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President requests maximum conservation funding, boosting conservation in Oregon

President Obama's proposed 2017 budget includes full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to advance projects from the Columbia Gorge to Wallowa County

Portland, Ore (February 10th, 2016) – President Obama released his [proposed 2017](#) budget to congress yesterday, calling for millions of new dollars in new funding to support more than a dozen conservation projects in Oregon. Obama's budget proposal is part of the administration's strategy to secure full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million per year.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) uses a portion of royalties from federal oil and gas leases and invests it back into local communities across the nation. Over its 50-year life, the program has invested nearly \$1 billion in Oregon and Washington directly into projects that create outdoor recreation opportunities and support Oregon's quality of life.

"President Obama's budget is a great first step in securing additional funding for the LWCF which is a crucial tool in preserving and protecting Oregon's treasured spaces," said Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley. "This vital funding will ensure areas around the entire state, from the Columbia River Gorge to the East Moraine of Wallowa Lake will be available for future generations to explore and enjoy. I am committed to fighting in the Senate to help make the President's budget a reality for the LWCF."

The 2017 budget request includes over \$30M for a large landscape proposal, Pathways to the Pacific, which conserves and restores landscapes from the John Day to the mouth of the Columbia. This would be largest federal funding request for the Columbia River Gorge in over 15 years.

Kevin Gorman, executive director of Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust, a key partner in the Pathways projects, said, "The President made an unprecedented investment in the Columbia Gorge by funding Pathways to the Pacific. This funding can help expand recreation opportunities in the Gorge by linking trails from town to town."

The budget would also fund a community-based effort in Northeast Oregon to protect the iconic East Moraine of Wallowa Lake, ranked third nationally for funding through the Forest Legacy program. The project is slated to receive \$900,000 in the 2017 budget, which adds to the \$3 million already earmarked in FY16's budget priorities for the Forest Legacy program.

"The East Moraine is a geological wonder, whose scenic beauty is enjoyed by thousands of people each year. The President's commitment to LWCF will help us ensure this icon of Northeast Oregon remains undeveloped and locally owned," says Kathleen Ackley, executive director for Wallowa Land Trust, a key partner in the project.

LWCF expired on September 30th of 2015, but was given a three-year extension at the end of 2015. The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts is part of a diverse group of stakeholders pushing to make the program permanent to help protect scenic treasures, wildlife habitat, and expand outdoor recreation throughout the nation.

"In Oregon, hunting, fishing, hiking and camping are ways of life, and LWCF has been ensuring that people have an outlet for those activities for fifty years," Oregon's senior Senator Ron Wyden said. "I am pleased that the

president's budget includes funding to safeguard this critical tool for protecting our nation's public lands and providing access for the outdoor recreation activities that so many Americans enjoy."

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Oregon projects identified in the [Department of Interior](#) and [USDA Forest Service](#) documents:

President's FY2017 Budget detail for Oregon LWCF projects:

- **Pathways to the Pacific** (large landscape, multi-state collaborative project): **\$19,269,000** (for Oregon)
 - Crooked River Wild and Scenic River - \$350,000
 - Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area - \$913,000
 - John Day Wild and Scenic River - \$10,250,000
 - John Day Fossil Beds - \$250,000
 - Lewis and Clark National Historic Park - \$2,506,000
 - Sandy River / Oregon National Historic Trail / Salmon River - \$3,000,000
 - Tualatin National Wildlife Refuge - \$2,000,000
- **Other Oregon projects: \$7,740,000**
 - Pacific Crest Trail / Cascade Siskiyou National Monument - \$1,500,000
 - Pacific Northwest Streams - Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest - \$1,450,000
 - Three mile: Siuslaw National Forest - \$390,000
 - Wassen Creek: Siuslaw National Forest - \$3,500,000
 - East Moraine Wallowa Lake - \$900,000
 - This is in addition to \$3,000,000 allocated in FY16 budget