

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands.

□ 1500

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 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 gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands?

There was no objection.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to explain the bill.

I want to thank the Chair of the Subcommittee on Parks for coming to the Virgin Islands and having a hearing in St. John on this important bill.

This bill, H.R. 53, was introduced by me on January 4 of this year to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to lease land on the island of St. John to the Government of the United States Virgin Islands to build a public school. The legislation is strongly supported by the people of the Virgin Islands, particularly the residents of St. John.

The Virgin Islands National Park was authorized by Congress in 1956 and established largely by an initial land donation by Laurance Rockefeller through the Jackson Hole Preserve, Incorporated. In 1962 and 1978, the park was enlarged by Congress so that it now takes up almost two-thirds of St. John, which is only 22 square miles.

For at least the past three decades, the Government of the Virgin Islands and the National Park Service have been discussing the question of securing suitable land on the island of St. John to construct the public school. Since the 1970s, public school enrollment on St. John has more than doubled, and the U.S. VI Government owns no land on the island to expand either of the two public schools that now exist or to build a new one.

The two existing public schools, Julius E. Sprauve and the Guy H. Benjamin Elementary School, only accommodate children up to the ninth grade. St. Johnian high school children have to travel to St. Thomas, 20 minutes by ferry over open ocean to complete their secondary education.

The Julius E. Sprauve School is in the middle of a heavily trafficked area, which really threatens and puts the lives of our children at risk as they come to and from school. About 2 years ago, a second-grade student was killed leaving a Christmas party. The schools are not in the best location; especially that school is not in the best location for our students.

It is clear that with limited land and the continued growth and population, this legislation is critically needed.

I want to thank Chairman RAHALL and Ranking Member DON YOUNG and Subcommittee Parks Chairman RAÚL GRIJALVA and Insular Affairs Subcommittee ranking member, LUIS

FORTUÑO, for their support to have this legislation considered on the floor today.

I also have to thank the One Campus Group in St. John, Kirstin Cox, Lorelei Monsanto, Alvis Christian, Ronnie Jones and all of the others for the work that they have done to get us this far and to bring the community together in support of the process that is outlined in H.R. 53 when all else failed.

I urge my colleagues to support the people of St. John and to support H.R. 53.

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

Mr. GOHMERT. I do thank my colleague from the Virgin Islands for outlining H.R. 53.

Two-thirds of the island of St. John is comprised of the Virgin Islands National Park. The park's dominant size is negatively impacting the quality of life for the growing population there at St. John. Without utilizing the park land, there is no other suitable property to build a school on St. John.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill. We had hoped to consider an amendment to convey the property outright for the school, as was offered, but then withdrawn by Congressman JEFF FLAKE during our committee consideration of this bill.

However, Chairman RAHALL has given his support for other long-term leases, and this bill does establish an important precedent for the National Park Service.

We support the bill. It is for a great purpose. I would urge my colleagues to support this, since we don't have an amendment to give it outright to my colleague, but, in the meantime, we support this bill and wish the project well.

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

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I thank the gentleman for his support.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 53, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REFUGE ECOLOGY PROTECTION, ASSISTANCE, AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE ACT

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 767) to protect, conserve, and restore native fish, wildlife, and their natural habitats at national wildlife refuges through cooperative, incentive-based grants to control, mitigate, and eradicate harmful nonnative species, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 767

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 "Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

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

(1) The National Wildlife Refuge System is the premier land conservation system in the world.

(2) Harmful nonnative species are the leading cause of habitat destruction in national wildlife refuges.

(3) More than 675 known harmful nonnative species are found in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

(4) Nearly 8 million acres of the National Wildlife Refuge System contain harmful nonnative species.

(5) The cost of early identification and removal of harmful nonnative species is dramatically lower than removing an established invasive population.

(6) The cost of the backlog of harmful nonnative species control projects that need to be carried out in the National Wildlife Refuge System is over \$361,000,000, and the failure to carry out such projects threatens the ability of the System to fulfill its basic mission.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to encourage partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, other Federal agencies, States, Indian tribes, and other interests for the following objectives:

(1) To protect, enhance, restore, and manage a diversity of habitats for native fish and wildlife resources within the National Wildlife Refuge System through control of harmful nonnative species.

(2) To promote the development of voluntary State assessments to establish priorities for controlling harmful nonnative species that threaten or negatively impact refuge resources.

(3) To promote greater cooperation among Federal, State, and local land and water managers, and owners of private land, water rights, or other interests, to implement ecologically based strategies to eradicate, mitigate, and control harmful nonnative species that threaten or negatively impact refuge resources through a voluntary and incentive-based financial assistance grant program.

(4) To establish an immediate response capability to combat incipient harmful nonnative species invasions.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

For the purposes of this Act:

(1) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—The term "Advisory Committee" means the Invasive Species Advisory Committee established by section 3 of Executive Order 13112, dated February 3, 1999.

(2) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES.—The term "appropriate Committees" means the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate.

(3) CONTROL.—The term "control" means, as appropriate, eradicating, suppressing, reducing, or managing harmful nonnative species from areas where they are present; taking steps to detect early infestations on at-risk native habitats; and restoring native species and habitats to reduce the effects of harmful nonnative species.

(4) ENVIRONMENTAL SOUNDNESS.—The term "environmental soundness" means the extent of inclusion of methods, efforts, actions,

or programs to prevent or control infestations of harmful nonnative species, that—

(A) minimize adverse impacts to the structure and function of an ecosystem and adverse effects on nontarget species and ecosystems; and

(B) emphasize integrated management techniques.

(5) **HARMFUL NONNATIVE SPECIES.**—The term “harmful nonnative species” means, with respect to a particular ecosystem in a particular region, any species, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that is not native to that ecosystem and has a demonstrable or potentially demonstrable negative environmental or economic impact in that region.

(6) **INDIAN TRIBE.**—The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b).

(7) **NATIONAL MANAGEMENT PLAN.**—The term “National Management Plan” means the management plan referred to in section 5 of Executive Order 13112 of February 3, 1999, and entitled “Meeting the Invasive Species Challenge”.

(8) **REFUGE RESOURCES.**—The term “refuge resources” means all lands and waters, including the fish and wildlife species and the ecosystems and habitats therein, that are owned and managed by the Federal Government through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and located within the National Wildlife Refuge System administered under the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), including any waterfowl production area.

(9) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(10) **STATE.**—The term “State” means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, any other territory or possession of the United States, and any Indian tribe.

SEC. 4. REFUGE ECOLOGY PROTECTION, ASSISTANCE, AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE (REPAIR) GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary may provide—

(1) a grant to any eligible applicant to carry out a qualified control project in accordance with this section; and

(2) a grant to any State to carry out an assessment project consistent with relevant State plans that have been developed in whole or in part for the conservation of native fish, wildlife, and their habitats, and in accordance with this section, to—

(A) identify harmful nonnative species that occur in the State that threaten or negatively impact refuge resources;

(B) assess the needs to restore, manage, or enhance native fish and wildlife and their natural habitats and processes in the State to compliment activities to control, mitigate, or eradicate harmful nonnative species negatively impacting refuge resources;

(C) identify priorities for actions to address such needs;

(D) identify mechanisms to increase capacity building in a State or across State lines to conserve and protect native fish and wildlife and their habitats and to detect and control harmful nonnative species that might threaten or negatively impact refuge resources within the State; and

(E) incorporate, where applicable, the guidelines of the National Management Plan.

The grant program under this section shall be known as the “Refuge Ecology Protec-

tion, Assistance, and Immediate Response Grant Program” or the “REPAIR Program”.

(b) **FUNCTIONS OF THE SECRETARY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall—

(A) publish guidelines for and solicit applications for grants under this section not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act;

(B) receive, review, evaluate, and approve applications for grants under this section;

(C) consult with the Advisory Committee on the projects proposed for grants under this section, including regarding the scientific merit, technical merit, feasibility, and priority of proposed projects for such grants; and

(D) consult with the Advisory Committee regarding the development of the database required under subsection (j).

(2) **DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY.**—The Secretary may delegate to another Federal instrumentality the authority of the Secretary under this section, other than the authority to approve applications for grants and make grants.

(c) **FUNCTIONS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**—The Advisory Committee shall—

(1) consult with the Secretary to create criteria and guidelines for grants under this section;

(2) consult with the Secretary regarding whether proposed control projects are qualified control projects; and

(3) carry out functions relating to monitoring control projects under subsection (j).

(d) **ELIGIBLE APPLICANT.**—To be an eligible applicant for purposes of subsection (a)(1), an applicant shall—

(1) be a State, local government, interstate or regional agency, university, or private person;

(2) have adequate personnel, funding, and authority to carry out and monitor or maintain a control project; and

(3) have entered into an agreement with the Secretary or a designee of the Secretary, for a national wildlife refuge or refuge complex.

(e) **QUALIFIED CONTROL PROJECT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—To be a qualified control project under this section, a project shall—

(A) control harmful nonnative species on the lands or waters on which it is conducted;

(B) include a plan for monitoring the project area and maintaining effective control of harmful nonnative species after the completion of the project, that is consistent with standards for monitoring developed under subsection (j);

(C) be conducted in partnership with a national wildlife refuge or refuge complex;

(D) be conducted on lands or waters, other than national wildlife refuge lands or waters, that, for purposes of carrying out the project, are under the control of the eligible applicant applying for the grant under this section and on adjacent national wildlife refuge lands or waters administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service referred to in subparagraph (C), that are—

(i) administered for the long-term conservation of such lands and waters and the native fish and wildlife dependent thereon; and

(ii) managed to prevent the future reintroduction or dispersal of harmful nonnative species from the lands and waters on which the project is carried out; and

(E) encourage public notice and outreach on control project activities in the affected community.

(2) **OTHER FACTORS FOR SELECTION OF PROJECTS.**—In ranking qualified control projects, the Director may consider the following:

(A) The extent to which a project would address the operational and maintenance

backlog attributed to harmful nonnative species on refuge resources.

(B) Whether a project will encourage increased coordination and cooperation among one or more Federal agencies and State or local government agencies or nongovernmental or other private entities to control harmful nonnative species threatening or negatively impacting refuge resources.

(C) Whether a project fosters public-private partnerships and uses Federal resources to encourage increased private sector involvement, including consideration of the amount of private funds or in-kind contributions to control harmful nonnative species or national wildlife refuge lands or non-Federal lands in proximity to refuge resources.

(D) The extent to which a project would aid the conservation of species that are listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

(E) Whether a project includes pilot testing or a demonstration of an innovative technology having the potential for improved cost-effectiveness in controlling harmful nonnative species.

(F) The extent to which a project considers the potential for unintended consequences of control methods on ecosystems and includes contingency measures.

(f) **DISTRIBUTION OF CONTROL GRANT AWARDS.**—In making grants for control projects under this section the Secretary shall, to the greatest extent practicable, ensure—

(1) a balance of smaller and larger projects conducted with grants under this section; and

(2) an equitable geographic distribution of projects carried out with grants under this section, among all regions and States within which such projects are proposed to be conducted.

(g) **GRANT DURATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Each grant under this section shall be to provide funding for the Federal share of the cost of a project carried out with the grant for up to 2 fiscal years.

(2) **RENEWAL.**—(A) If the Secretary, after reviewing the reports under subsection (h) regarding a control project, finds that the project is making satisfactory progress, the Secretary may renew a grant under this section for the project for an additional 3 fiscal years.

(B) The Secretary may renew a grant under this section to implement the monitoring and maintenance plan required for a control project under subsection (e)(1)(B) for up to 5 fiscal years after the project is otherwise completed.

(h) **REPORTING BY GRANTEE.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—(A) A grantee carrying out a control project with a grant under this section shall report to the Secretary every 24 months or at the expiration of the grant, whichever is of shorter duration.

(B) A State carrying out an assessment project with a grant under this section shall submit the assessment pursuant to subsection (a)(2) to the Secretary no later than 24 months after the date on which the grant is awarded.

(2) **REPORT CONTENTS.**—Each report under this subsection shall include the following information with respect to each project covered by the report:

(A) In the case of a control project—

(i) the information described in subparagraphs (B), (D), and (F) of subsection (k)(2);

(ii) specific information on the methods and techniques used to control harmful nonnative species in the project area; and

(iii) specific information on the methods and techniques used to restore native fish, wildlife, or their habitats in the project area.

(B) A detailed report of the funding for the grant and the expenditures made.

(3) INTERIM UPDATE.—Each grantee under subsection (h)(1)(A) of this section shall also submit annually a brief synopsis to the Secretary, either electronically or in writing, that includes—

(A) a chronological list of project progress; and

(B) use of awarded funds.

(i) COST SHARING FOR PROJECTS.—

(1) FEDERAL SHARE.—Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3), the Federal share of the cost of a project carried out with a grant under this section shall not exceed 75 percent of such cost.

(2) INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY COSTS.—The Federal share of the incremental additional cost of including in a control project any pilot testing or a demonstration of an innovative technology described in subsection (e)(2)(E) shall be 85 percent.

(3) PROJECTS ON REFUGE LANDS OR WATERS.—The Federal share of the cost of the portion of a control project funded with a grant under this section that is carried out on national wildlife refuge lands or waters, including the cost of acquisition by the Federal Government of lands or waters for use for such a project, shall be 100 percent.

(4) APPLICATION OF IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.—The Secretary may apply to the non-Federal share of costs of a control project carried out with a grant under this section the fair market value of services or any other form of in-kind contribution to the project made by non-Federal interests that the Secretary determines to be an appropriate contribution equivalent to the monetary amount required for the non-Federal share of the activity.

(5) DERIVATION OF NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—The non-Federal share of the cost of a control project carried out with a grant under this section may not be derived from a Federal grant program or other Federal funds.

(j) MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE OF CONTROL GRANT PROJECTS.—

(1) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, shall develop requirements for the monitoring and maintenance of a control project to ensure that the requirements under subsections (e)(1)(A) and (B) are achieved.

(2) DATABASE OF GRANT PROJECT INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall develop and maintain an appropriate database of information concerning control projects carried out with grants under this subsection, including information on project techniques, project completion, monitoring data, and other relevant information.

(3) USE OF EXISTING PROGRAMS.—The Secretary shall use existing programs within the Department of the Interior to create and maintain the database required under this subsection.

(4) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The Secretary shall make the information collected and maintained under this subsection available to the public.

(k) REPORTING BY THE SECRETARY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall, by not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act and biennially thereafter in the report under section 8, report to the appropriate Committees on the implementation of this section.

(2) REPORT CONTENTS.—A report under paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of—

(A) trends in the population size and distribution of harmful nonnative species in the project area for each control project carried out with a grant under this section, and in the adjacent areas as defined by the Secretary;

(B) data on the number of acres of refuge resources and native fish and wildlife habitat restored, protected, or enhanced under this

section, including descriptions of, and participants involved with, control projects selected, in progress, and completed under this section;

(C) trends in the population size and distribution in the project areas of native species targeted for restoration, and in areas in proximity to refuge resources as defined by the Secretary;

(D) an estimate of the long-term success of varying conservation techniques used in carrying out control projects with grants under this section;

(E) an assessment of the status of control projects carried out with grants under this section, including an accounting of expenditures by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, State, regional, and local government agencies, and other entities to carry out such projects;

(F) a review of the environmental soundness of the control projects carried out with grants under this section;

(G) a review of efforts made to maintain an appropriate database of grants under this section; and

(H) a review of the geographical distribution of Federal money, matching funds, and in-kind contributions for control projects carried out with grants under this section.

(l) COOPERATION OF NON-FEDERAL INTERESTS.—The Secretary may not make a grant under this section for a control project on national wildlife refuge lands or lands in proximity to refuge resources before a non-Federal interest has entered into a written agreement with a national wildlife refuge or refuge complex under which the non-Federal interest agrees to—

(1) monitor and maintain the control project in accordance with the plan required under subsection (e)(1)(B); and

(2) provide any other items of cooperation the Secretary considers necessary to carry out the project.

SEC. 5. CREATION OF AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CAPABILITY TO HARMFUL NON-NATIVE SPECIES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary may provide financial assistance for a period of one fiscal year to enable an immediate response to outbreaks of harmful nonnative species that threaten or may negatively impact refuge resources that are at a stage at which rapid eradication or control is possible, and ensure eradication or immediate control of the harmful nonnative species.

(b) REQUIREMENTS FOR ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide assistance under this section, with the concurrence of the Governor of a State, to local and State agencies, universities, or nongovernmental entities for the eradication of an immediate harmful nonnative species threat only if—

(1) there is a demonstrated need for the assistance;

(2) the harmful nonnative species is considered to be an immediate threat to refuge resources, as determined by the Secretary; and

(3) the proposed response to such threat—

(A) is technically feasible; and

(B) minimizes adverse impacts to the structure and function of national wildlife refuge ecosystems and adverse effects on nontarget species.

(c) AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall determine the amount of financial assistance to be provided under this section with respect to an outbreak of a harmful nonnative species, subject to the availability of appropriations.

(d) COST SHARE.—The Federal share of the cost of any activity carried out with assistance under this section may be up to 100 percent.

(e) MONITORING AND REPORTING.—The Secretary shall require that persons receiving assistance under this section monitor and re-

port on activities carried out with assistance under this section in accordance with the requirements that apply with respect to control projects carried out with assistance under section 4.

SEC. 6. COOPERATIVE VOLUNTEER HARMFUL NON-NATIVE SPECIES MONITORING AND CONTROL PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Consistent with the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-242), the Secretary shall establish a cooperative volunteer harmful non-native species monitoring and control program to administer and coordinate projects implemented by partner organizations concerned with national wildlife refuges that threaten national wildlife refuges or adjacent lands.

(b) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.—Each project administered and coordinated under this section shall include one of the following activities:

(1) Habitat surveys.

(2) Detection and identification of new introductions or infestations of harmful non-native species.

(3) Harmful non-native species control projects.

(4) Public education and outreach to increase awareness concerning harmful non-native species and their threat to the refuge system.

SEC. 7. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER AUTHORITIES.

(a) AUTHORITIES, ETC. OF SECRETARY.—Nothing in this Act affects authorities, responsibilities, obligations, or powers of the Secretary under any other statute.

(b) STATE AUTHORITY.—Nothing in this Act preempts any provision or enforcement of State statute or regulation relating to the management of fish and wildlife resources within such State.

SEC. 8. BIENNIAL REPORT.

The Secretary shall prepare and submit to the Congress by not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act and biennially thereafter—

(1) a comprehensive report summarizing all grant activities relating to invasive species initiated under this Act including—

(A) State assessment projects;

(B) qualified control projects;

(C) immediate response activities; and

(D) projects identified in the Refuge Operations Needs database or the Service Asset and Maintenance Management System database of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(2) a list of grant priorities, ranked in high, medium, and low categories, for future grant activities in the areas of—

(A) early detection and rapid response;

(B) control, management, and restoration;

(C) research and monitoring;

(D) information management; and

(E) public outreach and partnership efforts; and

(3) information required to be included under section 4(k).

SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act such sums as may be necessary.

(b) ALLOWANCE FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE.—Of the amounts appropriated to carry out this Act no more than 25 percent shall be available in any fiscal year for financial assistance under section 5.

(c) CONTINUING AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated under this Act may remain available until expended.

(d) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Of amounts available each fiscal year to carry out this Act, the Secretary may expend not more than 3 percent or up to \$100,000, whichever is greater, to pay the administrative expenses necessary to carry out this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Guam.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Guam?

There was no objection.

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

H.R. 767, as amended, would give the Secretary of the Interior additional tools to combat harmful nonnative species that are hurting native wildlife and plants on our national wildlife refuges. I commend the author of this bill, Representative RON KIND, for his leadership and on other matters affecting the National Wildlife Refuge System.

H.R. 767, as amended, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to issue grants to States to assess the extent of invasive species affecting refuges. The Secretary may also provide matching grants to entities for the control, mitigation, and eradication of invasive species on refuges and adjoining non-Federal lands.

The bill, as amended, includes a provision authorizing the Secretary to give States financial assistance to address invasive species outbreaks in emergency situations.

H.R. 767, as amended, will encourage the development of partnerships to address the threat of invasive species on a cooperative landscape basis. I urge adoption of the bill, as amended.

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 767, the REPAIR Act, as it is called, and yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to also congratulate and thank my dear friend from Guam. She gives hope to this country and encouragement by showing that there is class and there is graciousness in this body, and it exists in the delegate from Guam. She also carries that out as chairman of the subcommittee.

Now, the effectiveness of the REPAIR Act will be in direct proportion to the amount of money Congress allocates. We simply cannot afford to let our wildlife refuges be systematically destroyed by invasive species, and that is happening. This legislation is a positive step because it offers hope in the fight against invasives in the future.

One such species is the giant silvinia, a plant that has made its way across many lakes as it has entered Texas. It is a small harmless-looking little aquatic plant that finds itself on boat trailers leaving a lake. When the boat trailer is lowered into another lake,

the nightmare floating plant finds itself in a new lake, and it can take over. It doubles its size in less than a week, and in no time covers acres, shutting off sunlight, killing off plants underneath, which results in aquatic life dying. It must be fought and eradicated without doing damage to the lake during the fight. Such a battle takes many good minds and hard workers coming together to prevent this creeping menace from being the last thing left in a lake alive.

In Louisiana, there are cities like Shreveport whose sources of drinking water are being put in jeopardy by this freak of nature. Just recently I toured Caddo Lake, the largest freshwater natural lake at one time and a true treasure for America with its cypress trees, Spanish moss, and unusual fish. We had a joint task force of biologists and brilliant environmental problem-solvers from Federal, State, private groups, who all had the same goal: eradicate the invasion of this foreign species without doing damage to the lake.

I just want to read a list of the types of people that are willing to come together when we deal with something that is such a grave threat to our water supplies.

We had Dan Turner, representing Congressman JIM McCRERY of Louisiana; Ken Shaw, chairman, Cypress Valley Navigation District; Robert Speight, President, Greater Caddo Lake Association; Jack Canson, community response coordinator; Mark Williams, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge manager; Al Tasker, USDA/Animal Plant Health Inspection Service; Dustin Grant, USDA/Plant Protection and Quarantine, State operations support officer; Dr. Earl Chilton, Texas Parks & Wildlife, and a member of the Invasive Species Advisory Committee for the National Invasive Species Council, Department of the Interior; Paul Hoffman, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Interior/NISC; also Dr. Michael Grodowitz, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, biocontrol expert; Dr. Randy Westbrook, U.S. Geological Survey, invasive plant coordinator; Judge Richard Anderson, Harrison County judge; Jerry Lomax, Harrison County Precinct 1 commissioner; C.E. Bourne, Marion County Precinct 3 commissioner for Judge Parker; Sam Canup, mayor of the City of Uncertain, and that is a real city, Uncertain, Texas; Jay Webb, Caddo Lake Chamber of Commerce; Bill Abney, Red River Compact; Walt Sears, manager, Northeast Texas Municipal Water District; Dwight Shellman, Caddo Lake Institute; Todd Dickenson, manager, Caddo Lake State Park; Alan Grantham, Dallas Caddo Club; Connie Ware, Marshall Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Jim Harris, Marshall Chamber of Commerce, Water Committee Chair; and Sam Moseley of Marshall.

It just points up how important what this bill addresses is. These are

invasive species that come into lakes and to parks and take over and destroy the native habitat that we are trying to preserve. I have to say, when we had this meeting that went on for a number of hours, I don't recall one time during the entire meeting where anybody ever asked what party anybody ever supported politically. It was all about trying to protect what God had graced this country with, and it is wonderful to see that kind of support.

But what is very clear is that we cannot fight off these nonnative invasive species unless we work together in a bipartisan, in a cumulative fashion with all these different scientists, biologists, governmental groups coming together, because it affects so many different areas. It's one of the reasons I am so grateful to my friend from Guam and for all of those that have worked to help make this possible. We have got to preserve what we have got, and this is one of the ways to do it.

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

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my dear friend across the aisle, Mr. GOHMERT, the gentleman from Texas, for his very kind words.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman, my colleague from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) for 1 minute.

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

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. I do want to commend the distinguished gentlewoman who serves as Chair of our Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans Subcommittee in the Natural Resources Committee, and I want to associate myself with the comments made earlier by our colleague from the other side of the aisle, the gentleman from Texas. This is not a Republican or Democratic issue. This is something that really is important that serves the best interests of our Nation.

I know my good friend, the gentleman from Wisconsin, would have been here on the floor, but I am sure he probably had some transportation problems coming here today. I want to commend him especially for his leadership and for the tremendous service that he has rendered in promoting the interests of wildlife and refuge conservation measures, also as a distinguished member of the subcommittee; but I also want to note that I know he would have spoken, and not only in support of a bill that he has sponsored, but certainly for his knowledge and his commitment in dealing with the issues and conservation and wildlife refuges.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, once again, some people advocate mechanical removal of an invasive species; others advocate using natural means, whether it's an insect or a fish or something to help control an invasive species. Some offer that there are chemical means for dealing with those.

But unless we come together on a bill like this, bringing all the different entities with all the difference weapons

at their command, we are not going to be able to control some of these species. Some of them, like the giant silvinia, are so resistant to so much, and they hide among other plants until they take over and just spread so rapidly, that we must come together.

It is gratifying to see such bipartisan effort in trying to hold on to the land we love.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 767, the Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response Act, which I authored. Passage of this legislation today will bring us one step closer to giving our National Wildlife Refuge System a vital tool in the war being waged against invasive species.

For too long, our National Wildlife Refuges have been overlooked and neglected. The Refuge System has forged on as a System under siege from a number of fronts. Paramount among these has been the steady march of invasive plants and animals that have come from other places and literally taken over, crowding out the very wildlife and habitat the refuges are charged with protecting. Experts and refuge managers at the Fish and Wildlife Service have identified invasives as the number one threat to the biological integrity of our National Wildlife Refuges. Nevertheless, without the resources to maintain even the most basic functions and infrastructure—indeed, many refuge units do not have any dedicated staff at all—refuges have been able to do little to respond to invasive species.

This House has affirmed its commitment to our wildlife refuges by approving the largest-ever budget increase for the Refuge System in the FY08 Interior Appropriations bill. This money will begin to bring the System's budget to a level where it can stop cutting employees and shuttering refuges and begin to address its pressing maintenance and management needs. This is a good start. But with all the challenges that face our refuges, there is still a great need to focus resources on preventing the spread of invasive species. That is why we must pass the REPAIR Act here today.

H.R. 767 authorizes new grants that will bring the Fish and Wildlife Service together with State agencies, community groups, and private citizens to form a united front against invasives. The bill confronts the challenge of invasive species through a two-pronged approach. First, it authorizes immediate response grants when a harmful non-native species has been identified as an immediate threat to a refuge at a stage at which rapid eradication is possible. This way we will be able to prevent new invasive species from taking hold and wreaking havoc on refuge ecosystems.

The second line of defense in the bill are REPAIR grants, which contribute to a more long-term strategy for combating existing invasives. These grants would go to States, local governments, community groups, or individuals to remove harmful non-native species and promote native species and their habitat on lands and waters in and adjacent to National Wildlife Refuges. Additionally, the grants could be used to complete assessment projects consistent with existing State wildlife conservation plans to identify invasive species, assess the needs on the ground, and target resources to address the problem adequately and efficiently.

All grants would be awarded on a competitive basis and include monitoring and reporting requirements to ensure proper oversight ability by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Federal grants would cover 100 percent of the cost for projects within refuges and for immediate response projects, but a non-Federal cost share of at least 25 percent would be required for REPAIR grants on adjacent lands.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the REPAIR Act brings together the public and private sectors to ensure the future of our Wildlife Refuge System. These are special places unlike any other in the world. They are the only Federal land system devoted primarily to the preservation of our unique wildlife resources. I know from my countless hours spent taking in the grandeur of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, admiring the special beauty of Trempealeau NWR, or proudly watching the whooping cranes take off from Necedah NWR behind their ultralight guide, that these places are an integral part of the American experience that deserve special protection.

I would like to thank my fellow co-chairs of the Congressional National Wildlife Refuge Caucus, JIM SAXTON, MIKE THOMPSON, and MIKE CASTLE for helping promote our Refuge System here in the House, and for their support of H.R. 767. I also extend my great thanks to Natural Resources Committee Chairman RAHALL and Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans Subcommittee Chairwoman BORDALLO for their support and for helping this bill get through the committee process and to the floor today. Finally, I thank Dave Jansen and the rest of the committee staff for their expertise and tireless work on behalf of our Nation's tremendous natural endowment.

H.R. 767 makes good policy by fostering cooperation between government and private entities in pursuit of a common goal in the national interest. I urge my colleagues to support its passage today so we can begin to protect America's National Wildlife Refuges from further attack and degradation. We owe it to future generations of hunters, anglers, wildlife enthusiasts, and nature lovers of all types to preserve creatures and habitats that are distinctly American.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time and urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. BORDALLO. I thank the gentleman from Texas for his very supportive words on this particular measure.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 767, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CORAL REEF CONSERVATION AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2007

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill

(H.R. 1205) to reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1205

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 "Coral Reef Conservation Amendments Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROGRAM.

(a) PROJECT DIVERSITY.—Section 204(d) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6403(d)) is amended—

(1) in the heading by striking "GEOGRAPHIC AND BIOLOGICAL" and inserting "PROJECT"; and

(2) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

"(3) Remaining funds shall be awarded for—

"(A) projects (with priority given to community-based local action strategies) that address emerging priorities or threats, including international and territorial priorities, or threats identified by the Administrator in consultation with the Coral Reef Task Force; and

"(B) other appropriate projects, as determined by the Administrator, including monitoring and assessment, research, pollution reduction, education, and technical support."

(b) APPROVAL CRITERIA.—Section 204(g) of that Act (16 U.S.C. 6403(g)) is amended—

(1) by striking "or" after the semicolon in paragraph (9);

(2) by striking paragraph (10); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (9) the following:

"(10) promoting activities designed to minimize the likelihood of vessel impacts on coral reefs, particularly those areas identified under section 210(b), including the promotion of ecologically sound navigation and anchorages near coral reefs; or

"(11) promoting and assisting entities to work with local communities, and all appropriate governmental and nongovernmental organizations, to support community-based planning and management initiatives for the protection of coral reef ecosystems."

SEC. 3. EMERGENCY RESPONSE.

Section 206 of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6405) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 206. EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTIONS.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator may undertake or authorize action necessary—

"(1) to minimize the destruction or loss of, or injury to, a coral reef from—

"(A) vessel impacts, derelict fishing gear, vessel anchors, and anchor chains; and

"(B) from unforeseen or disaster-related circumstances; and

"(2) to stabilize, repair, recover, or restore such coral reef.

"(b) VESSEL REMOVAL; RESTABILIZATION.—Action authorized by subsection (a) includes vessel removal and emergency restabilization of the vessel or any impacted coral reef.

"(c) PARTNERING WITH OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.—When possible, action by the Administrator under this section should—

"(1) be conducted in partnership with other government agencies as appropriate, including—

"(A) the Coast Guard, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of the Interior; and

"(B) agencies of States and territories of the United States; and