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H.R. 2660 would increase the authorization for the Tensas Refuge from \$10 million to \$20 million. These additional funds are needed to purchase inholdings and corridor easements. Again, all this will be accomplished with the full cooperation and support of the surrounding community. My constituents who live and work near the refuge fully understand the need to maintain this haven of natural beauty.

Completion of land purchase for the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge will preserve a unique slice of southern habitat for enjoyment by countless future generations. Once again, I thank the members of the Resources Committee for their swift action in bringing this bill before the full House and strongly urge all Members to support its passage.

Mr. STUDDS. Mr. Speaker, to my utter astonishment, I have a request for time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. GEJDENSON].

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here with the majority today in support of this legislation. It is a noncontroversial bill. It does the right thing in extending this area. But as we are handing out fig leaves today, this is clearly a case where fig leaves are deserved to both previous speakers on the other side.

On the key votes before the Congress and particularly for the one that authorized this particular program, roll-call 502, both individuals voted against the general proposition. It is as if to say today that if Jesse James had in one instance deposited funds in a bank, it would absolve him of being referred to as a bank robber.

We have had a year and a half of a general assault on the environment, that the basic legislation that establishes these programs was resisted and opposed, that if you went down each one of these bills, on the Republican side, 99 percent voted to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling; 99 percent voted to keep destructive riders in the fiscal year 1996 Interior appropriations bill; 86 percent of the Republicans voted against an amendment to the fiscal year 1996 Interior appropriations act which would restore land and water conservation funds vitally important to the refuge system; 82 percent voted to keep the salvage rider in the rescission bills.

It seems to me that while this is a good thing we are doing here today, we welcome the last two speakers on the other side, that they do deserve the fig leaf here because you cannot just come to the floor when it is one instance in your district or in your party and claim that you are taking some kind of environmental action. The assault on the environment over the last year and a half has been so extreme, it has frightened people that are not simply environmental activists but average citizens who have some concern about the state of this country and the state of our natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, again I would commend the gentleman for what they do today, but I would hope that we would not see them in every instance oppose the major pieces of legislation. Give this opportunity to the entire country and not just to one place and one district.

Mr. STUDDS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2660, the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge Act, introduced by Representative JIM MCCRERY.

H.R. 2660 would increase the authorization level for the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge from \$10 million to \$20 million, and would make those funds available as of October 1 last year. This increase is necessary to cover the costs of buying critical habitat for the threatened Louisiana black bear. It is imperative that this legislation move forward, so the management plan for the threatened black bear can continue to be implemented.

We in Congress have been discussing prevention in the context of the Endangered Species Act. Here is a case where public input has resulted in the prevention of endangerment. This legislation deserves all our support.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2660 has been introduced by our distinguished colleague from Louisiana, JIM MCCRERY. This is a noncontroversial bill that simply increases the amount of the authorization level for the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge.

It is my understanding that there is interest in expanding the boundaries of this refuge, but these efforts are constrained by the provisions of Public Law 96-285 that legislatively created the refuge.

H.R. 2660 will increase from \$10 million to \$20 million the amount of funds that may be appropriated to the Department of the Interior, and it makes those funds available as of October 1 last year. These modifications are necessary because the cost of acquiring certain lands for inclusion in the Refuge were more expensive than anticipated.

Finally, the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge had been deemed critical habitat for the threatened Louisiana black bear and the river is the only major waterway in the Louisiana delta that has not been extensively altered by channelization.

Congressman JIM MCCRERY has made a persuasive case, and I compliment him for his outstanding leadership on this legislation. I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 2660.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. UPTON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. JONES] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2660, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

## GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2660, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

## NORTH PLATTE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE BOUNDARY REVISION

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2679) to revise the boundary of the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2679

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

## SECTION 1. REVISION OF BOUNDARY OF NORTH PLATTE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.

(a) TERMINATION OF JURISDICTION.—The secondary jurisdiction of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service over approximately 2,470 acres of land at the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge in the State of Nebraska, as depicted upon a map entitled "Relinquishment of North Platte National Wildlife Refuge Secondary Jurisdiction", dated August 1995, and available for inspection at appropriate offices of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, is hereby terminated.

(b) REVOCATION OF EXECUTIVE ORDER.—Executive Order Number 2446, dated August 21, 1916, is hereby revoked with respect to the lands referred to in section 1.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] and the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. STUDDS] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF].

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. METCALF asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2679, introduced by the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BARRETT] will remove about 2,470 acres of land from the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge.

This legislation is a direct result of a report issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that recommended that these lands be divested from the refuge because they provide nothing significant toward the refuge or the national refuge systems' purposes and goals.

While these lands may have limited value within the refuge unit, they offer recreational opportunities to thousands of citizens who enjoy boating, fishing, sightseeing and swimming in Nebraska. Under the terms of this legislation, which is strongly supported by the Department of the Interior, these lands would be removed from the

refuge, and they will be managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission through a lease from the Bureau of Reclamation.

While title to these lands would remain with the Federal Government, this measure is beneficial to the refuge system and the thousands of Americans who will enjoy utilizing Lake Minatare in the future.

I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 2679, and I compliment the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BARRETT] for his leadership in behalf of his constituents and this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STUDDS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this has been an exhilarating half hour, and we are for this one, too.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BARRETT], the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding this time to me. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2679, and I would like to thank the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON], and the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. STUDDS], and the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Alaska [Mr. YOUNG], for their support and for their work on this particular measure.

The House is debating this week several pieces of legislation relating to the environment and divestiture of 2,470 acres of land from the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge, which is just outside of Scottsbluff, NE, which would enhance the effectiveness of the national wildlife refuge system.

H.R. 2679 was developed with the support of the community local leaders and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and it is a very good example, Mr. Speaker, of cooperation between Federal, State, and local individuals.

The Lake Minatare refuge was established in the early part of the century as a preserve and breeding ground for water fowl which were native to that particular area. The refuge is also a part of a Bureau of Reclamation irrigation project. The Fish and Wildlife Service managed the wildlife aspect of the project, while the bureau managed the other aspects of the land, like recreation and cabins and so forth. And following a 1990 directive that the Fish and Wildlife Service bring all of the areas under its jurisdiction into compliance local, residents realized that this would essentially prohibit recreational and residential use of Lake Minatare, and this was absolutely and totally unacceptable.

The testimony before the fisheries subcommittee fully illustrated, I think, that Lake Minatare is an essential part of this Scottsbluff area com-

munity, and because of the significant local interest and the complex management nature of the refuge, the Fish and Wildlife Service did an environmental assessment. It determined that the best course of action would be to terminate the service's authority over certain portions of the land, as some areas were no longer effective as a wildlife refuge.

I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, to the House the broad support of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

My Scottsbluff district office, incidentally, reported we have over 5,000 different letters in support of this particular transfer.

The local citizens, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I have had a great amount of success in working together on this project. It is a unique win-win situation, and it sets an example for Congress as we strive to effectively manage our Nation's natural resources.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2679.

Mr. STUDDS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the gentleman from Alaska is, but we could use a little color here. But I do not see him. I have nothing further to say. One would never know the government is coming to an end tomorrow, but apparently it is, and we are having a wonderful afternoon.

We are very strongly for this bill; and I have no requests for time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON].

(Mr. SAXTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding this time to me. I certainly will not use anywhere near 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say to the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BARRETT], that this is obviously the result of a good deal of consideration by a lot of people, and I am pleased that the gentleman has brought this bill to us, which has obviously moved through the committee and is now here for a vote on the floor.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has found nothing significant, that the North Platte wildlife refuge adds nothing, in their words, significant toward the refuge or the National Refuge System purposes and goals. And it is the position of the Department of the Interior to support the bill as well.

So I congratulate the gentleman on the fine job that he has done in ushering this to the House floor, and I am sure it will pass. Congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2679, the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge Act, which was introduced by Representative BILL BARRETT.

H.R. 2679 would remove about 2,470 acres of land from the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge, which the Fish and Wildlife Service

has found to provide "nothing significant towards the Refuge or the National Refuge System purposes and goals."

The title to these lands would remain with the Federal Government, and they would be managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission through a lease with the Bureau of Reclamation.

I think it is important that when the Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes that a refuge is no longer serving the function for which it was founded, it takes steps to remove the land from the Refuge System. This bill is strongly supported by the Department of the Interior, and I urge all Members to support it.

Mr. DON YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2679, introduced by our colleague from Nebraska, BILL BARRETT, will remove about 2,470 acres of land from the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge.

This legislation is a direct result of a report issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that recommended that these lands be divested from the refuge because they provide "nothing significant toward the refuge or the National Refuge System purposes and goals."

While these lands may have limited value within the refuge unit, they offer recreational opportunities to thousands of our citizens who enjoy boating, fishing, sightseeing, and swimming in Nebraska.

Under the terms of this legislation, which is strongly supported by the Department of the Interior, these lands would be removed from the refuge and they will be managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission through a lease from the Bureau of Reclamation.

While title to these lands would remain with the Federal Government, this measure is beneficial to the Refuge System and the thousands of Americans who will enjoy utilizing Lake Minatare in the future.

I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 2679 and I compliment BILL BARRETT for his outstanding leadership on behalf of his constituents and this legislation.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2679.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 2679, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.