

Whereas, Work and completion of the Twin Metals Minnesota construction project will help Iron Range communities to prosper and grow;

Now, therefore both parties agree to enter into this comprehensive Project Labor Agreement, which shall be signed by Project Contractors selected for construction related to the mining, processing of precious metals in the Maturi Deposit, and tailings storage.

KELLY OSBORNE,

*CEO, Twin Metals  
Minnesota.*

MIKE SYVERSUD,

*President, Iron Range  
Building & Construction  
Trades Council.*

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1173, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

#### MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Ms. McCollum of Minnesota moves to recommit the bill H.R. 3195 to the Committee on Natural Resources.

The material previously referred to by Ms. MCCOLLUM is as follows:

Ms. McCollum moves to recommit the bill H.R. 3195 to the Committee on Natural Resources with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith, with the following amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act".

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is a 1,090,000-acre Federal wilderness area, located within the Superior National Forest, that was originally designated in the Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577).

(2) The Forest Service manages the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, which includes—

(A) nearly 2,000 pristine lakes ranging in size from 10 acres to 10,000 acres, and more than 1,200 miles of canoe routes;

(B) 1,500 cultural resource sites including historic Ojibwe village sites and Native American pictograph panel sites; and

(C) 150 miles of land and water on the international border with the Government of Canada.

(3) In 1978, Congress passed the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act (Public Law 95-495) to remove incompatible uses, prohibit mining within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and on 220,000 acres of the Superior National Forest, and to provide management guidance to protect, preserve, and enhance the lakes, waterways, and forested areas of the Boundary Waters Canoe

Area Wilderness to enhance public enjoyment of the unique landscape and wildlife.

(4) The federally recognized Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa retain hunting, fishing, and other usufructuary rights throughout the entire northeast portion of Minnesota, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, under the 1854 Treaty of LaPointe. All Bands have a legal interest in protecting natural resources and the Forest Service shares in the Federal trust responsibility to maintain treaty resources.

(5) The Rainy River Watershed lies within the Superior National Forest, which contains 20 percent of the fresh water supply in the entire National Forest System.

(6) The Rainy River Watershed headwaters begin in northeastern Minnesota and flow north through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park and into Canada along the shared international border. These international waters are governed by the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty, which states that "boundary waters and the waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other".

(7) The waters of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park are classified as Outstanding Resource Value Waters under Federal and State law, and degradation of water quality is prohibited. A risk of mining development is acid mine drainage which generally occurs when sulfide minerals are exposed to air and water creating sulfuric acid, which decreases water pH and leaches harmful metals such as copper, zinc, lead, cadmium, iron, and nickel.

(8) Acid mine runoff from sulfide-ore copper mining entering groundwater, rivers, streams, and lakes harms aquatic life, degrades water quality, and results in potential severe environmental impacts.

(9) A peer-reviewed study of water quality impacts from 14 operating United States copper sulfide mines found 100 percent of the mines experienced pipeline spills or accidental releases: 13 mines experienced failures of water collection and treatment systems to control contaminated mine seepage resulting in significant negative water quality impacts.

(10) The mining of copper and other metals in sulfide bearing ore on Federal lands in the Superior National Forest, within the Rainy River Watershed, poses a direct and long-term threat from sulfide-ore mining contamination to the pristine water and air quality and healthy forested habitat of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park.

(11) The likely contamination of the air, water, and forested habitat of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park from the mining of copper, nickel, platinum, palladium, gold, and silver on Federal lands within the Rainy River Watershed puts at risk—

(A) the nationally recognized natural resources of the area; and

(B) the region's amenity-based and tourism industry, which if protected by a mineral withdrawal, would grow by 1,500 to 4,600 more jobs and \$100,000,000 to \$900,000,000 more income over the next 20 years than if such mining were not banned.

(12) In 2016, the Forest Service issued a Record of Decision which found "unacceptable the inherent potential risk that development of a regionally untested copper-nickel sulfide ore mine within the same watershed as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness might cause serious and irreplaceable harm to this unique, iconic, and irreplaceable wilderness area". The Forest

Service subsequently proposed a 20-year mineral withdrawal of 234,328 acres of Federal lands and waters in the Rainy River Watershed.

(13) In 2018, approximately 20 months into a 24-month review period of the Rainy River Watershed mineral withdrawal proposal, the Department of Agriculture abruptly canceled the withdrawal application and abandoned the Environmental Assessment.

#### SEC. 3. WITHDRAWAL OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LANDS AND WATERS IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA.

(a) DEFINITION OF MAP.—In this Act, the term "Map" means the map prepared by the Forest Service entitled "Superior National Forest Mineral Withdrawal Application Map" and dated December 5, 2016.

(b) WITHDRAWAL.—Except as provided in subsection (d) and subject to valid existing rights, the approximately 234,328 acres of Federal land and waters in the Rainy River Watershed of the Superior National Forest in the State of Minnesota, as located on the Map and described in the Federal Register Notice of Application for Withdrawal, dated January 19, 2017 (82 Fed. Reg. 6639), are hereby withdrawn from—

(1) all forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws;

(2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and

(3) operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws.

(c) ACQUIRED LAND.—Any land or interest in land within the area depicted on the Map that is acquired by the United States after the date of enactment of this Act shall, on acquisition, be immediately withdrawn in accordance with this section.

(d) REMOVAL OF SAND, GRAVEL, GRANITE, IRON ORE, AND TACONITE.—The Chief of the Forest Service is authorized to permit the removal of sand, gravel, granite, iron ore, and taconite from national forest system lands within the area depicted on the Map if the Chief determines that the removal is not detrimental to the water quality, air quality, and health of the forest habitat within the Rainy River Watershed.

(e) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—The Map shall be kept on file and made available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Amend the title so as to read: "A bill to provide for the protection of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and interconnected Federal lands and waters, including Voyageurs National Park, within the Rainy River Watershed in the State of Minnesota, and for other purposes."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XIX, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. 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, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

#### TRUST THE SCIENCE ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1173, I call up the bill (H.R. 764) to require the Secretary of the Interior to reissue regulations removing the gray wolf from the

list of endangered and threatened wildlife under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1173, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 764

*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 “Trust the Science Act”.

**SEC. 2. REMOVING THE GRAY WOLF FROM THE LIST OF ENDANGERED AND THREATENED WILDLIFE.**

Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this section, the Secretary of the Interior shall reissue the final rule entitled “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Removing the Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*) From the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife” and published on November 3, 2020 (85 Fed. Reg. 69778).

**SEC. 3. NO JUDICIAL REVIEW.**

Reissuance of the final rule under section 2 shall not be subject to judicial review.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill shall be debatable for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources, or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) each will control 30 minutes.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN).

**GENERAL LEAVE**

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 764.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 764, sponsored by the gentlewoman from Colorado (Ms. BOBERT). This bill instructs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reissue its 2020 final rule delisting the gray wolf from the endangered species list in the lower 48 States.

Defining success under the Endangered Species Act is crucial not only for species but also for landowners. Understanding recovery goals and accurately measuring progress informs management actions needed to improve a species’ health and habitat. When a species is recovered and is a candidate to be delisted, the achievement should be celebrated.

Mr. Speaker, by every definition, the gray wolf is a recovered species and should be celebrated as an ESA success story.

Gray wolf populations are healthy and thriving in every region where

they are currently found. The Great Lakes region has the largest concentration of gray wolves in the lower 48 States, with approximately 4,200 wolves that inhabit the States of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The recovery plan and criteria for delisting the gray wolf in the Great Lakes is clear. The region must have a stable or increasing population of wolves in Minnesota and at least 200 wolves outside of the Minnesota population.

According to former wildlife biologist at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Nathan Roberts: “These goals have been met since at least 1994.” He went on to say: “It is remarkable to note that given the natural lifespan of wolves, every wolf on the landscape in the Great Lakes region was born long after recovery goals were met.”

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

Backing up this record of success, in February, the Service announced it had denied two petitions related to the gray wolf, one calling for wolves to be relisted in the Northern Rocky Mountains ecosystem and another calling for wolves to be relisted in the entire Western United States. In denying these petitions, the Service stated wolves are “not at risk of extinction in the Western United States now or in the foreseeable future.”

The Service also stated that wolf populations in the Western United States had a healthy abundance, retained genetic diversity, had the ability to respond to high mortality events, and maintained adaptive capacity.

This announcement, coupled with the fact that most wolves in the Western United States are in States where they have already been delisted, shows that States are responsibly managing their wolf populations.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time the House of Representatives debated wolf management. In 2011, Congress directed the Service to reinstate a 2009 rule that delisted wolves in Idaho and Montana and prohibited judicial review.

In fact, delisting the gray wolf in the lower 48 States has bipartisan support. In 2013, the Obama administration proposed delisting the gray wolf in the lower 48 States. The Biden administration is currently appealing the Federal court orders that are preventing the 2020 delisting rule from taking effect. This is a rare occurrence where the Biden administration is actually defending an action taken by the Trump administration.

In 2018, the House of Representatives passed language similar to the bill before us today with the support of nine Democrats, some of whom are still in Congress. Yet, we are here again, pursuing a delisting that should have been accomplished long ago.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to celebrate the recovery of the gray wolf and support its delisting and the legislation that is before us today. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER), one of the most passionate and knowledgeable champions for wolf preservation in the Congress.

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 764.

Rather than celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act and the many species our Nation’s most successful conservation legislation has saved, House Republicans have relentlessly targeted the ESA and the wildlife it has protected.

As co-chair of the Endangered Species Act Caucus, I am deeply concerned about how House Republicans have proposed to weaken this bipartisan framework that preserves our Nation’s rich biodiversity.

Today’s scheme, a bill comically and ironically named Trust the Science Act, ignores what scientists are actually recommending to preserve the iconic gray wolf species and allow them to reach adequate recovery.

The protections of ESA have allowed gray wolf populations across the country to stabilize and regain strength, but if delisted nationally, gray wolves will once again be hunted and trapped to extinction.

Some of the things that my friend across the aisle has mentioned, where they have been delisted in States, 90 percent of the wolves have been killed already. We have seen proof of this in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Trophy hunting of these beautiful wolves has recently been reintroduced in Wisconsin with States such as Michigan and Minnesota ready to follow suit.

Just last week, The Washington Post reported that photos of muzzled, injured wolves have gone viral worldwide, inundating the Wisconsin game and fish department with complaints.

If we actually wanted to trust the science, we would see the gray wolf has made progress in their recovery but also that wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains are being killed in dramatic numbers, even the celebrated Yellowstone National Park’s gray wolves.

Why? To protect livestock? Wolves kill 9 out of every 100,000 cows in America. Wolves overwhelmingly feed on deer and elk, not farm animals, and prefer habitats with high forest coverage. Dogs kill twice as many cattle as wolves and 13 times more sheep. In Colorado, where wolves were recently reintroduced, they have killed one cat so far. Yet, we don’t say that all good dogs should go to the gravel pit when dogs kill twice as many cows as wolves.

Premature listing not only hinders wolf research, but in this environment, it puts a nationwide target on gray wolf packs.

I love my dog. I have seen the emotional complexity of canine consciousness, which they inherited from their

ancestors. If you love your dog, thank a wolf.

Wolf families are more like human families than almost any other species. They mate for the life of their partner. They keep their children in the pack until they are old enough to look for a mate. Please read Farley Mowat's "Never Cry Wolf" to see just how intelligent and charismatic these animals are.

We are in the midst of a biodiversity crisis. Rather than weakening regulations that safeguard important carnivores that strengthen our ecosystems, we should be supporting all current scientific efforts by fully funding the agencies that carry out ESA extinction prevention work.

I know appropriations deadlines are quickly approaching. If my colleagues don't like species being delisted, I have a letter they can join.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reflect on the success of the Endangered Species Act so far—a 99 percent success rate, one of the most effective pieces of legislation in our history—and why allocating adequate resources is essential to promoting species recovery and monitoring. Instead of mocking science, we should embrace it.

Here is a scientific fact for the fearful among us: Not a single human being in the lower 48 States has been killed by a wolf in the last 100 years.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose H.R. 746.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his eloquence and thoughtfulness, which stands in such contrast to the Kristi Noem school of animal welfare that we see reflected in the legislation before us.

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

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

I want to point out that although the accusations have been made that hunting would adversely affect the populations of wolves, that is contrary to proven data that we have from all species that are hunted.

In particular, in each State where wolves have been delisted, there is a State management plan in place that has been proven to be effective in managing wolf populations. Each State recovery plan calls for wolf populations to remain well above recovery goals, and science from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proves that wolf populations remain healthy post-delisting.

While States may vary on population and size management, they all plan for and set policies to have a sustainable and secure population. To be clear, a reduction in population size is not the same as eliminating a population. Each State recovery plan calls for wolf populations to remain well above recovery goals.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Colorado (Ms. Boebert), the sponsor of the legislation.

Ms. BOEBERT. Mr. Speaker, I, too, stand here today celebrating the suc-

cess story of the Endangered Species Act, seeing that the gray wolf has been fully recovered.

I also stand today, Mr. Speaker, in defense of our farmers and ranchers, just like the Farrell family in Grand County, Colorado, who has lost up to five of their cattle in a 10-day span from wolves attacking their ranch in Grand County.

In my home State of Colorado, out-of-touch Denver and Boulder leftists voted to reintroduce gray wolves. Since 10 wolves were reintroduced in December, there have been eight confirmed wolf livestock depredations and six separate incidents involving wolf attacks in Colorado just this month. My Trust the Science Act delists the gray wolf from the Federal Endangered Species List and returns the issue of wolf management to States and Tribal wildlife agencies. Again, this is a success story that we should be celebrating here today.

Specifically, my bill requires the Secretary of the Interior to reissue the 2020 Department of the Interior final rule that delisted gray wolves in the lower 48 United States and ensures that the reassurance of the file rule will not be subject to judicial review.

Gray wolves were first listed under the Endangered Species Preservation Act in 1967. That was 57 years ago.

In 2009, the Obama administration upheld the decision to delist gray wolves when their Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar, a Democrat from Colorado, announced the decision at a press conference that the Fish and Wildlife Service decision to delist gray wolves was "a supportable one. . . . Scientists have concluded that recovery has occurred."

In 2011, Congress directed USFWS to reinstate a rule to delist the gray wolf in the Northern Rockies ecosystem.

In 2013, the Obama administration proposed delisting gray wolves in the lower 48 states.

In November 2020, scientists and non-partisan career employees at the Department of the Interior once again found gray wolves were fully recovered and once again issued a rule that returned management of gray wolf populations to State and Tribal wildlife agencies.

Unfortunately, frivolous litigation was filed by the Defenders of Wildlife, WildEarth Guardians, and other extremist groups, and an activist California judge subsequently pandered to these groups by vacating the 2020 rule and ultimately relisting the gray wolf by judicial fiat.

In April 2022, the Biden administration appealed the ruling of this California activist judge and supported the 2020 rule that delisted gray wolves in the lower 48 United States.

In February of this year, the Biden administration announced a "not warranted" finding for two frivolous petitions that tried to list gray wolves under the ESA in the Northern Rocky Mountains and the Western United States.

In the 115th Congress, the House of Representatives passed legislation similar to my bill in a vote of 196-180, with 9 Democrats voting in favor of passage.

State and Tribal wildlife agencies have a proven record of successfully managing gray wolves. In fact, Montana's successful State management resulted in gray wolves being 500 percent above Fish and Wildlife Service recovery goals. Idaho's successful State management resulted in gray wolves being 700 percent above recovery goals. Now, there are an estimated up to 6,000 wolves in the lower 48. Furthermore, there are an estimated 7,000 to 11,000 gray wolves in Alaska, and there are an estimated 30,000 gray wolves in Canada. Again, this is an endangered list success story.

Let's do as my bill says: Trust the bipartisan science and pass this bill so we can finally delist the fully recovered gray wolf and focus scarce taxpayer funding on endangered species that actually need help being recovered.

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

Throughout this Congress, my Republican colleagues have tried at every turn to weaken our bedrock environmental laws. The Endangered Species Act has, of course, been one of their favorites to attack.

Once again, Republican leadership has taken an opportunity to vilify an endangered species today, here on this floor, to sacrifice it to their precious industry groups. Guns, oil, and polluters has come to be what this GOP stands for, at least in this Congress.

Last summer, they rushed to the House floor with bills to increase the extinction risk of the lesser prairie-chicken and northern long-eared bat. Today, it is the iconic gray wolf.

Do my Republican friends truly have nothing better to do with their time, with the time of this body? We should be working on issues that make a difference to everyday life in America, but this Congress has been mostly about Republicans fighting with each other in a circular firing squad. The only time they seem to take a break from that is when they want to do something to enrich the wealthiest Americans, harm the environment, or, now, to kill wolves.

This bill is falsely named. It is called the Trust the Science Act. It would legislatively delist the gray wolf in the Endangered Species Act in the lower 48. That is not something that is done based on science. It is something this bill would do by political fiat.

The gray wolf is one of America's most iconic species. While it is making a comeback, the science and the facts on the ground tell us that it still needs help.

This bill would make it so that not a single gray wolf in the United States, in the entire country, would be protected by the Endangered Species Act.

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Yes, it is true that the Yellowstone National Park wolf reintroduction is one of the great success stories of the ESA.

We saw that as apex predators, wolves help to rebalance and revitalize vibrant ecosystems and flourishing wildlife populations in one of the crown jewels of our National Park System.

The ESA has kept the wolf from going extinct. We have gone from several hundred wild wolves in America, and these were inhabiting the northern parts of Michigan and Minnesota, to approximately 7,500 wolves today with populations in at least 11 States.

That is the ESA in action. It is a great success story, but that doesn't mean that we can just unfurl a banner and declare, "mission accomplished." We certainly cannot do that when the folks who took wolves to the brink of extinction are ready to rev up the wolf-killing machine once again and put us right back on that path to extinction.

Wolf numbers have grown in the Western United States, but the ESA rightly requires more than just population counts for delisting. Otherwise, we can quickly devolve right back to where we started.

There are still a lot of factors that go into species recovery; habitat destruction, disease, the regulatory and recovery efforts by States that would have to take over management of the species if it is delisted, and a lot more.

The ESA requires that the Fish and Wildlife Service use the best available science to assess all of this, not just population numbers, before they make any delisting decisions. Importantly, the Fish and Wildlife Service must consult with Tribes.

Right now, the service is following these processes and developing a recovery plan, but if this bill was signed into law, all of that would be skipped. They would have to ignore any scientific evidence of remaining threats to the wolf. This is the danger of legislatively delisting a species.

While I believe my colleagues are capable of going on to Google and pulling up some population numbers on gray wolves, it is pretty brazen to suggest that they, as Members of Congress, are more qualified than the scientists and experts with years of training to determine if a species is actually recovered.

The ultimate goal of the ESA is to recover species and then set them up for success post-recovery. We need durable, not temporary outcomes.

Passing this bill would simply call wolves recovered, but that does not make it so. The bill ignores science, and it sends a species back down the path to extinction by reinstating a Trump-era delisting rule that the courts have overturned because it violated the Endangered Species Act, as well as the Administrative Procedure Act.

This bill ignores the careful analysis of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over the past year. It ignores the fact

that although wolf populations are doing well in some places, they haven't met recovery goals in others.

It does nothing to require Federal consultation with Tribes, and on top of that, there is nothing in the bill to push States to improve their conservation measures for wolves.

When wolves were delisted in 2011 and 2021, some States raced to approve the killing of significant portions of their wolf populations, even using harvest quotas.

States in the Northern Rockies actually incentivized hunting. They paid hunters to kill wolves. This does not demonstrate a commitment to conserving the species once it is delisted.

All of these State policies would simply further villainize wolves and reward the type of killing that caused the population to crash in the first place. So no, a simple head count is not a scientifically sound basis for declaring open season on the gray wolf.

My Republican colleagues know that what they are trying to do will never stand up to scrutiny in the courts.

It would never stand up to consideration of the best available scientific and commercial data, and that is why this bill prohibits judicial review. That really gives the game away. If you really trust the science then you shouldn't be afraid of a little scrutiny.

Based on the talking points that we have heard throughout this legislative process, this is all just so people can shoot more wolves.

Why would Congress invest millions of taxpayer dollars in recovering this iconic species just to turn around and let States start killing them all over again?

We will hear a lot in debate today about how these apex predators, which are vital to our ecosystems, are scary, cold killers. That is ancient ignorance, not science.

If we are lucky, we may even hear some of the wild conspiracy theories that we have heard in previous debates about larger, faster, more aggressive Canadian gray wolves. We have heard practically everything except the claim that these Canadian wolves have laser eyes.

Congress shouldn't be overriding conservation decisions made by scientists. Fortunately, when we saw this type of extreme and baseless language a few years ago, a dozen Republicans trusted the science and voted against it.

I urge my colleagues and fellow conservationists to actually trust the science and to vote "no" on this trust the ignorance act.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the only rule or the only science that this bill would maybe not hold up to is the political science that is being pushed back and forth in this Chamber today.

If you look at real wildlife management, we know that maintaining

healthy populations of wolves also affects other species.

I would say if you could talk to an elk or a deer, you might ask them if a wolf is a violent killer or talk to somebody's cattle because they do kill. They are apex predators.

We need them in the ecosystem, but we have to manage those numbers. Just because a species hasn't been recovered in its native range doesn't mean that that species should be on the endangered species list. If that were so, we would have black bear and elk on the endangered species list.

The real science data shows that delisting the wolf and letting States manage the wolf population, and we are not talking about wiping out the wolf population, we are talking about maintaining it at healthy levels, that is what would be best for the wolf and for all others concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN).

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Speaker, delisting the gray wolf does not mean we no longer monitor or manage the population. In fact, the exact opposite is true.

This bill allows State agencies who know their land and wildlife best and who already have management plans in place to manage wolves in a way that protects life and property and allows all species in the ecosystem to thrive.

Minnesota has the largest population of wolves in the lower 48. There are over 6,000 wolves in Minnesota, and they refer to the northern part of the State as the dead zone because wolves have largely wiped out all other wildlife: the deer, the muskrats, the beavers, et cetera.

It is our States, not the Federal Government, who supply the vast majority of time, money, and expertise to manage wildlife, and their record of success demonstrates clearly that species management is more effective when carried out by State and local agencies.

It is State management agencies, not the Federal Government, that recovered and delisted the gray wolf in 2020, only to have radical enviro-activists sue to keep them listed.

For years, populations throughout the West have been well above the recovery thresholds prescribed in the Endangered Species Act.

Yet, officials in the Department of the Interior, beholden to radical environmental NGOs, continually shift the recovery goalpost to keep species like the gray wolf and Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem grizzly bear listed as endangered, preserving their budget and control over Western lands.

Instead of wasting taxpayer dollars on a recovered species, the Fish and Wildlife Service should focus its time and efforts on species that are actually at risk of becoming extinct.

The science demonstrates how successful State management plans for the gray wolf have been, and the Fish and Wildlife Service's own research has

stated that: “. . . wolves are likely to retain a healthy level of abundance. . . .” And they also said: “. . . do not meet the definition of an endangered species or threatened species.”

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is our State management officials, those who are on the ground and in the community, who are best equipped to manage our wildlife and can serve our environment, not unelected officials working from concrete buildings in Washington, D.C.

Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho are classic examples of this fact. All three have maintained a recovered wolf population for well over 20 years.

Contrary to what my colleagues on the other side would say, that the plans that have been passed by the States would never pass judicial muster, the facts are the opposite.

In fact, it was the Circuit Court of Appeals right here in D.C. that ordered the Fish and Wildlife Service to delist the gray wolf in the State of Wyoming.

I thank Ms. BOEBERT for introducing this commonsense bill and encourage my colleagues to vote for its passage.

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

Mr. Speaker, when you call a bill the Trust the Science Act, you probably shouldn't rely so heavily on narratives that seem like a mix of Little Red Riding Hood and YouTube conspiracies about the chupacabra.

You should actually listen to wildlife managers and scientists, and you should also be thoughtful about lessons that we have learned in the past when Federal delisting led to State management that adopted many of those stubborn anti-predator myths.

We know what happens in many of these States when Federal delisting occurs. In 2021, Idaho passed legislation allowing for 90 percent of their gray wolf population to be culled by nearly any means, including killing pups.

In Wisconsin, one hunting season alone wiped out over 30 percent of that State's gray wolf population. In Montana, they allowed increased bag limits and hunting of wolves just outside of national parks, a quota of 40 percent of the State's wolves.

These States in the Northern Rockies pay hunters up to \$2,500 per gray wolf, and they have authorized expanding killing methods including traps, snares, night-vision equipment, bait, and motorized vehicles and dogs to track and kill wolves.

States have legalized the hunting of wolves under the guise of predator control, and with this designation, malice toward wolves is actually precluded from animal cruelty laws.

This has led to some disgusting acts of torture and abuse. Just last month, we saw that a man in Wyoming hunted down a wolf, struck the animal with a snow machine, muzzled the maimed wolf with duct tape, and brought it in to show his buddies in a bar while it was suffering.

This is the kind of tender mercy that apparently my colleagues across the

aisle suggest for thoughtful management of the gray wolf.

The punishment of this individual, by the way, a \$250 fine; not for the gruesome abuse of an animal but for wrongful possession of live wildlife. If he had simply killed it, there probably would have been no punishment at all.

Wolves in Wyoming can be hunted year-round without a license. The identity of the hunter who kills the wolf is protected by State law.

Hunting down the wolf and purposefully hitting it with a vehicle, that is also considered just hunting in Wyoming.

House Republicans love to point to State management as the solution to our biodiversity crisis. I think we all can agree that we should celebrate when species are successfully recovered and management is returned to States.

However, this bill would turn over management to States that have proven an unwillingness, a stubborn unwillingness to conserve the species further, and that would put wolves at risk in the lower 48 States.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, running down any kind of animal and running over it with a vehicle is not considered hunting in any jurisdiction that I know of.

That is illegal, it should not be tolerated, and it shouldn't be used as an example of why wolves shouldn't be managed using traditional hunting methods and letting States manage those populations.

I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. STAUBER).

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Speaker, I want to just rebut my colleague from California. He put up a picture, a devastating picture, alleging that Republicans would do that to an animal. I utterly reject that type of behavior on the House floor, and he knows better.

I thank my colleague from Colorado for bringing H.R. 764, the Trust the Science Act, to the House floor for consideration.

This legislation would have an enormously positive impact on my State of Minnesota where the gray wolf population has more than recovered.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources estimates Minnesota's gray wolf population to be roughly around 2,700, which greatly exceeds the Endangered Species Act recovery goal for the State.

□ 1430

However, many experts, hunters, and farmers with boots on the ground estimate the real number to be anywhere from 5,000 to 6,000.

The majority of Minnesota's gray wolf population resides in the district I represent in northern Minnesota, placing the burden directly on the people I represent.

In the meetings I have held throughout my district, I am constantly hearing from my constituents who are fed

up with the dramatic rise in the wolf population. Whether it is the hunters who have been reporting low deer numbers, farmers and ranchers who have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of livestock, or grief-stricken families whose pets have been killed by a gray wolf, the overall consensus is that something needs to change.

Administration after administration have attempted to delist this species, only to have well-funded activist groups come out of the woodwork to challenge these efforts with litigation.

Most recently, an activist judge in California, living hundreds of miles away from gray wolf country, ordered the Biden administration to relist the gray wolf.

The Trust the Science Act would delist the gray wolf in the lower 48 States and ensure this action is not subject to judicial review, eliminating the constant back-and-forth that we have seen play out in the courts over the years.

Contrary to what some may argue, this bill does not throw out protections for the gray wolf. It simply turns management of the species over to wildlife managers in each of the individual States. States then will be able to enact fit-for-purpose protections for the specific needs of the species in each respective State.

As the title of this bill appropriately conveys, we need to trust the best available science, which considers the gray wolf to be an Endangered Species Act success story.

We cannot continue to allow activist judges and radical environmentalists to weaponize the Endangered Species Act at the expense of other species and the communities we represent.

Mr. Speaker, Minnesotans treasure wildlife. While we celebrate the recovery of the gray wolf, we also believe it should be our right to responsibly manage our State's population.

It is time to remove the gray wolf from the endangered species list once and for all.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Trust the Science Act so we can get Federal bureaucracy out of the way and finally allow State agencies to create wolf management plans that meet the unique circumstances and conditions in each State. The people we represent think that we should also do that.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman from Colorado brought up Tribes in her opening remarks, and I am glad, because we should be talking about and thinking about Tribes on this subject.

Tribes are not interested in scaring people into killing wolves. For many Tribes, wolves are sacred. They are an integral part of the land-based identity that shapes their communities, beliefs, and customs. Like bears, wolves are considered closely related to humans by many North American Tribes, and the origin stories of some Northwest Coastal Tribes tell of their first ancestors being transformed from wolves into men.

In Shoshone mythology, the wolf plays the role of the noble creator god, while in Anishinaabe mythology, a wolf character is the brother and true best friend of the culture hero. Among the Pueblo Tribes, wolves are considered one of the six directional guardians associated with the east and the color white and associated with protection, ascribing to them both healing and hunting powers.

Wolves are also one of the most common clan animals in Native American cultures. Tribes with wolf clans include the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Chipewewa, Algonquian Tribes like the Shawnee and Osage, the Pueblo Tribes of New Mexico, and Northwest Coastal Tribes.

It is essential that the United States Government uphold its trust responsibilities to engage in meaningful, good-faith consultation with all affected Indian Tribes.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, Tribes were not consulted as the treaty and trust responsibilities required when the Trump administration delisted the gray wolf. That is unacceptable. Ignoring Tribal voices erodes Tribal sovereignty.

After the wolf was delisted, Tribes sued the State of Wisconsin for violating Tribal treaty rights by authorizing the hunting of hundreds of wolves in 2021. No wonder this bill attempts to bar judicial review.

Tribes should be allowed to lead in identifying conservation measures for the wolf populations that are culturally sensitive. If this legislation is enacted, Tribes will have been left out of the process yet again and will face further violations of their treaty rights by State actions.

During the hearing on this bill, the Fish and Wildlife Service reaffirmed its commitment to consulting with Tribes during the species status review. I was glad to hear this commitment. I believe the United States Government's relationship with Tribes, and the conservation of wolves, will both be better for it.

This bill, which reinstates the Trump rule, which Tribes opposed and were not consulted on, would further erode our government's trust responsibilities to Tribes while putting the gray wolf at risk. We should reject this political attempt to sidestep science and Federal trust responsibilities and instead let the Fish and Wildlife Service do its job, go through the species status review in meaningful consultation with Tribes, and follow the best available science.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BENTZ), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries.

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Speaker, I don't think I have encountered such an amazing display of ignorance regarding the nature of a wolf until this after-

noon. A wolf is not a pet dog. It is not some schnauzer, golden retriever, or dachshund. It is, truth of the matter, a natural-born killer. That is what it does for a living. That is how it stays alive. It kills things. It eats them. It does not kill them in a kind and humane fashion. It is a wolf. We would be led to believe otherwise by what we have been hearing from the other side of the aisle.

It is obvious to me, from those who have suggested, ranchers are apparently not to be concerned about. Having not grown up on a ranch, as did I, they don't have a clue about what it is like to have to get up in the middle of the night to try to go out and protect your livelihood from nocturnal killers like wolves. They don't get it. They don't want to get it. They don't want to understand it because they don't have to.

The people I represent do have to deal with wolves back in Oregon. It is some of the most awkward situations. Highway 395 cuts my district basically in half. My district, by the way, Congressional District Two in Oregon, is bigger than the State of Washington. It is bisected by this highway. On one side the wolves are listed, and on the other side they are not. In some places, this highway runs right through the middle of a single-ownership ranch. Hence, you can imagine when the wolf kills an animal on one side where it is protected and runs to the other where it is not or vice versa. That is hardly a situation that benefits folks trying to make a living.

To suggest that there is a balance in Yellowstone, you haven't read the most recent report about Yellowstone apparently. You should. There is some argument that the wolf brought some sort of natural balance back to Yellowstone. Not true. Read the report.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question: How many wolves is enough? We have about 250, something like that, wolves in Oregon, 25 packs. That has been determined to be adequate for the survival of the wolf. That is enough under the ESA. We have 2,500 to 3,500 in Minnesota. That is a few more than I think is necessary, don't you, Mr. Speaker?

We have 60,000 wolves in Canada, and the number is growing because it is almost impossible to slow the growth down. We have 5,000 to 6,000 wolves in Alaska.

Mr. Speaker, how many wolves is enough? That is really the question we should be asking, because the Endangered Species Act doesn't require an abundance of these natural-born killers. It requires enough that we still have them around. No one is disputing that.

To suggest that 90 percent of the wolves were killed in Idaho, not true. There are over 1,000 wolves still in Idaho to this day. The exact count is difficult.

Wolves are smart. They are intelligent creatures. They learn, and it becomes more and more difficult to con-

trol them. The reason they need to be delisted is so that we have some means of controlling an apex predator. An apex predator is one of these things that once you have them, they are very hard to control. Being listed makes it almost impossible.

It is odd when we have language in the report from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that states unequivocally—I will read you page 15 of the report dated February 1 of 2024: "Specifically now and into the foreseeable future, wolves are likely to retain a healthy level of abundance. Given the assumptions in our model, our analysis of our model projections indicates that there is no risk of quasi-extinction in the next 100 years under any of our future scenarios."

This is U.S. Fish and Wildlife talking: "More specifically, according to the population protections for the forecasting model, which incorporates Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming's minimum management commitments since delisting, we project there would be at least 739 wolves throughout Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming for the next 100 years."

Mr. Speaker, of course we need the delisting. It is the way that we are going to be able to protect, if at all, and control the number of wolves that now inhabit the United States.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, my friends across the aisle have a pretty selective interest in numbers. They seem to want to take a single aggregate number for the wolf population in the United States and legislatively delist that population in a way that contravenes science, contravenes the way the Endangered Species Act is supposed to work, but they ignore a lot of other numbers.

Let's talk about some numbers. First of all, when we try to scare people about wolves, we should probably acknowledge that you are far more likely to die falling out of bed than from a gray wolf attack. My colleague, Mr. BEYER, explained that not once in the last 100 years has someone died from a wolf attack in the United States.

Wolves rarely attack people, and in the majority of documented cases, which are very few, humans ended up provoking the wolf or feeding it to cause that encounter. Further, wolves are a minimal threat to livestock, despite the hue and cry that we hear about this. Wolves are responsible for the loss of fewer than two-hundredths of a single percent of livestock every year.

Dogs and coyotes are responsible for far greater numbers of livestock losses, and even those losses fall well behind losses due to illness or weather. While there is inherent risk in raising livestock in wolf habitat, the losses are small. Importantly, ranchers are compensated for any financial loss due to wolf predation.



We need to base listing, delisting, and all other wildlife management decisions on science, not conspiracy theories, not unfounded fears, not myths, not political whims.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. TIFFANY).

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Speaker, what a success we are celebrating here today: The Endangered Species Act and how it worked with the wolf. It worked. It has recovered. We should be celebrating that here today.

Don't take our word for it. Take these 26 scientists' names right behind me. We have heard repeatedly today about how we should be trusting science. Scientists are not saying that. I will put these scientists, these wildlife biologists, up against any scientist here in America who is in the upper Great Lakes States. They sent a letter to the Fish and Wildlife Service 10 years ago saying: Delist the wolf. It is recovered. You are going to endanger the Endangered Species Act if you don't delist a recovered species.

The fine State of Wisconsin, which I represent the Seventh Congressional District, was impugned, in particular, the hunters of the State of Wisconsin. We have had three successful wolf hunts: 2011, 2012, 2013, and once again in 2021. Each time, the numbers rebounded right back to where they were before or grew even more. That is a sign of having a successful hunt, that you are managing the population in an appropriate manner.

One of the most eminent predator biologists appeared before our committee last year and spoke about that, how up to 30 percent—29 percent being the exact number—but up to about 30 percent of take can happen of a particular species and it still will recover. That is peer-reviewed science, and that is why you see these 26 eminent wildlife biologists saying that the wolf should be delisted.

I want to talk a little bit about dead animals and killing cattle. It is not the cattle that they kill that causes the harm to a rancher or a farmer. It is the reduction in production.

□ 1445

It is the reduction in the amount of milk that a dairy cow produces when they are stirred up by wolves tracking them. It is the reduced rate of gain for a beef farmer. That is what puts farmers out of business in wolf country. It is not the actual killing of the animal.

The gentleman can cite these arcane statistics like this. That does not get at the heart of the harm that it does to farmers.

It is time to let the States manage the wolf population because there are other species, as was said in our hearing, that perhaps we should be dedicating time to. If you have a recovered species, and additional time and effort by the Fish and Wildlife Service is

being put into a species that has already recovered like the wolf, we are not able to deal with other species.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. D'ESPOSITO). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. TIFFANY. It requires additional resources for species that may be headed in that direction.

As these 26 wildlife biologists said in their letter that they sent 10 years ago, the ultimate danger in not delisting the wolf, a recovered species, is that you are going to endanger the Endangered Species Act and diminish its value.

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

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us today would take a significant step backward in protecting gray wolves from extinction by legislatively delisting the species across its entire range without any scientific analysis.

As I said before, every one of us in this room probably has an opinion on whether wolves should be delisted, but in many ways, that shouldn't matter. Congress has no business listing and delisting species. We aren't the scientific experts tasked with assessing population numbers, recovery goals, and continued threats to those species.

Unfortunately, if Congress delists the species, States that have so far demonstrated a stubborn unwillingness to conserve the species will be left responsible for leading recovery and management efforts.

The gray wolf was nearly eliminated from the landscape because these types of anti-predator laws decimated the population, leading to the listing of the species under the Endangered Species Act in the 1970s.

For this reason, at the appropriate time, I will offer a motion to recommit this bill back to committee.

If the House rules permitted, I would have offered the motion with an important amendment to this bill to provide a necessary backstop if Congress legislatively delists the gray wolf. At the very least, the infrastructure needs to be in place to stop excessive killings or any other threats to wolves if they start decimating the population and sending it back toward extinction.

My language would create that backstop. It is simple. If the population declines too much, then emergency list the species, providing 240 days of protection, while the Service conducts a status review.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amendment in the RECORD immediately prior to the vote on the motion to recommit.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for the motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reject H.R. 764. As we have heard today, this is a bill based on fear, ignorance, and conspiracy theories that condone the inhumane killing of wolves.

Our Republican colleagues have made it clear that they intend to convince the Nation that wolves are just cold killers. Maybe that is good politics in some places to vilify wolves, to stoke the inhumane killing of wolves—running them over with snowmobiles and trucks, trapping, torturing, and finally shooting them, maybe after you put duct tape around their mouth and brought them in as a trophy to show your buddies at a bar.

All of that might work in some places, but most Americans understand the value of wolves. They understand that these creatures are foundational to ecosystem functions. They keep prey in check. Most Americans admire the intricate social structures of the wolf pack. They want to live in balance with nature, including predators.

This bill ignores the science, turns a blind eye to Tribal treaty rights, and removes judicial oversight of the delisting process to reinstate a faulty Trump-era rule. The gray wolf was listed as endangered because the predator control methods of the past had nearly eliminated the wolf from the landscape. Reinstating the Trump-era delisting rule will bring those anti-predator laws and policies right back into action and put us right back on the path to extinction.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on this sham legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear. The gray wolf is a recovered species. The administration is ignoring the facts. They are derelict in their duties, and it is time for Congress to act.

As we have heard from Members today, the impacts of an unmanaged wolf population are growing and will continue to grow as long as the administration doesn't take action. That is why Congress must take action.

I want to emphasize that passing this bill does not declare open season on wolves, as some would have you believe. Rather, it puts the management of wolves where it should be, with State game and fish departments. They are the ones who are best able to manage the wildlife in their State.

My colleagues across the aisle talk a big game about supporting State fish and wildlife agencies, but as we see here today, when the rubber meets the road, really talk is all that it is.

Today, by passing this bill, Congress would celebrate an ESA success story and confirm what three successive Presidential administrations of both political parties have tried to do. It is time for every Member of this Chamber to reject the political science, examine the facts, trust the facts, and delist the gray wolf.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman BOEBERT for her leadership on this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1173, the previous question is ordered on the bill.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

#### MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Huffman of California moves to recommit the bill H.R. 764 to the Committee on Natural Resources.

The material previously referred to by Mr. HUFFMAN is as follows:

Mr. Huffman moves to recommit the bill H.R. 764 to the Committee on Natural Resources with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith, with the following amendment:

Add at the end the following:

#### SEC. 4. EXCESSIVE WOLF LOSSES.

If, at any time, the Secretary of the Interior finds the unsustainable harvest of gray wolves or another factor has reduced the gray wolf population below recovery thresholds, the Secretary shall, not later than 7 days after the date on which the Secretary makes such finding, with respect to the gray wolf—

(1) issue an emergency regulation under section 4(b)(7) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1533(b)(7)) to temporarily restore Federal protections; and

(2) initiate a species status review.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XIX, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. 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, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

#### PROTECTING ACCESS FOR HUNTERS AND ANGLERS ACT OF 2023

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1173, I call up the bill (H.R. 615) to prohibit the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal land or water under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1173, the

amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Natural Resources, printed in the bill, shall be considered as adopted, and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

#### H.R. 615

*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 “Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2023”.*

#### SEC. 2. PROTECTING ACCESS FOR HUNTERS AND ANGLERS ON FEDERAL LAND AND WATER.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Except as provided in section 20.21 or 20.108 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act), and subsection (b), the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service or the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, and the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service (referred to in this section as the “applicable Secretary”), may not—

(1) prohibit the use of lead ammunition or tackle on Federal land or water that is—

(A) under the jurisdiction of the applicable Secretary; and

(B) made available for hunting or fishing activities; or

(2) issue regulations relating to the level of lead in ammunition or tackle to be used on Federal land or water described in paragraph (1).

(b) *EXCEPTION.*—Subsection (a) shall not apply to a prohibition or regulations described in that subsection that are limited to a specific unit of Federal land or water, if the applicable Secretary determines that—

(1) a decline in wildlife population at the specific unit of Federal land or water is primarily caused by the use of lead in ammunition or tackle, based on the field data from the specific unit of Federal land or water; and

(2) the prohibition or regulations, as applicable, are—

(A) consistent with the law of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located;

(B) consistent with an applicable policy of the fish and wildlife department of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located; or

(C) approved by the applicable fish and wildlife department of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located.

(c) *FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE.*—The applicable Secretary shall include in a Federal Register notice with respect to any prohibition or regulations that meet the requirements of paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (b) an explanation of how the prohibition or regulations, as applicable, meet those requirements.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill, as amended, shall be debatable for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Natural Resources, or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) each will control 30 minutes. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in

which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 615.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 615, sponsored by my colleague, Congressman WITTMAN of Virginia.

This commonsense bill protects hunters’ and anglers’ ability to continue using cost-effective lead ammunition and fishing equipment in our National Wildlife Refuge System. At the same time, this legislation gives the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the flexibility to make targeted decisions on lead use in refuges based on sound, site-specific science and in coordination with State fish and wildlife agencies.

In the United States, sportsmen’s and -women’s participation is crucial to the success of wildlife conservation. The North American model of wildlife conservation operates on seven interdependent principles. Embedded in these principles are sound science, active management, and access to hunting and fishing. This model is a success story that is best characterized by the millions of dollars paid by hunters and anglers for wildlife conservation each year through excise taxes on the equipment that they use.

In fiscal year 2024, the Service apportioned nearly \$1 billion in receipts from excise taxes on firearms manufacturers. Of that, about \$800 million was targeted to wildlife restoration. Similarly, \$381 million was generated from excise taxes on fishing equipment for fish conservation.

Last year, after significant pushback from stakeholders and Members of Congress, the Fish and Wildlife Service denied a petition from far-left environmental groups to ban the use of lead ammunition and tackle throughout the system. However, the Fish and Wildlife Service is still pressing ahead with refuge-specific lead bans.

In its 2023–2024 hunting and sports fishing regulations for the system, the Service is banning the use of lead ammunition and tackle in eight refuges. It tries to lessen the blow by expanding access to hunting and fishing in three other refuges, but this expansion also includes a lead ban.

Why does any of this matter? It is about access and how the Service’s actions are limiting access.

In 2021, the National Shooting Sports Foundation concluded that lead-free hunting ammunition is, on average, almost 25 percent more expensive than lead. Not only are alternative materials such as copper more expensive, but this administration also continues to push policies that prohibit mining such resources here in America.

Their lead bans will result in decreased hunting and fishing participation for all but the wealthy and a reduction in wildlife conservation and restoration funding.