

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3213

To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to acquire and manage lands in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to provide for the protection of critical aquifers and watersheds that serve as a principal water supply for Puerto Rico, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 1, 2001

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ (for himself, Ms. MCKINNEY, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mr. TOWNS, and Mr. MENENDEZ) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Resources

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to acquire and manage lands in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to provide for the protection of critical aquifers and watersheds that serve as a principal water supply for Puerto Rico, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Puerto Rico Karst
5 Conservation Act of 2001”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS, PURPOSES, AND DEFINITIONS.**

2 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

3 (1) The Karst Region of Puerto Rico is a
4 unique geological formation that is critical to the
5 maintenance of aquifers and watersheds which con-
6 stitute a principal water supply for much of Puerto
7 Rico.8 (2) The Karst Region is threatened by develop-
9 ment, which, if unchecked, could permanently dam-
10 age aquifers supplying fresh water and cause irre-
11 parable damage to natural and environmental assets
12 that are unique to the United States and Puerto
13 Rico.14 (3) Puerto Rico has one of the highest popu-
15 lation densities in the United States, which further
16 makes the protection of the Karst Region an impera-
17 tive for the maintenance of the public health and
18 welfare of the citizens of Puerto Rico.19 (4) The Karst Region possesses extraordinary
20 ecological diversity, including the habitats of several
21 endangered and threatened species and tropical mi-
22 grants and is, therefore, an area of critical value to
23 research in tropical forest management.24 (5) Coordinated efforts at land protection by
25 the Federal Government and the Commonwealth of

1 Puerto Rico will be necessary to conserve the envi-
2 ronmentally critical Karst Region.

3 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are to au-
4 thorize the Secretary of Agriculture, in cooperation with
5 the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, to undertake a pro-
6 gram of land conservation, acquisition, and research to
7 protect and manage the geological and ecological values
8 of the Karst Region, with particular emphasis on the
9 maintenance of biodiversity within a tropical forest eco-
10 system and protection of the aquifers which are vital to
11 the health and well being of the citizens of Puerto Rico.

12 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

13 (1) KARST REGION.—The term “Karst Region”
14 means those areas in the Commonwealth of Puerto
15 Rico generally depicted on the map entitled “Karst
16 Region Conservation Area” and dated March 2001.
17 The map shall be on file and available for public in-
18 spection in the Office of the Secretary, Puerto Rico
19 Department of Natural and Environmental Re-
20 sources, and the Office of the Chief of the Forest
21 Service.

22 (2) LAND.—The term “land” includes lands,
23 waters, and interests in lands and waters.

4 (4) FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM.—The term
5 “Forest Legacy Program” means the program es-
6 tablished pursuant to section 7 of the Cooperative
7 Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2103c).

10 SEC. 3. KARST REGION CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES.

11 (a) LAND ACQUISITION.—

1 (b) MANAGEMENT.—The Secretary shall manage
2 land acquired under subsection (a) pursuant to this Act,
3 the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Research
4 Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 620 et seq.), and the laws and
5 regulations applicable to the National Forest System.

6 (c) COOPERATIVE APPROACH.—The Secretary may
7 make grants to and enter into contracts and cooperative
8 agreements with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, other
9 Federal agencies, organizations, and corporations for the
10 acquisition, protection, and management of Federal and
11 non-Federal land in the Karst Region.

12 (d) RELATION TO OTHER AUTHORITIES.—Nothing
13 in this Act shall diminish any other authority that the Sec-
14 retary may have to acquire, protect, and manage natural
15 resources in Puerto Rico.

16 SEC. 4. PUERTO RICO KARST CONSERVATION FUND.

17 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is hereby established
18 on the books of the Treasury an interest bearing account
19 to be known as the “Puerto Rico Karst Conservation
20 Fund”.

21 (b) CREDITS TO FUNDS.—There shall be credited to
22 the Fund the following:

23 (1) Amounts authorized for and appropriated to
24 the Fund.

14 (C) Amounts collected under the Recre-
15 ation Fee Demonstration Program authorized
16 pursuant to section 315 of the Department of
17 the Interior and Related Agencies Appropria-
18 tions Act, 1996 (as contained in section 101(c)
19 of Public Law 104-134; 16 U.S.C. 460l-6a
20 note).

4 (c) USE OF FUND.—Amounts in the Fund shall be
5 available to the Secretary until expended, without further
6 appropriation, for the purchase of land in the Karst Re-
7 gion and related acquisition management expenses as au-
8 thorized by section 3.

9 SEC. 5. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.

10 (a) DONATIONS.—The Secretary may accept for de-
11 posit in the Fund donations made by public and private
12 agencies, corporations, organizations, and individuals in
13 furtherance of the purposes of this Act. The Secretary
14 may accept such donations even though the donor con-
15 ducts business with or is regulated by the Department of
16 Agriculture or any other department or agency of the
17 United States.

18 (b) RELATION TO FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—All lands in the Karst Re-
20 gion shall be eligible for inclusion in the Forest Leg-
21 acy Program.

1 SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

2 There is authorized to be appropriated \$100,000,000
3 to be credited to the Fund.

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