

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 276.

Last year the Republican majority was supportive of this measure, and this bill was passed in the House of Representatives. This year, we once again support this bill and commend Representative CAPPS for her work to recognize this historic site in her district.

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

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, Representative CAPPS is traveling back from her district in California and could not be here on the floor. She has submitted a statement which we will be submitting for the RECORD today.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 276, the Piedras Blancas Historic Light Station Outstanding Natural Area Act.

First, I want to thank the chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, Mr. RAHALL, and chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, Mr. GRIJALVA, as well as the ranking members of the full Committee and Subcommittee for expediting the consideration of this legislation and for bringing H.R. 276 before us today. This bill was passed by the House of Representatives last year but was never acted on by the Senate.

H.R. 276 would designate the Piedras Blancas Historic Light Station—located in my congressional district—as an Outstanding Natural Area within the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System.

The Piedras Blancas Light Station is located on an 18-acre parcel of BLM administered land along the Pacific Coast in San Luis Obispo County. The property is adjacent to Pacific Coast Highway and the Hearst Castle State Historic Monument, and it looks over a pristine coastal area that includes the southern portion of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and California Coastal National Monument. It is also nationally recognized as an important monitoring point for migrating whales, and is used by the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Marine Fisheries Service and a number of universities and colleges for marine wildlife and plant research.

The Light Station and the surrounding area are also important for tourism. For example, the national historic Light House—built in 1879—is a main destination focal point on the central coast, and the peninsula is very popular for viewing sea otters, elephant seals, and sea lions from shore. The elephant seal colony at Piedras Blancas attracts an estimated 400,000 visitors annually.

In 2001, BLM assumed ownership and management of the Light Station from the U.S. Coast Guard. Since then, BLM, State and local agencies, community stakeholders and conservation groups have developed a very successful partnership to preserve the Light Station.

Some of these partners include: the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association; California State Parks; San Luis Obispo County; the cities of Cambria and San Simeon; the California Coastal Conservancy and Coastal Commission; NOAA; and the Hearst Corporation.

As a result of their hard work, the site was re-opened to public tours in 2003—for the first time in 128 years. These partners continue to work together on a series of environmental education, historical restoration and resource protection programs; and, I'm confident they will each support and showcase this national designation if enacted.

My legislation tracks the successful model of designating the Oregon Coast's Yaquina Head as an Outstanding Natural Area, which was signed into law in 1980. Yaquina Head was later included in the National Landscape Conservation System.

Like Yaquina Head, the addition of the Piedras Blancas Light Station to the NLCs would be an important step in protecting and preserving this valuable natural and historic resource. It will also focus attention on the restoration of the Light Station and surrounding area, specifically the three on-site National Register properties; and, it will serve as a means to increase public awareness of the Light Station's scientific, cultural and educational values.

Specifically, H.R. 276 stresses long-term conservation of the Light Station by requiring timely completion of a management plan. The management plan would be developed through a public process and include guidelines for restoration of the National Register of Historic Places buildings, including the Light House; public access; ecological and cultural resource management; and, fostering scientific study and research opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Piedras Blancas Light Station is a wonderful resource. It has the potential to serve as a model for future resource management, and therefore would be an appropriate addition to the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System.

Again, I would like to thank the Committee on Natural Resources for supporting this bill to designate Piedras Blancas Historic Light Station as an Outstanding Natural Area, and urge its immediate passage.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 276.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COLORADO NORTHERN FRONT RANGE MOUNTAIN BACKDROP PROTECTION STUDY ACT

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 903) to provide for a study of options for protecting the open space characteristics of certain lands in and adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests in Colorado, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 903

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS; PURPOSE.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Colorado Northern Front Range Mountain Backdrop Protection Study Act”.

(b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Rising dramatically from the Great Plains, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains provides a scenic mountain backdrop to many communities in the Denver metropolitan area and elsewhere in Colorado. The portion of the range within and adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests also includes a diverse array of wildlife habitats and provides many opportunities for outdoor recreation.

(2) The open space character of this mountain backdrop is an important esthetic and economic asset for adjoining communities, making them attractive locations for homes and businesses.

(3) Rapid population growth in the northern Front Range area of Colorado is increasing recreational use of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and is also placing increased pressure for development of other lands within and adjacent to that national forest.

(4) Efforts by local governments and other entities have provided important protection for portions of this mountain backdrop, especially in the northern Denver metropolitan area. However, some portions of the mountain backdrop in this part of Colorado remain unprotected and are at risk of losing their open space qualities.

(5) It is in the national interest for the Federal Government, in collaboration with local communities, to assist in identifying options for increasing the protection of the mountain backdrop in the northern Front Range area of Colorado.

(c) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to identify options that may be available to assist in maintaining the open space characteristics of lands that are part of the mountain backdrop of communities in the northern section of the Front Range area of Colorado.

SEC. 2. COLORADO NORTHERN FRONT RANGE MOUNTAIN BACKDROP STUDY.

(a) STUDY AND REPORT.—The Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service and in consultation with the State and local officials and agencies specified in subsection (c), shall review the lands within the study area and, not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, shall report to such officials and to Congress regarding the following:

(1) The present ownership of such lands.

(2) Which undeveloped land may be at risk of development.

(3) Actions that could be taken by the United States, the State of Colorado or a political subdivision of such State, or any other parties to preserve the open and undeveloped character of such lands.

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

(1) STUDY AREA.—The term “study area” means those lands in southern Boulder, northern Jefferson, and northern Gilpin Counties, Colorado, that are situated west of Colorado State Highway 93, south and east of Colorado State Highway 119, and north of Colorado State Highway 46, excluding lands within the city limits of the cities of Boulder or Golden, Colorado, as generally depicted on the map entitled “Northern Front Range Mountain Backdrop Study Area” dated April, 2006.

(2) UNDEVELOPED LAND.—The term “undeveloped land” means land that—

(A) is located within the study area;

(B) is free or primarily free of structures; and

(C) the development of which is likely to adversely affect the scenic, wildlife, or recreational value of the study area.

(c) CONSULTATIONS.—In implementing this Act, the Secretary shall consult with the following:

(1) The Colorado Department of Natural Resources.

(2) Colorado State Forest Service.

(3) Colorado State Conservation Board.

(4) Great Outdoors Colorado.

(5) The Boards of County Commissioners of Boulder, Jefferson, and Gilpin Counties, Colorado.

(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed as authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to take any action that would affect the use of any lands not owned by the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) and the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members 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 Arizona?

There was no objection.

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

Today I rise, Mr. Speaker, in strong support of H.R. 903, introduced by my colleague on the Natural Resources Committee, the gentleman from Colorado, Representative MARK UDALL.

This legislation would require the Forest Service to review lands in or adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and report to Congress on the present ownership of the lands, and which undeveloped lands may be at risk of development, as well as apprising Congress of appropriate actions that could be taken to preserve the open and undeveloped character of these lands.

Rapid population growth in the northern Front Range area of Colorado is spreading west from Denver, pushing homes and shopping centers up the valleys and along the highways. This development then spreads out along the ridges and mountaintops that make up this backdrop. New homes and businesses in the wildland urban interface also create new liabilities for first responders and a more complicated management framework for forest managers.

The result of these changes is the potential loss of many of the very qualities that attract new residents and contribute to the quality of life of the region. H.R. 903 is designed to help provide a better understanding of what steps might be done to lessen the risk.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend and congratulate my colleague, Mr. UDALL, for his commitment and leadership on this matter. A hearing was held on a nearly identical measure last Congress,

and the bill was approved by the Natural Resources Committee and passed the House by voice vote last September.

Mr. Speaker, we strongly support H.R. 903 and urge its adoption by the House today.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 903.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 903 would require the Forest Service to review non-Federal lands in or adjacent to the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest and recommend strategies to maintain open space. Republicans do not object to this legislation, but considering the current budget constraints on the Forest Service, we believe funds would be better used to tackle the enormous risk of catastrophic wildfire in Colorado. Currently, 42 percent of Colorado's forests are suffering from bark beetle infestation, which continues to spread and will likely kill thousands of acres of trees. These dead and dying trees pose extremely high wildfire risks to Colorado's forests. Surely funds would be better spent on removing dead and dying trees that pose a tremendous threat to homes and communities, watersheds and wildlife habitats.

Moreover, we believe that local and State governments should address open space and smart growth options rather than Federal Government agencies based here in Washington, D.C. While we commend Mr. UDALL's good intentions, we believe recommendations and solutions to these problems should come from the counties and the States, not from the Federal Government.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 903, the Colorado Northern Front Range Mountain Backdrop Protection Study bill.

It is identical to a measure that passed the House last year but on which the Senate did not complete action. I appreciate the actions of Chairman RAHALL, Ranking Member DON YOUNG, and the staff of the Natural Resources Committee for making it possible for the House to consider it today.

The bill is intended to help local communities identify ways to protect the Front Range Mountain Backdrop in the northern sections of the Denver-metro area, especially the region just west of what will soon be the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

The Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest includes much of the land in this backdrop area, but there are other lands as well.

Rising dramatically from the Great Plains, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains provides a scenic mountain backdrop to many communities in the Denver metropolitan area and elsewhere in Colorado.

The portion of the range addressed in this bill also includes a diverse array of wildlife habitats and provides many opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Its open-space character is an important aesthetic and economic asset for adjoining communities, making them attractive locations for homes and businesses.

But rapid population growth in the northern Front Range area of Colorado is increasing recreational use of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest and is also placing increased pressure for development of other lands.

We can see this throughout Colorado and especially along the Front Range.

Homes and shopping centers are spreading up the valleys and along the highways. This development then spreads out along the ridges and mountain tops that make up the backdrop.

The result is potential loss of many of the very qualities that attract new residents.

This bill is designed to help provide a better understanding of what steps might be done to lessen that risk.

Already, local governments and other entities have provided important protection for portions of this mountain backdrop.

The bill acknowledges their good work and aims to assist further efforts along the same lines.

The bill does not interfere with the authority of local authorities regarding land use planning.

And it does not infringe on private property rights.

Instead, it will bring the land protection experience of the Forest Service to the table to assist local efforts to protect areas that comprise the backdrop.

Under the bill, the Forest Service will work in collaboration with local communities, the state, nonprofit groups, and other parties.

I think this is in the national interest.

The backdrop both beckoned settlers westward and was a daunting challenge to their progress. Their first exposure to the harshness and humbling majesty of the Rocky Mountain West helped define a region, and the pioneers' independent spirit and respect for nature still lives with us to this day.

We need to work to maintain the mountain backdrop as a cultural and natural heritage for ourselves and generations to come.

This bill is intended to assist in that effort, and I urge its approval.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 903.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXTENDING AUTHORIZATION FOR THE AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE MEMORIAL

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 995) to amend Public Law 106-348 to extend the authorization for establishing a memorial in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.