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113TH CONGRESS
1st Session
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
REPORT
113–112

AMENDING THE FISH AND WILDLIFE ACT OF 1956 TO REAUTHORIZE THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE BENEFIT OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

JUNE 17, 2013.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

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Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, from the Committee on Natural Resources, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 1300]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Natural Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 1300) to amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to reauthorize the volunteer programs and community partnerships for the benefit of national wildlife refuges, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. REAUTHORIZATION OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM VOLUNTEER, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP, AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

Section 7(g) of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742f(g)) is amended by striking "2011 through 2014" and inserting "2015 through 2017".

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of H.R. 1300, as ordered reported, is to amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to reauthorize the volunteer programs and community partnerships for the benefit of national wildlife refuges.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

The National Wildlife Refuge System contains 150 million acres of federal lands dedicated to the conservation of fish and wildlife. There are 561 refuges located throughout the United States and these federal lands provide essential habitat for thousands of fish and wildlife species. The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, as amended by the Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act of 1978, and the Na-

tional Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–242) authorized the Fish and Wildlife Service to accept volunteer services.

Public Law 105–242 expanded the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to recruit, train and accept the services of individuals as volunteers; provide volunteers with food, housing, transportation and uniforms; provide matching funds for gifts or bequests to refuges; establish a Senior Volunteer Corps; enter into cooperative agreements with partner organizations, academic institutions or State or local governments to carry out operation and maintenance and educational projects; develop refuge education programs; deem volunteers government employees for tort claim liability and compensation for injuries; and require that gifts are used on site.

This law also directed the Secretary to establish two or more pilot projects to provide employment for a full time volunteer coordinator who would be responsible for recruiting, training and supervising volunteers. This Act has been extended on several occasions with an authorization of appropriations of $2 million each fiscal year, the latest to September 30, 2014, with the enactment of P.L. 111–357. However, this program has not received a direct Congressional appropriation, but relies on base funding allocated to the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

In reality, FWS has maintained a refuge volunteer program for nearly thirty years and utilized volunteers throughout the System. The number of volunteers has increased from 4,251 in 1982 to 56,000 individuals in 2012, and they play a vital role in the operation of many refuges within the System. The hours of service have also grown from 128,440 hours to 2.1 million, with donated time equaling 1000 full-time employees or about 20 percent of the work completed within the refuge system. The value of this work has also significantly increased from $1.1 million to the current calculation of $47 million. In fact, FWS has indicated that "they play a vital role in serving over 44 million visitors who enjoy public lands managed by the Service." Among the important activities that volunteers perform are: operating the visitors centers; building new fishing piers and kiosk exhibits; fighting invasive species; conducting fish and wildlife population surveys; planting native trees; removing debris; and trail maintenance.

In addition to accepting the services of individual volunteers, the Service has developed formal relationships with a number of conservation and service organizations. These have included: the American Hiking Society; the Boys Scouts of America; the Chamber of Commerce; Ducks Unlimited; the National Rifle Association; and local sportsmen's clubs. There are more than 230 "Friends of the Refuge" groups which are private, independent, community-based, nonprofit organizations formed primarily by citizen volunteers who support the mission and purposes of a national wildlife refuge.

During the past five years, the Obama Administration has requested huge increases for additional land acquisition within the national wildlife refuge system but has largely ignored its existing $3 billion dollar operations and maintenance backlog. As a result of these misplaced priorities, there are now 139 refuges closed to the public and 216 units have no FWS staff on site. Refuge volunteers will continue to play a growing role in the operation of the refuge system and this legislation provides a modest investment of

taxpayer money, allocated from the refuge operations account, to ensure that volunteer activities are properly supervised and directed. More importantly, this will help to ensure that Americans continue to have opportunities to hunt, fish, photograph, study and observe wildlife at our nation's national wildlife refuges located in all 50 states and the five territories.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 1300 was introduced on March 20, 2013, by Congressman Jon Runyan (R–NJ). The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs. On April 25, 2013, the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs held a hearing on the bill. On May 15, 2013, the Full Natural Resources Committee met to consider the bill. The Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs was discharged by unanimous consent. Congressman John Fleming (R–LA) offered an amendment designated .001 to the bill; the amendment was adopted by unanimous consent. No further amendments were offered, and the bill, as amended, was then adopted and ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by unanimous consent.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Natural Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII

1. Cost of Legislation. Clause 3(d)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires an estimate and a comparison by the Committee of the costs which would be incurred in carrying out this bill. However, clause 3(d)(2)(B) of that rule provides that this requirement does not apply when the Committee has included in its report a timely submitted cost estimate of the bill prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office under section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974. Under clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following cost estimate for this bill from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office:

H.R. 1300—A bill to amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to reauthorize the volunteer programs and community partnerships for the benefit of national wildlife refuges, and for other purposes

Summary: H.R. 1300 would authorize the appropriation of $6 million over the 2015–2017 period for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to carry out volunteer programs and community partnerships at national wildlife refuges. Assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost $6 million over the 2015–2017 period. Enact-

ing H.R. 1300 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

H.R. 1300 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 1300 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014–2018
CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION						
Authorization Level	0	2	2	2	0	6
Estimated Outlays	0	2	2	2	0	6

Basis of estimate: For this estimate, CBO assumes that the legislation will be enacted before the end of 2013 and that the authorized amounts will be appropriated for each fiscal year. Estimated outlays are based on historical spending patterns for similar USFWS activities.

H.R. 1300 would authorize the appropriation of $2 million a year over the 2015–2017 period for USFWS to continue certain volunteer programs and community partnerships. Under those programs, volunteers assist USFWS personnel in conducting recreation activities, restoring habitats, and performing administrative and maintenance work at national wildlife refuges. In 2013, those programs received appropriations of about $2 million and are authorized, under current law, to receive $2 million in 2014. CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1300 would cost $6 million over the 2015–2017 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts.

Pay-as-you-go considerations: None.

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: H.R. 1300 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimate prepared by: Federal Costs: Jeff LaFave; Impact on State, Local, and Tribal Governments: Melissa Merrell; Impact on the Private Sector: Amy Petz.

Estimate approved by: Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

2. Section 308(a) of Congressional Budget Act. As required by clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, this bill does not contain any new budget authority, credit authority, or an increase or decrease in revenues or tax expenditures. Assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost $6 million over the 2015–2017 period.

3. General Performance Goals and Objectives. As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this bill, as ordered reported, is to amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to reauthorize the volunteer programs and community partnerships for the benefit of national wildlife refuges.

EARMARK STATEMENT

This bill does not contain any Congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined under clause 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of Rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC LAW 104–4

This bill contains no unfunded mandates.

COMPLIANCE WITH H. RES. 5

Directed Rule Making. The Chairman does not believe that this bill directs any executive branch official to conduct any specific rule-making proceedings

Duplication of Existing Programs. This bill does not establish or reauthorize a program of the federal government known to be duplicative of another program. Such program was not included in any report from the Government Accountability Office to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111–139 or identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance published pursuant to the Federal Program Information Act (Public Law 95–220, as amended by Public Law 98–169) as relating to other programs.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

This bill is not intended to preempt any State, local or tribal law.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE BILL, AS REPORTED

In compliance with clause 3(e) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in italic, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

SECTION 7 OF THE FISH AND WILDLIFE ACT OF 1956

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, RECOMMENDATIONS

SEC. 7. (a) * * *

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(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior to carry out subsections (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f), $2,000,000 for each of fiscal years **[**2011 through 2014**]** *2015 through 2017*.

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