



## Analysis of the President's Proposed Federal Budget for FY12

### President's Budget Proposal Includes Significant Increases for Parks, Recreation, and Conservation; Cuts to funding for Community Development Block Grants.

#### Highlights:

- **President proposes "Full funding" of LWCF at \$900 million with \$200 million going toward State Grants.**
- **Stateside Assistance program would include \$78m for states through existing formula and \$116m through new competitive grants.**
- **Increases in funding for Youth Conservation programs.**
- **New Transportation Livability Grants as part of the Administration's proposed Surface Transportation Reauthorization.**
- **Cuts to the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG).**
- **Continued support for HUD's Sustainable Communities Initiative and EPA's Brownfields program.**
- **Consolidated Health and Education programs that include funding for parks and recreation.**

On Monday, February 14, President Obama released his proposed \$3.7 trillion federal budget for FY2012. As talks of extensive spending cuts dominate Capitol Hill, the President's plan includes a 5-year freeze on overall domestic spending programs which the White House projects will trim the deficit by \$400 billion over the next 10 years. The goal of the Administration is to both rebuild the nation's economy and reduce record deficits by focusing on programs that invest in education, innovation, infrastructure, and clean energy.

While the proposed budget means there will be even more competition for scarce federal resources, the good news is that parks and recreation is well positioned to address many of the President's stated priorities and the Administration seemingly recognizes the vital role that parks, green space, and recreation opportunities play in making communities, and our nation, healthier, more livable, and economically competitive. The President's budget includes full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) with \$200 million directed toward the Stateside Assistance program. It also includes increased investment in youth conservation programs and continued support for community development initiatives and transportation programs focused on creating more livable and sustainable places to live.

The President's proposed budget is the first step in the annual federal funding process. Next, Congress must agree on overall funding levels for federal government spending and produce a guiding budget blueprint. The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations will set overall spending limits and subcommittees will determine spending levels for each federal agency and program. Both chambers will pass their versions of each appropriation bill, resolve and difference, and then send to the President for his approval and signature.

This means that the time for parks and recreation advocates to make their case for federal funding is NOW. NRPA and our network of advocates must effectively communicate to Congress and the Administration that investments in public parks and recreational opportunities are vital to the economic health of our nation now and for generations to come.



The following is a brief analysis of programs within the President's Budget that are of the greatest interest to park and recreation agencies and NRPA's Legislative Platform. Please note that Congress is still debating funding levels for FY11 thus all comparisons are relative to FY10 budget numbers.

## **Department of Interior**

The President's budget proposes to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million for FY12. Of this total, \$200 million would go to LWCF State grants. The Administration is looking to revamp the State Assistance program by allocating \$78m through the existing formula and \$116m through competitive grants to leverage resources for urban parks and public-private conservation projects. NRPA will continue to work with the Administration to develop a LWCF Stateside program that is in the best interests of state and local parks and recreation agencies.

The budget also proposes to provide \$19.2 million, a \$5.7 million increase over FY10 levels, to fund youth engagement and education programs in parks. NRPA is seeking additional information on how these programs can be implemented at the local and community level.

## **Department of Housing and Urban Development**

This year's budget cuts funding for the Community Development Block Grant program by \$300 million for a total of just under \$3.7 billion. CDBG grants are awarded locally and HUD estimates that in a typical year about \$100 million goes toward parks and recreation projects. The President referred to the cuts as, "a tough choice that balances the need to decrease the budget deficit with the tough fiscal conditions confronting State and local governments."

The FY12 budget also includes \$150 million (same as FY10) for the Sustainable Communities Initiative. This program is part of a multi-agency partnership between the HUD, the Dept. of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency to better coordinate federal policy to provide affordable housing, lower transportation cost, shorten commutes, protect the environment, and enhance overall quality of life for communities.

## **Department of Transportation**

As part of the Administrations Surface Transportation Reauthorization proposal the Federal Highway Administration will put forth \$4.1 billion in FY12, and \$28 billion over 6 years, for "Livability grants" to fund projects like multi-modal transportation hubs and streets that accommodate pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access. These grants are part of what the Administration calls a "transformational policy shift" to give people access to affordable and environmentally sustainable transportation options.

## **Department of Education**

The budget includes continued funding for the Effective Teaching and Learning for a Complete Education Program created last fiscal year. This year's proposal includes \$835 million to expand support subjects including history, the arts, foreign languages, and environmental and financial literacy.

The President is proposing an increase to 1.26 billion, up from 1.13 billion, to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program. This proposal also reforms the program and provides a tremendous opportunity to leverage the effort to expand upon the conventional school day and



year, providing students with greater academic and enrichment opportunities and giving schools greater flexibility in working with community partners such as parks and recreation agencies.

Also included is funding for the Safe, Successful and Healthy Students Initiative at \$365 million, which consolidates several existing programs including the Physical Education Program.

### **Department of Health and Human Services**

The Administration promotes wellness and prevention to address the nation's health care crisis. The budget includes \$221 million for Community Transformation grants to improve public health in communities across the country.

### **Environmental Protection Agency**

This year's budget proposes \$99 million, \$1 million less than FY10, for EPA's Brownfields program. This program provides direct funding for brownfields assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, and environmental job training.

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The National Recreation and Park Association is the leading advocacy organization dedicated to the advancement of public parks and recreation opportunities. The NRPA Public Policy team works every day to represent the cause of public parks and recreation at the federal level by fighting for legislation and federal resources that improve access to open space and recreational opportunities for all people in all communities.