

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2520

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire by donation certain property in Alabama to provide for the protection and preservation of certain rare paleontological resources on that property, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 19, 2003

Mr. ADERHOLT introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Resources

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire by donation certain property in Alabama to provide for the protection and preservation of certain rare paleontological resources on that property, 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. UNION CHAPEL FOSSIL FOOTPRINT SITE PRES-**
4 **ERVATION ACT.**

5 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the
6 “Union Chapel Fossil Footprint Site Preservation Act”.

7 (b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Fossils have scientific and educational value
2 and it is in the national interest to preserve and pro-
3 tect sites of paleontological significance.

4 (2) The Union Chapel Mine is a
5 paleontologically significant site that has been the
6 focus of an extensive collaborative effort over the
7 past 2 1/2 years by amateur collectors and profes-
8 sional paleontologists from the Geological Survey of
9 Alabama, the University of Alabama, Emory Univer-
10 sity, the University of Florida, and the University of
11 South Alabama.

12 (3) The site is significant because it has yielded
13 an unusually large quantity of rare pre-dinosaur fos-
14 sil trackways dating from the early Pennsylvanian
15 Period (approximately 310 million years ago, about
16 100 million years before the first dinosaurs).

17 (4) Material obtained from spoil piles at the
18 site includes over 1,300 vertebrate and invertebrate
19 tracks, some new to science, as well as a wide array
20 of fossil plants. The trackways are due mainly to
21 primitive amphibians, horseshoe crabs, and other ar-
22 thropods. These tracks now comprise the largest col-
23 lection of specimens documenting the existence of
24 these animals in north central Alabama during the
25 Coal Age.

1 (5) An extensive photographic database of over
2 1,800 digital images has been compiled using mate-
3 rial from the site.

4 (6) At least 4 presentations at scientific meet-
5 ings have been delivered relating to findings at the
6 site and a monograph and 2 manuscripts for publi-
7 cation in scientific journals are being prepared.

8 (7) It is estimated by geologists working at the
9 Union Chapel Mine that far more fossil material ex-
10 ists within the remaining spoil piles at the site and
11 that undisturbed tracks and other trace fossils with-
12 in the adjoining high wall may constitute an unpar-
13 alleled resource for scientific exploration of this an-
14 cient ecosystem.

15 (8) The Union Chapel Mine has now been rec-
16 ognized by international experts in the field as the
17 most important Coal Age footprint site in the world.

18 (c) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act include the
19 following:

20 (1) To authorize the Secretary to acquire by do-
21 nation from the New Acton Coal Mining Company,
22 Inc., the Union Chapel Paleozoic Footprint Preserve
23 to preserve and develop it for further paleontological
24 research.

1 (2) To grant an exemption from the require-
2 ments of the Surface Mining Control and Reclama-
3 tion Act of 1977 (30 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.), for fur-
4 ther reclamation of the site to the owner of the
5 Union Chapel Mine, the New Acton Coal Mining
6 Company, Inc. of Cordova, Alabama.

7 (3) To authorize the complete restoration of
8 funds held in escrow pending further reclamation of
9 the Union Chapel Mine by the Director of the Sur-
10 face Coal Mining Commission of the State of Ala-
11 bama to the New Acton Coal Mining Company, Inc.

12 (d) AUTHORIZATION TO ACQUIRE THE UNION CHAP-
13 EL PALEOZOIC FOOTPRINT PRESERVE.—If offered by a
14 willing owner, the Secretary shall accept, by donation only,
15 the 35 acres of land (and all related facilities and other
16 appurtenances thereon) generally depicted on the map en-
17 titled “Union Chapel Mine”, ASMC permit number 3778,
18 for permanent preservation of that property.

19 (e) APPLICATION OF CERTAIN LAW.—The require-
20 ments of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act
21 of 1977 (30 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.), shall not apply to the
22 New Acton Coal Mining Company, Inc. regarding further
23 reclamation of the Union Chapel Paleozoic Footprint Pre-
24 serve.

1 (f) RETURN OF FUNDS IN ESCROW.—All funds held
2 in escrow on the date of the enactment of this Act pending
3 further reclamation of the Union Chapel Mine by the Di-
4 rector of the Surface Coal Mining Commission of the State
5 of Alabama may be returned to the New Acton Coal Min-
6 ing Company, Inc.

7 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
8 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary \$500,000
9 for the following:

10 (1) To preserve and protect the paleontological
11 resources located within the exterior boundaries of
12 the Union Chapel Paleozoic Footprint Preserve.

13 (2) To provide opportunities for scientific re-
14 search in a manner compatible with paragraph (1).

15 (3) To provide the public with opportunities for
16 educational activities in a manner compatible with
17 paragraph (1).

18 (h) MAP ON FILE.—The map referred to in sub-
19 section (d) shall be on file and available for public inspec-
20 tion in the appropriate office of the Department of the
21 Interior.

22 (i) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section,
23 the following definitions apply:

24 (1) UNION CHAPEL PALEOZOIC FOOTPRINT
25 PRESERVE.—The term “Union Chapel Paleozoic

1 Footprint Preserve” means the property (and all fa-
2 cilities and other appurtenances thereon) described
3 in subsection (d).

4 (2) UNION CHAPEL MINE.—The term “Union
5 Chapel Mine” means the surface coal mine in Union
6 Chapel, Alabama.

7 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
8 the Secretary of the Interior.

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