

# Opinion: Most popular outdoors program is in danger

By Elizabeth Miller, Backpacker

Jonathan Asher didn't know much about the Land and Water Conservation Fund when he started working for the Wilderness Society, where he's a senior representative for government relations. But when he scrolled through the list of projects that it had paid for, he found that it touched his life from end to end.

"I couldn't throw a stone and not see a place that I knew of or grew up around or had had some interaction with, whether it was Evergreen Lake and growing up skating there, or the Evergreen rec center, or my fondest or most epic trips, like Kenai and Denali," he says. Even visiting his father in Buena Vista, Colo., he passes a sign touting the fund's support of the town's river park.

But the fund, to which Congress can allocate up to \$900 million, saw many of its components zeroed out by the president's proposed budget. All in all, the fund is looking at a whopping 85 percent cut, one of a series of reductions to the Department of Interior that saw millions dropping from the budgets for the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management. Conservation groups called it "reckless" and "a shameless attack on America's parks and public lands."

No taxpayer dollars go to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was created in 1964 to direct royalties paid by energy companies drilling on the outer continental shelf toward efforts to safeguard national parks, cultural and recreation sites, forests, rivers, and lakes.

**Read the whole story**