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## **President Obama Announces Plan for Community-Based Conservation through the America's Great Outdoors Initiative**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – President Barack Obama today announced the Administration's action plan, under the America's Great Outdoors initiative, to achieve lasting conservation of the outdoor spaces that power our nation's economy, shape our culture, and build our outdoor traditions. This initiative seeks to reinvigorate our approach to conservation and reconnect Americans, especially young people, with the lands and waters that are used for farming and ranching, hunting and fishing, and for families to spend quality time together. Recognizing that many of these places and resources are under intense pressure, the President established the America's Great Outdoors Initiative last April to work with the American people in developing a conservation and recreation agenda that makes sense for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The report released today outlines ways in which the Federal Government will help empower local communities to accomplish their conservation and recreation priorities by recognizing that the best ideas come from outside of Washington. Last summer, senior Administration officials held 51 listening sessions across the country to gather input from Americans about the outdoor places and activities that they value most. These sessions drew more than 10,000 participants and more than 105,000 written comments, shaping an action plan that, based on local initiatives and support, which when implemented will result in:

- Accessible parks or green spaces for our children.
- A new generation of great urban parks and community green spaces.
- Newly-restored river restorations and recreational "blueways" that power economic revitalization in communities.
- Stronger support for farmers, ranchers, and private landowners that help protect rural landscapes and provide access for recreation.
- The reinvestment of revenues from oil and gas extraction into the permanent protection of parks, open spaces, wildlife habitat, and access for recreational activities.
- A 21<sup>st</sup> century conservation ethic that builds on local ideas and solutions for environmental stewardship and connecting to our historic, cultural, and natural heritage.

"With children spending half as much time outside as their parents did, and with many Americans living in urban areas without safe access to green space, connecting to the outdoors is more important than ever for the economic and physical health of our communities," said Nancy

Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. “Through the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, this Administration will work together with communities to ensure clean and accessible lands and waters, thriving outdoor cultures and economies, and healthy and active youth.”

“The America’s Great Outdoors Initiative is born out of a conversation with the American people about what matters most to them about the places where they live, work, and play,” Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said. “It’s about practical, common-sense ideas from the American people on how our natural, cultural, and historic resources can help us be a more competitive, stronger, and healthier nation. Together, we are adapting our conservation strategies to meet the challenges of today and empowering communities to protect and preserve our working lands and natural landscapes for generations to come.”

“America’s farmlands and woodlands help fuel our economy and create jobs across the rural areas of our country,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “This plan seeks to work in partnership with landowners, conservation groups, states and others to conserve our working lands and our public lands and to reconnect Americans – especially our nation’s youth – with opportunities to stay active. This blueprint was developed with input from the over 100,000 Americans in all corners of our country who joined our national listening sessions and who contributed their ideas online.”

“This initiative is an effort to reconnect Americans with the valuable resources all around them and shape a 21st century plan for protecting our great outdoors,” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “It is important that our waters, lands and greenspaces are brought back into our daily lives. President Obama’s initiative will help make these critical resources a national focus once again, and involve people of every background in conservation of the places that we hold dear.”

Specifically, the report calls for fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund; establishing a 21<sup>st</sup> century Conservation Service Corps to engage young Americans in public lands and water restoration; and extending the deduction for conservation easement donations on private lands beyond 2011, among other measures.

The full report and additional information is available at: [www.americasgreatoutdoors.gov](http://www.americasgreatoutdoors.gov).

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