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March 9, 2018

The Honorable Nannette Diaz Barragán  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1320 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Turner  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2368 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Barragán and Turner:

We are writing to express our support for H.R. 2943, the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Grant Program Act, a bill that creates a dedicated source of funding of up to \$25 million to expand outdoor recreation opportunities in urban communities and to promote the development of public-private partnerships for such projects. With over 80 percent of the population living in a city, our nation's urban parks, which are supported by a vast network of infrastructure systems, play an important role in spurring economic growth and development and creating more resilient communities with green infrastructure systems. However, despite the growing popularity of public parks and lands, chronic underfunding of our parks infrastructure continues to plague the system, threatening both the safety of these infrastructure systems and the ability to meet the demands of a growing population.

*ASCE's 2017 Infrastructure Report Card* gave our nation's public parks a grade of "D+." Decades of underinvestment in our public parks infrastructure has resulted in large backlogs of deferred maintenance that threatens communities' economic stability. Fortunately, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides a critical source of funding for the protection of natural resources and for outdoor recreation projects, including local parks, playgrounds, urban wildlife refuges, greenways, trails, and open spaces, and more than 98% of our nation's counties have a park project that has been funded by the LWCF. Since its inception in 1965, the LWCF has provided state and local governments with over 42,000 matching grants totaling over \$4 billion and leveraging much more in local and private investment. Funded through revenues generated through offshore oil and gas energy development, the LWCF comes at no cost to the taxpayer and generates \$4 in economic value for every dollar invested.

In addition to acting as strong economic drivers, urban parks create dual-use spaces for both recreation and green infrastructure stormwater management. In fact, the LWCF has funded the development of over 25,000 sports fields in communities across the nation, many of which are designed to soak up millions of gallons of rainwater to reduce combined sewer overflows (CSOs). CSOs discharge untreated wastewater and stormwater, often containing agricultural

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runoff and toxic substances, directly into nearby bodies of water. As one of the leading sources of pollution in the nation, CSOs put the public health of communities and local ecosystems at great risk. Green infrastructure systems, such as urban parks that also function as a rain garden, use the natural environment to manage stormwater and provide co-benefits such as aesthetic value to communities, improved water quality, and cost competitiveness compared to gray forms of infrastructure.

As advocates of robust investment in our nation's public parks infrastructure systems, ASCE supports this bill's goal of creating a dedicated source of funding within the LWCF's State and Local Assistance Program for public parks in disadvantaged urban communities. Access to and investment in our nation's public parks remains a bedrock of American society and is a critical category within *ASCE's 2017 Infrastructure Report Card*. We thank you for your introduction of H.R. 2943, the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Grant Program Act and welcome the opportunity to work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Pallasch", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian Pallasch

Managing Director, Government Relations & Infrastructure Initiatives