Dear PGC members:

This year Peter and I were happy to represent all of you this year at the National Affairs & Legislation Conference (NAL). NAL is non-profit and bi-partisan advocating for issues, not politicians, based on science and facts. This year GCA was represented by 165 clubs nationwide and 300 delegates. We met with representatives Bonnie Coleman & Tom Malinowski and Senator Menendez and staffers of Senator Booker. These meetings were to promote our agenda and positions on the legislation to follow. Please take note, our elected officials all have strong voting records regarding the environment and following our visit, Tom Malinowski signed on to the ‘Botany Bill’ as a co-sponsor. One piece of legislation, the Land and Water Conservation Fund passed the House on the day we were on Capitol Hill.

Have broken notes down into four sections: 1. Good quotes to inspire you; 2. Legislation to care about; 3. Facts and resources; 4. Some senators and representatives to watch

**Good quotes to inspire:**

“Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t change the world. We have a moral responsibility to try.” Mike Quigley, D-IL, congress

“This is the decade of decision; the point of no return” Earl Blumenauer, D-OR, congress

“We are the first generation to see the impact of climate change and the last generation to be able to do anything about it” - popular quote, heard more than once

“Optimism is a passive virtue; hope is an active one” Derek Kilmer, D-WA, congress

“We have got to focus on the environment with a laser beam. It is the issue for today because there is no tomorrow. The fierce urgency of now” Donald McEachin, D-VA

“The environment is the most important issue of the 21st century” Donald McEachin, D-VA

“We are still in the Paris Climate Accord!” Jared Huffman, D-WA

“Congressman may come and go, but GCA just keeps coming back.” Dede Petri, GCA President

**Legislation:**

1. *Land and Water Conservation Fund*: permanent authorization. LWCF is our most important national conservation program having preserved open spaces and created outdoor recreation opportunities in every State and nearly every county in the nation. Authorization of the fund expired back in Sept 2018. Permanent reauthorization was
being sought, passed the senate and while we were in DC the house passed it as well. On March 12, the President signed this bill into law (The John D Dingell Jr Conservation, Management and Recreation Act). Success for GCA!

2. Reviving America’s Scenic Byways Act: already passed the House. Asked our senators to co-sponsor. There are over 150 scenic byways in the country - they limit billboards, create corridors for nature and the bill will encourage the use of native plants along these byways

3. Restore our Parks Act: will provide $6.5 bn over 5 years to address the $12 bn maintenance backlog in our national parks. Both House and Senate need to vote on this bill.

4. Our signature legislation: the ‘Botany Bill’ - the Botanical Sciences and Native Plant Materials Bill H.R. 1054. GCA worked with the Chicago Botanical Garden and Congressman Mike Quigley, D-IL to draft and promote this bill. Among other things it will encourage use of native plants on federal lands, promote hiring of more botanists in federal agencies to help combat invasive species and promote use of native plants to address drought, improve water quality and promote resilience. It includes forgiveness of student loans for those who get degrees in botany and subsequently work for the government. House and senate must pass this bill and it will be introduced soon. Following NAL, 22 new co-sponsors are supporting this bill. Coincidence?

Protect Public Trees Act will be introduced in 2019

**Facts and resources:**

Some evidence of climate change:
1. Timing of important biological events is changing: bird migration, first leaf, salmon migration, average growing season increased by 2 weeks in past 150 yrs.; ragweed season is 1-3 weeks longer (weeds respond favorably to increased CO2 - much more than ‘good' crops)
2. Geographic range changes: plant hardiness zones; center of bird distribution moved 40 miles north in last century
3. Invasive species: fire ants are kept at bay by cold winters. Their range is now growing northward; ticks and Lyme disease spreading northward as warmer winters allow the carrier to expand range
4. Increased risk of extinction: polar bears
5. Climate change exacerbates: extreme heat, extreme precipitation, atmospheric rivers, forest fires and flooding.
Cherry trees in DC flower 1 week earlier; center of blueberry production shifted from Maine to Quebec

Significant weather events increasing: extreme heat, and extreme precipitation because warmer air holds more water. Hurricanes stronger, bigger, slower. High tides and ‘sunny day flooding’ along the east coast. Permanently frozen ground in Alaska is thawing.

*People generally don’t have a problem with the science of climate change. They just don’t believe it will hurt them personally in their lifetimes.*

Audubon society: ‘if you take care of the birds, you take care of most of the big problems in the world’; 314 species of birds are threatened by the loss of more than 50% of their habitat; “Plants for Birds” database accessible through Audubon and GCA websites: plug in your zip code and find out which native plants in your area will attract which native birds; you can also find out where to purchase the plants. The reason why we don’t have more native species of plants in our school yards and highway medians is a lack of native plant seeds and material. It’s a supply chain problem - now some natives are available on Amazon. Need to create more demand.

Partners for Plants is a GCA initiative that works together with government to monitor local plants, remove invasives and restore habitats. Rumson GC did a great project with Sandy Hook. We could find a project for PGC

Go to the GCA website and take the Healthy Yard Pledge: requires that you use no (to minimal) synthetic chemicals in your yard - and you pledge to flush no pharmaceuticals down drains/sewers. *Garden clubs can educate local communities on the need for proper disposal of excess medications. PGC - shall we take up this challenge?*

Homeowners use 10x more chemicals per acre than farmers

New GCA position paper on oceans is worth a read. We must reduce CO2 emissions as this is a great stressor for oceans. Other stressors are plastic pollution, over-fishing and water pollution (storm water runoff). *What can you do today: stop using single-use plastics!!*

Plant blindness: Refers to the fact that people don’t realize how important plants are for our environment. Plants make up 60% of the US endangered species list but get only 4% of the funding. The Bureau of land management has only 54 botanists - 1 for every 4.6 million acres. National Park Services have only 28 botanists - 1 for
every 3 million acres.

Highlands Nursery in Mansfield Township NJ stock native plants.

**Elected Officials to watch:**

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-RI; Blue Oceans Bill  
Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D-MD; Chesapeake Bay Watershed; Cap & Trade legislation  
Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-OR; Saving America’s Pollinator’s Act  
Rep. Lee Zeldin, R-NY; Bird Safe Buildings Act; Bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus  
Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick R-PA; Carbon Tax supporter; Bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus  
Rep Derek Kilmer, D-WA; Preventing Pollution Through Partnerships Act (storm water reduction); Bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus  
Rep Jared Huffman, D-WA; Sustainable fisheries, threatened landscapes, national monuments  
Rep. Donald McEachin, D-VA: Green infrastructure & “green collar jobs”, conservation, environmental protection  
Rep. Mike Quigley, D-IL: our very own Botany Bill sponsor! He’s also a member of the very important House Appropriations Committee