

Park and Conservation Organizations Applaud Department of Interior's \$16 million in Grants to Improve Local Parks and Recreation in Disadvantaged Urban Communities

(August 10, 2021)

Today, the National Park Service announced its fourth round of Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) awardees which will distribute \$16 million in funding for parks projects across 19 communities throughout the country. The ORLP, funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, was created by Congress in 2014 to expand outdoor recreation opportunities in underserved communities across the nation. The National Park Service competitive grant program delivers funding to urban areas – jurisdictions of at least 50,000 people – with priority given to projects located in economically disadvantaged areas and lacking in outdoor recreation opportunities.

Today's announcement was lauded by leading national parks and conservation organizations including City Parks Alliance, National Recreation and Park Association, The Trust for Public Land, Sierra Club, and The Wilderness Society.

"The National Park Service's Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) awardees include park parks that will help ensure all people have access to quality outdoor recreation opportunities, leading to healthier and stronger communities. The ORLP provides critical funding for urban parks and ORLP grants double their impact when matched with local funds, leading to enormous health, economic, and social equity benefits," **said Julie Waterman, Advocacy Director of City Parks Alliance.**

"Today's announcement by the National Park Service shows the important work being addressed by the Department of Interior to ensure equitable access to quality parks for all. We are strong believers in the power of parks and recreation to transform communities and improve the lives of residents. These projects provide innovative approaches that address many of the challenges being faced by vulnerable communities. These innovative projects and exciting enhancements will provide new outdoor recreation opportunities that will help to create healthy, active, and vibrant neighborhoods that have greater access to climate-smart parks that are close to home. NRPA is proud to be a champion of the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program and applauds the U.S. Congress and the National Park Service for the

investments made today.” **Elvis Cordova, Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy**

“The ORLP program is critical to promoting equitable access to the outdoors. The parks and greenspace projects supported by this program ensure the communities that have been robbed of access to the outdoors are able to experience the benefits of nature that boosts our health and heals our spirits. In making these investments, we can take important steps towards building an outdoors — and a liveable planet — for all.” **Jackie Ostfeld, Sierra Club's Outdoors for All campaign director.**

“The Outdoors Alliance for Kids is thrilled to see this latest round of transformative grants funded through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program,” **said Jayni Rasmussen, Sr. Campaign Representative for the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK).** “This past year made it clear that not all youth and families have equal access to the mental and physical health benefits of spending time in nature. By targeting investment in urban park projects that benefit the children, youth and families who have been disproportionately denied access to the outdoors, this round of ORLP grants, the most funding of its kind made available to date, is a significant step toward rectifying these inequities.”

“Access to parks and green space should not be dictated by a person’s income, race, or neighborhood,” **said Yvette Lopez Ledesma, Senior Director of Community Led Conservation at The Wilderness Society.** “The benefits of improved mental, physical and spiritual health - along with the need for a nearby place to play, cool off in the shade and simply get some fresh air are critical components of community health. The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program helps break down the barriers to equitable access to nature faced by millions of people across the country. It provides much-needed funding for local parks and in turn, boosts local economies, provides jobs, and conserves nature in urban areas.”

“Equitable access to the outdoors helps people lead healthier, happier, more prosperous lives. This year's awardees demonstrate both the importance of and demand for federal park funding. The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program is a tremendous asset for communities across the country and we're excited to see the benefits,” **said Jordan Schreiber, Senior Director for Policy Advocacy and Government Relations.**

The National Park Service is currently accepting applications for the fifth round ORLP funding. You can find out more information on how to apply [here](#).

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Selected communities include:

California

East Bay Regional Park District (San Francisco)

Tidewater Estuary Park Improvements and Public Access - \$1,000,000

East Bay Regional Park District plans to redevelop Tidewater Estuary Park in East Oakland, expanding onto a former trucking storage yard to become an 8-acre park. Grant funds will be used to create a play area/playground, picnic and barbeque areas, and multi-use pathways.

City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation

Ortega Park Revitalization Project - \$1,000,000

The City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation plans to complete a full-scale rehabilitation of Ortega Park with a new multi-sport synthetic turf field, year-round pool, park restrooms, playground, family picnic area, and a multi-generational activity zone with a skate park, basketball, bocce ball, and other amenities. The project includes park access and circulation improvements with pedestrian pathways and expanded street parking.

County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation

Ford's Theater Hiking Trail - \$999,822

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation plans to create a new hiking trail through a naturally vegetated hillside offering stunning scenic vistas within a 45-acre regional park that is also home to the Ford's Theater.

District of Columbia

Department of Energy and Environment

Equitable Access to Paddle Sport Recreation at Kingman Island - \$781,800

The District of Columbia's Department of Energy and Environment plans to create a paddle sport recreation area at Kingman Island by constructing a pavilion for kayak and canoe storage and a permeable paver turnaround for access, restoring the wetlands around and dredging a shallow navigational channel to create an area to teach paddling, and installing a composting toilet.

Iowa

City of Des Moines

Central Place Levee Trail - Phase I - \$500,000

The City of Des Moines plans to complete Phase 1 of the Central Place Levee Trail by developing a 1.8 mile multi-use trail section between Rotary Riverwalk Park in downtown Des Moines, and the intersection of Franklin and 2nd Avenue in north-central Des Moines. The trail sets atop a levee offering views of the Des Moines River Greenway.

Maryland

City of Baltimore

Middle Branch Park Trail and Water Access - \$1,000,000

The City of Baltimore plans to improve Middle Branch Park by extending a trail along and improving access to the Patapsco River to support boating, fishing/crabbing, walking, biking and wildlife viewing, and restoring the shoreline to facilitate access and improve habitat. The project is a first phase of plans for the trail that will continue on to other property along the riverfront and ultimately connect to another park.

Massachusetts

City of Worcester

Tacoma Street Playground Renovation - \$1,000,000

The City of Worcester plans to renovate the Tacoma Street Playground by constructing an athletic field and bleachers, installing field lighting, retaining wall, parking improvements, and upgrading the current drainage system.

Michigan

Genesee County

Flint River Restoration Project - \$1,000,000

In partnership with the City of Flint, Genesee County plans to help restore the Flint River Riverfront by installing multiple rock rapid areas within the main channel to naturalize river flow and allow fish passage upstream, resting pools to provide safe recreational benefits for fisherman and park users, entrance and site improvements, and furnishings. The riverbanks will also be improved by modifying and naturalizing existing concrete and sheet metal retaining walls with vegetation and rock terraces.

Missouri

Great Rivers Greenway (St. Louis)

A New Vision for The Old Chain of Rocks Bridge Park and Trailhead - \$990,000

Great Rivers Greenway (special purpose district) of St. Louis plans to develop and rehabilitate the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge Park with new and upgraded infrastructure, and conservation and safety trailhead enhancements, including meadow and woodland restoration, nature trails, site furnishings, an entry road, an event area, and parking.

New Jersey

City of Trenton

104 Taylor Street Soccer and Fitness Development - \$1,000,000

The City of Trenton plans to develop a soccer and fitness complex at 104 Taylor Street, the site of a former industrial site along the Assunpink Creek. New amenities include a regulation sized-soccer field and two open air pavilions, one outfitted with exercise equipment and the other left open as a multipurpose space.

Camden County

Whitman Park Improvement and Expansion \$1,000,000

Camden County plans to improve the existing 6.5-acre Whitman Park and expand it into an adjacent 3.5-acre former industrial property, creating a 10-acre hub for youth sports and play.

North Carolina

City of Rocky Mount

Battle Park Renovation - \$500,000

The City of Rocky Mount plans to assist Battle Park by renovating sections of the greenway, boat ramp, fishing piers, canoe/kayak launch, installing an additional launch, replacing three existing shelters with picnic areas, providing additional trails and parking, creating a bouldering and bike trials area, making improvements to the trailhead, including restrooms, and completing riparian and landscaping improvements.

Ohio

City of Cleveland

Clark Avenue Park Development Project - \$661,724

The City of Cleveland plans to develop Clark Avenue Park, located next to the Clark Recreation Center. The project includes preparing the site and improving infrastructure and landscaping, and installing a splash pad, play equipment, basketball court, outdoor game tables and park benches.

Metroparks Toledo

Glass City Metropark: Urban Camping- \$1,000,000

Metroparks Toledo plans to develop urban camping infrastructure at Glass City Metropark by installing 11 campsites, four overnight eco-huts, an overlook providing views of the Maumee River, parking, restrooms and showers, a walking path and an access road.

South Carolina

Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission

Cooper River County Park Development - \$1,000,000

Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission plans to complete Phase 1 of the revitalization of Cooper River County Park by turning the currently undeveloped upland into a park that will complement the existing marina. The City will complete site preparation and install landscaping, passive recreation park amenities, trails, a picnic area, grills, bike racks, benches and marsh boardwalks.

Washington

City of Lakewood

Wards Lake Park Enhancement - \$1,000,000

The City of Lakewood plans to expand and improve critical wetland areas at Ward Lake Park and provide new active and play amenities including a bicycle/skateboard pump-track, a 3-acre fenced off-leash dog park, enhanced upland forest and native oak-prairie habitat areas, a 1-mile loop trail around the lake, pedestrian safety improvements, and greater connectivity to the park and other trail corridors. Park infrastructure will also be upgraded.

Seattle Parks and Recreation

North Rainier Park Development - \$1,000,000

Seattle Parks and Recreation plans to develop the one-acre North Rainier Land Banked site into a new park, providing multi-use and cross generational activities including a fitness zone, basketball half-court, picnic areas, a lawn, walking paths, bike racks, planted areas and trees.

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Maple Wood Playfield Renovation - \$1,000,000

Seattle Parks and Recreation plans to renovate the Maple Wood Playfield by making improvements including upgrading drainage and irrigation, regrading the fields, renovating two multi-use athletic fields and restrooms, and installing a grass playing surface, new play equipment, a basketball half-court, gaga ball court, separate play structures and gathering spaces to support community gatherings/events.

Wisconsin

City of Milwaukee

Extending the Kinnickinnic River Oak Leaf Trail to High Needs Areas - \$453,954

The City of Milwaukee plans to construct the Kinnickinnic River Parkway Off-Road Trail at Oak Leaf Trail from 16th St to 27th (approximately 5500 linear feet) as a 10' wide off-road paved trail. Additionally, trees will be planted, rain gardens installed, and outdoor recreation facilities will be renovated to meet community needs.

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About the National Recreation and Park Association

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this mission by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being. For more information, visit www.nrpa.org. For digital access to NRPA's flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit www.parksandrecreation.org.