

In every State of the United States, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been one of the most successful programs for preserving open space and our environment for future generations. It is important to note, as the ranking member has said, that the LWCF is not funded by taxpayer dollars but by fees charged to the industry for the extraction of oil and gas from public lands.

Congress created the LWCF 45 years ago on the principle that some funds garnered from extraction of resources should be devoted to the preservation of other resources, in fact protecting permanently important lands and waters and access to recreation for all Americans. The LWCF is the only environmental preservation program in the Federal Government that is fully offset, and under the LWCF, polluters, not taxpayers, pay to protect the environment.

So cutting this program doesn't save taxpayer dollars. It robs taxpayers of the returns. And, actually, as in so many things in this continuing resolution, it does away with jobs.

It's my belief that the LWCF should be fully funded at the authorized level of \$900 million and the stateside program should receive at least \$200 million to match State funds. This is what the President requested in his fiscal year 2012 budget--and I think that's a fair proposal. The draconian continuing resolution in front of us not only would zero out the stateside portion of the LWCF, it would cut the LWCF overall program to the lowest level in its history, ending much-needed balance between resource extraction and resource conservation. We should reject this amendment.

The budget before us and this continuing resolution would really turn back the clock on efforts to preserve open spaces. The stateside portion of LWCF, which I helped revive in one of my first acts when I came to this Congress, through its matching grants has saved over 73,000 acres in my State of New Jersey; and in our 12th District, which I have the privilege to represent, we've received tens of millions of dollars in stateside LWCF funding. Every family that visits Veterans Park in Mercer County, the Sickles recreation area in the Borough of Shrewsbury, or the Colonial Lake playground in Lawrence Township, to name a few of the hundreds of LWCF projects, have benefited directly from this successful program.

Preserving open space is more than an environmental issue. It really is a quality of life issue. It's not just about preserving beautiful vistas. It's about preserving nature's way of cleansing herself.

It is about providing recreation and parks. It is particularly important for States east of the Mississippi, but it is no less important for all 50 States.

Every State has positive stories to tell about LWCF. Voters consistently have supported funding open space preservation. Recent polling found that 86 percent of Americans are supportive of reinvesting funds from offshore drilling fees to land and water protection.

President Johnson said, ``If future generations are to remember us more with gratitude than with sorrow, we must achieve more than just the miracles of technology. We must also leave them a glimpse of the world as it was created, not just as it looks when we get through with it."

The Land and Water Conversation Fund is one of the few government programs that really benefits all Americans, does not use taxpayer dollars, and receives the overwhelming support of the Nation.

I ask my colleagues to defeat this amendment.