

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

CHERRY VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE STUDY ACT

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5232) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to initiate and complete an evaluation of lands and waters located in Northeastern Pennsylvania for their potential acquisition and inclusion in a future Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5232

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) The scenic Cherry Valley area of Northeastern Pennsylvania is blessed with more than 80 special-concern animal and plant species and natural habitats.

(2) In a preliminary assessment of Cherry Valley, United States Fish and Wildlife Service biologists ranked Cherry Valley very high as a potential national wildlife refuge.

(3) Six species that are listed as endangered species or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) have been documented within or near Cherry Valley: The bog turtle (possibly the most significant population of the listed subspecies), the dwarf wedge mussel, the northeastern bulrush, the small whorled pogonia, the bald eagle, and the Indiana bat (a historic resident, with efforts under way to re-establish favorable conditions).

(4) Cherry Valley provides habitat for at least 79 species of national or regional concern, which either nest in Cherry Valley or migrate through the area during critical times in their life cycle, including—

(A) neo-tropical migratory birds such as the Cerulean Warbler, the Worm-eating Warbler, and the Wood Thrush, all of which nest in Cherry Valley;

(B) waterfowl such as the American Black Duck;

(C) several globally rare plants, such as the spreading globeflower; and

(D) anadromous fish species.

(5) The Cherry Valley watershed encompasses a large segment of the Kittatinny Ridge, an important migration route for birds of prey throughout the Northeastern United States. Every migratory raptor species in the Northeast is regularly observed along the Kittatinny Ridge during the autumnal migration, including the bald eagle, the golden eagle, and the broad-winged hawk.

(6) The Kittatinny Ridge also includes a long segment of the Appalachian Trail, a nationally significant natural-cultural-recreational feature.

(7) Many of the significant wildlife habitats found in the Cherry Valley, especially the rare calcareous wetlands, have disappeared from other localities in their range.

(8) Ongoing studies have documented the high water quality of Cherry Creek.

(9) Public meetings over several years have demonstrated strong, deep, and growing local support for a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge, as demonstrated by the following:

(A) Area landowners, business and community leaders, media, and elected officials have consistently voiced their enthusiasm for a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

(B) Numerous local communities and public and private conservation entities share complementary goals for protecting Cherry Valley and are energetically conserving wildlife habitat and farmland. Along with State land-management agencies and the National Park Service, these local entities represent potential strong partners for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and view a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge as a complement to existing private, county, municipal, and State efforts.

(C) A number of local landowners have already put their land into conservation easements or other conservation arrangements.

(D) A voter-approved Monroe County Open Space Fund and a voter-approved Stroud Township municipal land conservation fund have contributed to many of these projects.

(10) Two federally owned parcels of land are contiguous to the area to be studied under this Act as for acquisition and inclusion in a future Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge: The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and a 700-acre segment of the Appalachian Trail owned by the National Park Service.

SEC. 3. STUDY OF REFUGE POTENTIAL AND FUTURE REFUGE LAND ACQUISITION.

(a) STUDY.—The Secretary shall initiate within 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act a study to evaluate the fish and wildlife habitat and aquatic and terrestrial communities located in Northeastern Pennsylvania and identified on the map entitled, "Proposed Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge—Authorization Boundary", dated February 24, 2005, for their potential acquisition by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service through donation, exchange, or willing seller purchase and subsequent inclusion in a future Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

(b) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary, while conducting the study required under this section, shall consult appropriate State and local officials, private conservation organizations, major landowners and other interested persons, regarding the identification of eligible lands, waters, and interests therein that are appropriate for acquisition for a national wildlife refuge and the determination of boundaries within which such acquisitions should be made.

(c) COMPONENTS OF STUDY.—As part of the study under this section the Secretary shall do the following:

(1) Determine if the fish and wildlife habitat and aquatic and terrestrial communities to be evaluated are suitable for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System and management under the policies of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.).

(2) Assess the conservation benefits to be gained from the establishment of a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge including—

(A) preservation and maintenance of diverse populations of fish, wildlife, and plants, including species listed as threatened species or endangered species;

(B) protection and enhancement of aquatic and wetland habitats;

(C) opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreation, scientific research, and environmental education and interpretation; and

(D) fulfillment of international obligations of the United States with respect to fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

(3) Provide an opportunity for public participation and give special consideration to views expressed by local public and private entities regarding lands, waters, and interests therein for potential future acquisition for refuge purposes.

(4) The total area of lands, water, and interests therein that may be acquired shall not in the aggregate exceed 30,000 acres.

(d) REPORT.—The Secretary shall, within 12 months after date of the enactment of this Act, complete the study required by this section and submit a report containing the results thereof to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate. The report shall include—

(1) a map that identifies and prioritizes specific lands, waters, and interests therein for future acquisition, and that delineates an acquisition boundary, for a potential Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge;

(2) a cost estimate for the acquisition of all lands, waters, and interests therein that are appropriate for refuge status; and

(3) an estimate of potentially available acquisition and management funds from non-Federal sources.

(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary \$200,000 to carry out the study.

SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act the term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. RADANOVICH) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support this legislation proposed by Congressmen PAUL KANJORSKI, CHARLES DENT, JIM GERLACH, and TIM HOLDEN, that will direct the Fish and Wildlife Service to evaluate the potential for creating a new Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Northeast Pennsylvania.

What this measure proposes is a unique approach. While the National Park Service has been following this "study first" model for many years, this may be the first time Congress has ever studied the possibility of creating a new national wildlife refuge. This is a sound conservation approach.

Cherry Valley is a beautiful region, and it provides critical habitat for at least six federally listed species and 80 species of national and regional concern. In addition, it is a prime bird migration corridor for bald and golden eagles and broad-winged hawks. The idea of a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge has been endorsed by a number of locally effective bodies, citizen groups, and conservation organizations.

Under the terms of the bill, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to conduct a 12-month study to evaluate the fish and wildlife habitat and aquatic and terrestrial communities to determine whether their value merits the establishment of a national wildlife refuge. This report will identify priority lands, assess their conservation value, determine the Federal acquisition costs and create a potential acquisition boundary.

I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 5232.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

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

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, we support this legislation that would direct the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate lands and waters located in the Cherry Valley Region of Northeastern Pennsylvania for their potential designation as a future National Wildlife Refuge.

Witness testimony received during the May 10, 2006, Fisheries Subcommittee hearing on the bill clearly documented that the Cherry Valley Region contains significant ecological habitat for several species of threatened and endangered wildlife, especially for migratory raptors like hawks and eagles.

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Also, the hearing confirmed that the designation of a new Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a goal strongly supported by local governments and residents. I want to applaud the bill's Democratic sponsor, Congressman PAUL KANJORSKI, for introducing this legislation as a first step towards achieving the ultimate goal of establishing a new Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

I urge Members to support this worthy bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KANJORSKI), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. KANJORSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise in very strong support of the bill I introduced, H.R. 5232, the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act.

Located in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania, Cherry Valley provides habitat to more than 75 species of national or regional concern, including several plants and animals listed as either endangered or threatened. These species include the bog turtle and the bald eagle. Monroe County, however, is also the fastest growing county in Pennsylvania, and this development now threatens and will soon encroach upon the habitat of these rare species.

As a result, grass-roots efforts to protect these sensitive habitats have gained momentum and now have widespread support within the local community. Rarely in my career in Congress have I experienced such overwhelming local support for a legislative endeavor as I have encountered for the designation of a national wildlife refuge in Cherry Valley.

Designation of a national wildlife refuge has bipartisan support from elected officials, including all three county commissioners, two State representatives, and a State senator. It also has the support of supervisors from all of the townships included and located in the Cherry Valley area. Moreover, my colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT) has joined me in sponsoring this legislation because he once represented parts of Cherry Valley when he served as a State senator.

Area business owners have also voiced their support for this effort. For example, the Pocono Builders Association, a building industry trade association in Monroe County, passed a resolution in support of designating Cherry Valley a national wildlife refuge.

Moreover, a number of local landowners have already put their land into easements and other conservation arrangements to facilitate the creation of a national wildlife refuge. Voters have also approved initiatives designed to provide the revenue needed for conservation purposes. Designation of a national wildlife refuge would, therefore, help to coordinate these efforts and provide Federal support for conservation of this important habitat.

In order to determine the appropriate land for inclusion in a potential refuge, I introduced H.R. 5232, the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act, after consulting with my colleagues and determining the best course of action. The bill authorizes a study to be completed by the Fish and Wildlife Service to determine what specific lands are suitable for inclusion in a potential refuge.

The legislation does not authorize the creation of a national wildlife refuge at this time. The bill is intended merely to study areas for their potential for inclusion in a refuge, not to authorize the creation of another refuge. In addition, the study is designed to provide Congress with the information needed to determine if the designation of a wildlife refuge in Cherry Valley is appropriate.

Before closing, I would like to thank my colleague from New Jersey (Mr.

PALLONE) and my colleague from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) for holding a hearing on this legislation. I also would like to thank my colleague from California (Mr. POMBO) and my colleague from West Virginia (Mr. RABALL) for moving this legislation through the House Resources Committee. Their work on this bill is much appreciated.

In summation, I urge passage of this legislation.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. RADANOVICH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5232.

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.

PERMITTING USE OF CAPITOL ROTUNDA FOR A CEREMONY TO COMMEMORATE THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 427) permitting the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 427

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), that the rotunda of the Capitol is authorized to be used on July 19, 2006, for a ceremony to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Physical preparations for the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as the Architect of the Capitol may prescribe.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

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

For three-quarters of a century, the Department of Veterans Affairs has supported the distinguished men and women of our Armed Forces through the many services they offer. Since its inception in 1930, the VA has worked tirelessly to enhance patient care and veterans benefits, providing excellence in service to those who serve our Nation proudly.

Of the 25 million veterans currently alive, nearly three of every four served during a war or in an official period of hostility. About a quarter of the Nation's population, approximately 70