

Resolution

NUMBER 5-28-98-5f

WHEREAS, the City Council of College Station, Texas is committed to preserving our natural resources and open spaces for our citizens and for those tourists who visit College Station each year; and,

WHEREAS, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a federally funded program was originally conceived in 1964, as a federal-state partnership program created to expand the Nation's park and recreation system through funds received from off shore oil leasing fees; and,

WHEREAS, from the funds received from the LWCF each year, the Texas Park and Wildlife Department implemented programs to distribute these funds to municipalities such as College Station for the preservation, enhancement and expansion of local park systems; and

WHEREAS, the LWCF in past years has leveraged millions of dollars in local funds with a one-to-match for acquisition, restoration, renovation and improvements; and

WHEREAS, the Congress in the last three years has taken action to reduce and eliminate funding under the LSCF to the states intended for programs that provide for local park acquisition, restoration, renovations and improvements, instead using the funds for other federal priorities; and

WHEREAS, reinstatement of full stateside funding of the LSCF with provisions for distributions to local park systems is important to the quality of life of College Station citizens as well as to citizens in other urban cities.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS

1. That the City Council urges Congress to reinstate full stateside funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund with provisions to distribute funding to local municipalities for the purpose of protecting vital natural

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

On May 29, 1998, the College Station City Council unanimously approved Resolution # 5-28-98-5F requesting the local congressional delegation to "urge Congress to reinstate full stateside funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)." The positive implications of this action for College Station were stated in the original resolution (attached). On November 10, 1999, the House Resources Committee passed HR 701 the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) by a 37 to 12 vote. Congressman Brady, our local representative, is a member of that committee and supported the vote. CARA includes full stateside funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and has been expanded to embrace a number of other pieces of conservation legislation.

The Committee's vote indicated strong bi-partisan support for CARA, which gives it a good chance of passing in the House this year; and is likely to be considered by the full House in March or April 2000. It also has bi-partisan sponsorship in the Senate (S25) and was supported by the President in his State of the Union Address.

CONTENTS OF CARA

CARA would provide approximately \$3 billion annually in conservation funds, with approximately \$250 million of this coming to Texas each year. The funding for CARA comes from dedicating a portion of federal income from offshore oil and natural gas leases.

When LWCF was first authorized in 1965, it was intended that funds from these leases would be allocated to LWCF. Their use for conservation purposes was a rational way of recycling the value of one natural resource being depleted back to public use by enhancing another natural resource. Subsequently, however, Congress diverted these funds to other uses. CARA re-establishes the original intent of this legislation and restores to the American people the legacy they believed they were promised in the original legislation. All funds in CARA would be under permanent budget authority and not subject to the Balanced Budget Act or counted as new budget authority or outlays.

If CARA is passed, it will be the most significant impetus for enhancing the environment that has occurred in Texas in the past 25 years. CARA includes funding for 9 different programs:

1. **Impact Assistance & Coastal Conservation**

Total funding \$1 billion: Texas share \$132 million

Funding will be used to mitigate the impacts of outer continental shelf oil and gas activities, aid conservation of coastal ecosystems and support sustainable development from non-renewable resources.

2. **Land & Water Conservation Fund Revitalization**

Total funding \$900 million: Texas share \$73.5 million

This assures stable annual funds from LWCF. The funds are divided equally between the federal land agencies, and local and state park systems.

3. **Wildlife Conservation & Restoration Fund**

Total funding \$350 million: Texas share \$17.5 million

Eligible uses will include scientific resource management, acquisition, improvement of habitat, wildlife education and recreation. Funds are intended to benefit a diverse array of wildlife and associated habitats, including species that are not hunted or fished.

4. **Urban Park & Recreation Recovery**

Total Funding: \$125 million: Texas share \$5 million

Provides matching grants to local governments to rehabilitate recreation areas and facilities. Cost share is 70:30, federal to state.

5. **Historic Preservation Fund**

Total Funding: \$100 million: Texas share \$2.5 million

Funds programs of the Historic Preservation Act, including maintaining the National Register of Historic Places, and administering numerous historic preservation program.

6. **Federal & Indian Lands Restoration**

Total funding \$200 million: Texas share \$2.5 million

Funding on these lands to restore degraded lands, protect resources that are threatened with degradation, and protect public health and safety.

7. **Conservation Easements & Species Recovery**

Total funding \$150 million: Texas share \$2 million

Funding for conservation easements and for landowner incentives to aid in the recovery of endangered and threatened species.

8. **Payment In-Lieu of Taxes and Refuge Revenue Sharing**

Total funding \$200 million

The annual interest generated from the CARA fund will match, dollar for dollar, the amount appropriated during the annual congressional appropriations process to ease the burden on local governments impacted by nontaxable federal lands.