

# THE CONSERVATION FUND

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **SENATORS INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO REINSTATE A CRITICAL WESTERN LANDS PROGRAM**

*Bill would reauthorize the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act, which will benefit local economies, ranchers, sportsmen, outdoor enthusiasts, conservation, and historic preservation*

**ARLINGTON, Va. (Feb. 13, 2013)** — Today, Senators Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Dean Heller (R-NV) introduced a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), a critical western lands program. Through FLTFA’s “land for land” concept, Federal land sales fund priority land conservation in the West.

A diverse set of over 100 groups, including The Conservation Fund and National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, support quickly reinstating the program that produced successful results before it expired. Original cosponsors include Senators Tom Udall (D-NM), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Max Baucus (D-MT), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mark Udall (D-CO), and Michael Bennet (D-CO).”

“FLTFA is an excellent model of public land management that achieves conservation and responsible access goals while spurring economic development,” said Senator Heinrich. “In New Mexico, we’ve seen how well FLTFA works. These funds have been used to protect land at Aztec Ruins National Monument, the Elk Springs, and La Cienega BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. Because of FLTFA, these areas will be protected for future generation of New Mexicans.”

“I’m pleased to partner with Senator Heinrich in support of a program that provides a fiscally responsible way to protect sensitive lands and make additional lands available for our communities to grow. This is an important tool for Nevada and the West, and I am pleased to be part of this bipartisan effort,” said Senator Dean Heller.

“We praise Senators Heinrich and Heller for leading the effort to bring back this fiscally sound solution to western lands,” said The Conservation Fund’s President, Larry Selzer. “FLTFA is good for the West because it balances the region’s economic and conservation needs.”

“We support the reauthorization of FLTFA. It provides a common-sense and balanced approach to land acquisition,” said Dustin Van Liew, Executive Director, Public Lands Council and Director of Federal Lands, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. “The ‘land for land’ concept allows the agencies to dispose of land that will provide increased private-sector economic productivity, while at the same time putting targeted specifications on the type and amount of land the agencies may acquire. This should help the agencies consolidate their holdings and make much-needed improvements to their land-management.”

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Under FLTFA, federal land sales by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) generate funding for the “FLTFA Account” that the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture may use to acquire critical lands from willing sellers within national recreational areas, national forests, national trails and other areas managed by the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The revenue also provides some funding for BLM to run the FLTFA program, resulting in a self-funded program.

Before FLTFA’s authority expired in July 2011, the BLM completed hundreds of Federal land sales, generating over \$115 million. Many ranchers and farmers purchased BLM lands adjacent to their properties, often allowing them to expand their operations. BLM also sold lands to timber interests, real estate companies, a community college, landfills, a cemetery and many others. The BLM sales helped support economic development, consolidate land ownership, and create jobs.

Utilizing the FLTFA Account, agencies purchased high-priority conservation lands for recreational access for hunting, fishing, hiking, boating and other activities, as well as historic, scenic and cultural resources.

The conservation purchases often enhanced the tourism and recreation economies of local communities through retail sales, hotels, restaurants, gas stations and more. The program helped consolidate inholdings to allow for better management of public lands. In addition, FLTFA helped many landowners achieve their economic goals, by providing opportunities to sell their lands to conservation.

FLTFA accomplishments include:

- protecting crucial winter range for big game and public access for scenic hiking along steep cliffs, rocky slopes, and mesa tops at Elk Springs ACEC in **New Mexico**;
- acquiring several properties in Red Rock Canyon, **Nevada**’s first National Conservation Area that provides 30 miles of hiking trails, rock climbing, horseback riding, mountain biking, road biking, picnic areas and nature observing to more than one million visitors a year;
- protecting a historic stopping point for rafters and fishermen along the Rogue Wild and Scenic River, Zane Gray’s cabin in **Oregon**;
- creating over one mile of riverfront, fly-fishing access at the famed Gray Reef stretch of the North Platte River, a Blue Ribbon/Class I trout fishery that supports the highest pounds of trout per mile of any stream in **Wyoming**;
- conserving both sides of Kolob Terrace Road, a popular scenic route near the base of Tabernacle Dome in Zion National Park, **Utah**;
- securing recreational access at a popular hiking area in the heart of Hells Canyon Wilderness in **Arizona**;
- preserving the artifact-rich cultural sites of the Ancestral Puebloans at Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in **Colorado**;

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- protecting big game habitat and an outstanding lake view at the popular Chain of Lakes Special Recreation Area and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail in **Montana**;
- conserving key riverfront lands along the canyon stretch of the South Fork Snake River, a popular angling and boating area that supports 341 related jobs in **Idaho**; and
- safeguarding pristine Coho salmon habitat and productive spawning reach for Chinook salmon within a Wild and Scenic River designation along the South Fork of the Trinity River at the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in **California**.

For more information on FLTFA reauthorization, see [www.fltf.org](http://www.fltf.org).

## **About The Conservation Fund**

At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states to protect more than 7.5 million acres of land since 1985.

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