

113TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 2845

To establish the Southern Prairie Potholes National Wildlife Refuge.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 17 (legislative day, SEPTEMBER 16), 2014

Mr. HARKIN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred  
to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

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## A BILL

To establish the Southern Prairie Potholes National Wildlife  
Refuge.

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 “Southern Prairie Pot-  
5       holes National Wildlife Refuge Act”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress finds that—

8               (1) the area of the State of Iowa known as the  
9       Southern Prairie Potholes and consisting primarily  
10      of the Willow Creek watershed in Greene County of-

1       fers exceptional potential for restoration into a boun-  
2       tiful native wildlife habitat area;

3           (2) ongoing restoration and preservation of this  
4       wildlife habitat area will significantly enhance oppor-  
5       tunities for outdoor recreation in this region, includ-  
6       ing waterfowl and upland hunting, wildlife viewing,  
7       and hiking;

8           (3) the Southern Prairie Potholes area is lo-  
9       cated at the southwestern edge of the Des Moines  
10      Lobe left by glaciers 12,000 years ago;

11          (4) the sloughs and grassland offer a substan-  
12      tial oasis of both wetland and grassland habitat at  
13      the southwestern boundary of the most heavily  
14      cropped region in Iowa;

15          (5) because of the location of the Southern  
16      Prairie Potholes at the edge of the multistate and  
17      international region known as the Prairie Potholes  
18      Region, and along important migratory flyways, the  
19      restoration and preservation of the area is critical to  
20      providing wildlife habitat across the full extent of  
21      the Prairie Potholes Region;

22          (6) this 23,500-acre area has for years been  
23      designated by the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture as  
24      a priority area for restoration and preservation be-  
25      cause of the importance of the area to wildlife, facili-

1 tating gradual public land acquisition for habitat  
2 restoration;

3 (7) the area already includes the 2,134-acre  
4 Dunbar Slough wetland complex of Federal and  
5 State land managed as popular wildlife and hunting  
6 areas serving Carroll, Greene, and Guthrie Counties  
7 and beyond;

8 (8) national wildlife refuges increasingly follow  
9 a mosaic pattern with a core of publicly held land  
10 surrounded by privately held land also located within  
11 the refuge boundary;

12 (9) private ownership and uses are not affected  
13 for private land within the designated boundaries of  
14 the refuge, but private landowners may be provided  
15 increased opportunities for partnering on conserva-  
16 tion or restoration practices;

17 (10) restoration and preservation of the South-  
18 ern Prairie Potholes area will benefit hundreds of  
19 birds, mammals, butterflies, reptiles, and amphib-  
20 ians that have been classified as species of greatest  
21 conservation need, including the endangered Bland-  
22 ing's turtle;

23 (11) restoration of grassland and wetland in the  
24 area will contribute to improved flood control and  
25 water quality downstream, as the Middle Raccoon

1 River is the major water source for the Des Moines  
 2 metropolitan region and other communities;

3 (12) the Southern Prairie Potholes area offers  
 4 unique recreational appeal because the area is adja-  
 5 cent to the existing Whiterock Conservancy, a 4,300-  
 6 acre land trust dedicated to conserving and pro-  
 7 tecting the natural resources of Iowa and engaging  
 8 the public with the landscape;

9 (13) Whiterock Conservancy offers outdoor  
 10 recreation and education and includes a major new  
 11 Backcountry Trail complex;

12 (14) the proximity of the Southern Prairie Pot-  
 13 holes to the largest metropolitan area in Iowa adds  
 14 to the ability of the area to provide natural resource  
 15 experiences to a broad community; and

16 (15) the area is already attracting cyclists, and  
 17 that appeal will grow with ongoing development of  
 18 the cross-country American Discovery Trail  
 19 transecting the area.

### 20 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

21 In this Act:

22 (1) REFUGE.—The term “Refuge” means the  
 23 Southern Prairie Potholes National Wildlife Refuge  
 24 established under section 4.

1           (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
2           the Secretary of the Interior.

3 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE OF REFUGE.**

4           (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

5           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish  
6           the Southern Prairie Potholes National Wildlife Ref-  
7           uge, consisting of approximately 23,500 acres of  
8           Federal land, water, and interests in land and water  
9           within the boundaries depicted on the map entitled  
10          “Southern Prairie Potholes Project Area” and dated  
11          August 26, 2014.

12          (2) BOUNDARY REVISIONS.—The Secretary  
13          shall make such minor revisions of the boundaries of  
14          the Refuge as may be appropriate to carry out the  
15          purposes of the Refuge or to facilitate the acquisi-  
16          tion of property within the Refuge.

17          (3) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—The Secretary  
18          shall keep the map referred to in paragraph (1)  
19          available for inspection in appropriate offices of the  
20          United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

21          (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Refuge are—

22               (1) to enhance opportunities for outdoor recre-  
23               ation, including waterfowl and upland hunting, hik-  
24               ing, native habitat exploration, and wildlife viewing;

1           (2) to provide for the restoration or preserva-  
2           tion of Refuge land to native wetland and grassland  
3           habitats and landscapes;

4           (3) to provide for the restoration and conserva-  
5           tion of native plants and animal communities on  
6           suitable sites in the Southern Prairie Potholes area,  
7           including the protection of threatened and endan-  
8           gered species and the restoration of extirpated spe-  
9           cies;

10          (4) to provide critical travel and nesting habitat  
11          for migratory birds;

12          (5) to provide opportunities to private land-  
13          owners to access technical or financial assistance for  
14          the voluntary restoration of the land of the private  
15          landowners for the benefit of fish and wildlife;

16          (6) to provide for outdoor recreation, including  
17          hunting, hiking, paddling, and wildlife viewing to the  
18          public; and

19          (7) to facilitate the education of the public, es-  
20          pecially young people, about nature, the environ-  
21          ment, and the conservation of the natural resources.

22          (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

23          (1) IN GENERAL.—The establishment of the  
24          Refuge shall take effect on the date on which the  
25          Secretary publishes a notice that sufficient property

1       has been acquired by the United States within the  
2       boundaries described in subsection (a)(1) to con-  
3       stitute an area that can be efficiently managed as a  
4       National Wildlife Refuge.

5           (2) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish  
6       the notice described in paragraph (1) in the Federal  
7       Register and publications of local circulation in the  
8       vicinity of the area within the boundaries described  
9       in subsection (a)(1).

10   **SEC. 5. ADMINISTRATION OF REFUGE.**

11       (a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the purposes described  
12   in section 4(b), the Secretary shall administer all land,  
13   water, and interests in land and water acquired under this  
14   Act in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge Sys-  
15   tem Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et  
16   seq.).

17       (b) ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may  
18   use such additional statutory authority as may be avail-  
19   able for the conservation of fish and wildlife, and the pro-  
20   vision of fish- and wildlife-oriented recreational opportuni-  
21   ties, as the Secretary considers appropriate to carry out  
22   the purposes of this Act.

23       (c) PRIORITY USES.—In providing opportunities for  
24   compatible fish- and wildlife-oriented recreation, the Sec-  
25   retary, in accordance with paragraphs (3) and (4) of sec-

tion 4(a) of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1996 (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)), shall ensure that hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation are the priority public uses of the Refuge.

(d) VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall encourage the use of volunteers and facilitate partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, local communities, conservation organizations, and other non-Federal entities to promote public awareness, conservation, and priority uses of the resources of the Refuge.

**SEC. 6. ACQUISITION OF LAND AND WATER.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (c) and the availability of appropriations, the Secretary may acquire up to 23,500 acres of land and water, or interests in land and water, within the boundaries of the Refuge as described in section 4(a)(1).

(b) INCLUSION IN REFUGE.—Any land, water, or interests acquired by the Secretary under this section shall be part of the Refuge.

(c) MANNER OF ACQUISITION.—All acquisition of land or water under this section shall be made in a voluntary manner from willing sellers only.

1 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2       There are authorized to be appropriated such sums  
3 as are necessary to carry out this Act.

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