urban heat islands” by lowering peak summer daytime temperatures by up to 9 degrees.⁶
- Research shows that close-to-home nature supports healthy communities, promoting active lifestyles, stress reduction, mindfulness, and improved mental health.⁷

Call to Action

Cosponsor the Outdoors for All Act, sponsored by Senator Padilla and Representatives Barrágan and Turner with strong bipartisan support. Expand outdoor recreation opportunities and support underserved communities across the country by codifying ORLP.

Outcomes

More than 80 percent of the United States population live in cities,⁸ but not all have equitable access to quality outdoor recreation opportunities. Across the U.S., parks that serve primarily communities of color are half the size of parks that serve white communities and are five times more crowded,⁹ limiting the ability for kids to grow up experiencing the outdoors and its social, economic, and health benefits. ORLP grants prioritize projects that support underserved communities, provide job-training to youth, and leverage resources through public-private partnerships. To-date, four sets of ORLP funding awards have supported 69 ORLP projects, while leveraging more than \$76 million in non-federal funds, to improve close-to-home access to the outdoors.

The Outdoors for All Act will address outdoor recreation deficits by codifying ORLP to ensure that, as cities grow and the effects of climate change increase, there will be equitable access to all the benefits of local parks, from job creation to clean air. The parks, playgrounds, green spaces, preserved natural habitats, and trails that ORLP funds provide much needed outdoor outlets for city residents, bringing communities together across different social and economic spectrums and reconnecting people with the outdoors.

- Since its inception in 2014, over \$45 million in ORLP grants have been awarded to over 60 communities in 30 states.
- ORLP grants facilitate creation and improvement of parks and outdoor recreation opportunities without spending taxpayer dollars, are complementary to LWCF state side funding, and do not supplant federal funds.
- Eligible applicants for ORLP grants are state or local government agencies, federally recognized Indian tribes, special purpose districts such as parks districts, and nongovernmental or private entities.
- Grants may be used to acquire land for outdoor recreation, to develop or renovate facilities that provide outdoor recreation opportunities to the public, and to develop projects that provide opportunities for outdoor education and public lands volunteerism.



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1 - <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/the-economic-impact-of-local-parks/>
2 - <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/urban-parks-infrastructure-gets-congressional-spotlight/>
3 - <https://www.americanforests.org/about-us/tazo/>
4 - <https://www.tpl.org/blog/why-the-10-minute-walk>
5 - <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/april/parks-as-a-solution-to-climate-change/>

6 - <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/using-trees-and-vegetation-reduce-heat-islands#2>
7 - <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/april/the-health-benefits-of-small-parks-and-green-spaces/>
8 - <http://css.umich.edu/factsheets/us-cities-factsheet>
9 - <https://www.tpl.org/the-heat-is-on>