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## **FY25 / FY26 Federal Appropriations Request & Legislative Priorities**

### **1. New England National Scenic Trail (NET) Trail Base Funding Increase**

- FY 2013 Funding Level (enacted through National Park Service): \$127,000
- President's Budget Request, FY 14-21: \$127,000 / FY22: \$275,000 / FY23: \$310,000
- Recommendation for FY25 Continuing Resolution: \$600,000
- Recommendation for FY26: \$600,000

### **2. US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Program (LSR)**

The Landscape Scale Restoration Program leverages significant local partnerships to improve and enhance the condition of forested land. Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is a recipient of a 2023 LSR grant (\$245,464 over 3 years) to support its Master Woodland Manager (MWM) program. MWM is educating private forest owners and municipal and non-profit forest managers in managing their property for habitat, public access and resilience to extreme weather events, among other public benefits. CFPA hopes to apply to the next round of available funding and respectfully requests support from Congress to ensure the program continues.

### **3. Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

The LWCF supports a range of programs that are supporting natural resources for all Americans, including the New England National Scenic Trail (NET). We applaud the Congress and the President for support for their prior support at \$900 million annually and encourage future support, including rejection of proposals that would change the LWCF or related provisions in the Great America's Outdoors Act.

We also encourage a \$10 million appropriation for the Highlands Conservation Act (HCA) within the LWCF. For 2024, the US Fish & Wildlife Service is waiting for approval to announce the award of \$4.2 million to Connecticut landowners to permanently protect approximately 1,000 acres of land. Communities in 80% of Connecticut's Congressional Districts are now eligible to apply for funding.

### **4. Legislation**

- **The Complete America's Great Trails Act** would grant a tax credit to private landowners who provide conservation easements to designated National Scenic Trails. This low-cost incentive for willing landowners to donate easements would increase and protect trail connectivity and help ensure access to outdoor recreation. Senator Blumethal has been lead in the Senate.
- **Connecticut River Watershed Partnership Act** was introduced in 2023 by Congressman McGovern (MA-2) and Senator Shaheen (NH) and would create a dedicated funding stream to support *non regulatory* conservation, restoration, education and recreation efforts in the watershed through enhanced partnerships and coordination between non-profits, community members, tribal organization and state and federal agencies. Benefits of the program include public safety and resilience against storm events, clean drinking water, wildlife habitat and public access for outdoor recreation. The Connecticut River watershed encompasses the entire New England Trail.