

on inefficiency, but there is something we can do today with this bill to make government applications easier to find and simpler to submit and process.

Congress can pass the Electronic Permitting Modernization Act, which I lead with my good friend across the aisle, Representative DOUG LAMALFA.

This commonsense bill encourages the Department of the Interior to offer an online option for as many of its permits as possible. It creates a web page where our constituents can find links to the Department's online permits. Then, it would task the Department of the Interior to report back to Congress periodically on its progress toward electronic permitting.

These simple steps are no-brainers, but they are necessary to keep our government on track and to make the permitting process work for all users.

Creating an online option for more permits will make permitting easier for everyone, not just the applicant. It will reduce the amount of paperwork mailed to the agency, speed up processing times, and finally help bring our government into the 21st century.

At the same time, this bill would help Congress hold the Department of the Interior accountable for its work. With this bill, we could more easily see which bureaus are getting things done here with us in the 21st century and which bureaus are still having workers sitting in windowless rooms, opening envelopes with paper checks and forms in triplicate.

What matters the most about this bill is that it improves the daily lives of the people we serve.

Look, I am a single mom with three kids. When your life is anything like mine, you just want things that you expect to be easy to actually be easy. Let's be clear: It should be easy to find and apply for a permit to comply with the law.

Let's simplify people's lives just a little bit. Let's show them that this part of government using their public lands works efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, I thank, again, my co-lead, Representative LAMALFA, as well as Chairman WESTERMAN, Ranking Member GRIJALVA, and their staff for their work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support the Electronic Permitting Modernization Act.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, the Federal Government is long overdue in doing the work needed to bring its permitting processes into the 21st century. The bill before us instructs the Secretary to create an electronic permitting system to accept, process, and record applications for any permitting process under the Department's jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, even though the gentleman from California opposed my commonsense, straightforward forestry

bill earlier today, I do recognize, commend, and support Representative PORTER for her work on this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5509, 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.

UPPER COLORADO AND SAN JUAN RIVER BASINS ENDANGERED FISH RECOVERY PROGRAMS REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2024

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4596) to reauthorize the Bureau of Reclamation to provide cost-shared funding to implement the endangered and threatened fish recovery programs for the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4596

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 "Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Reauthorization Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF UPPER COLORADO AND SAN JUAN RIVER BASINS ENDANGERED FISH AND THREATENED FISH RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS.

(a) PURPOSE.—Section 1 of Public Law 106-392 (114 Stat. 1602) is amended by inserting "and threatened" after "endangered".

(b) DEFINITIONS.—Section 2 of Public Law 106-392 (114 Stat. 1602; 116 Stat. 3113) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking "to implement the Recovery Implementation Program for the Endangered Fish Species in the Upper Colorado River dated September 29, 1987, and extended by the Extension of the Cooperative Agreement dated December 6, 2001, and the 1992 Cooperative Agreement to implement the San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program dated October 21, 1992, and as they may be amended" and inserting "for the Recovery Implementation Program for Endangered Species in the Upper Colorado River Basin dated September 29, 1987, and the 1992 Cooperative Agreement for the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program dated October 21, 1992, as the agreements may be amended and extended";

(2) in paragraph (6)—

(I) by inserting "or threatened" after "endangered"; and

(B) by striking "removal or translocation" and inserting "control";

(3) in paragraph (7), by striking "long-term" each place it appears;

(4) in paragraph (8), in the second sentence, by striking "1988 Cooperative Agreement and the 1992 Cooperative Agreement" and inserting "Recovery Implementation Programs";

(5) in paragraph (9)—

(A) by striking "leases and agreements" and inserting "acquisitions";

(B) by inserting "or threatened" after "endangered"; and

(C) by inserting ", as approved under the Recovery Implementation Programs" after "nonnative fishes"; and

(6) in paragraph (10), by inserting "pursuant to the Recovery Implementation Program for Endangered Species in the Upper Colorado River Basin" after "Service".

(c) AUTHORIZATION TO FUND RECOVERY PROGRAMS.—Section 3 of Public Law 106-392 (114 Stat. 1603; 116 Stat. 3113; 120 Stat. 290; 123 Stat. 1310; 126 Stat. 2444; 133 Stat. 809) (as amended by section 101 of division CC of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117-328)) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking "(1) There is hereby authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary, \$88,000,000 to undertake capital projects to carry out the purposes of this Act. Such funds" and inserting the following:

"(1) AUTHORIZATION.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), there is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary for use by the Bureau of Reclamation to undertake capital projects to carry out the purposes of this Act \$50,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2024 through 2031.

"(B) ANNUAL ADJUSTMENT.—For each of fiscal years 2025 through 2031, the amount authorized to be appropriated under subparagraph (A) shall be annually adjusted to reflect widely available engineering cost indices applicable to relevant construction activities.

"(C) NONREIMBURSABLE FUNDS.—Amounts made available pursuant to subparagraph (A)";

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking "Program for Endangered Fish Species in the Upper Colorado River Basin shall expire in fiscal year 2024" and inserting "Programs shall expire in fiscal year 2031"; and

(C) by striking paragraph (3);

(2) by striking subsections (b) and (c) and inserting the following:

"(b) NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CAPITAL PROJECTS.—The Secretary, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, may accept contributed funds, interests in land and water, or other contributions from the Upper Division States, political subdivisions of the Upper Division States, or individuals, entities, or organizations within the Upper Division States, pursuant to agreements that provide for the contributions to be used for capital projects costs.";

(3) by redesignating subsections (d) through (j) as subsections (c) through (i), respectively;

(4) in subsection (c) (as so redesignated)—

(A) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking "\$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2020 through 2024" and inserting "\$80,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2024 through 2031";

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in the first sentence, by striking "\$4,000,000 per year" and inserting "\$52,914,285 for the period of fiscal years 2024 through 2031";

(ii) in the second sentence—

(I) by inserting "Basin" after "San Juan River"; and

(II) by striking "\$2,000,000 per year" and inserting "\$27,085,715 for the period of fiscal years 2024 through 2031"; and

(iii) in the third sentence, by striking "in fiscal years commencing after the enactment of this Act" and inserting "for fiscal year 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter"; and

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

"(3) FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ANNUAL BASE FUNDING.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—For each of fiscal years 2024 through 2031, the Secretary, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, may accept funds from other Federal agencies, including power revenues collected pursuant to the Act of April 11, 1956 (commonly known as the ‘Colorado River Storage Project Act’) (43 U.S.C. 620 et seq.).

“(B) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—Funds made available under subparagraph (A) shall be available for expenditure by the Secretary, as determined by the contributing agency in consultation with the Secretary.

“(C) TREATMENT OF FUNDS.—Funds made available under subparagraph (A) shall be treated as nonreimbursable Federal expenditures.

“(D) TREATMENT OF POWER REVENUES.—Not more than \$499,000 in power revenues over the period of fiscal years 2024 through 2031 shall be accepted under subparagraph (A) and treated as having been repaid and returned to the general fund of the Treasury.

“(4) NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ANNUAL BASE FUNDING.—The Secretary, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, may accept contributed funds from the Upper Division States, political subdivisions of the Upper Division States, or individuals, entities, or organizations within the Upper Division States, pursuant to agreements that provide for the contributions to be used for annual base funding.

“(5) REPLACEMENT POWER.—Contributions of funds made pursuant to this subsection shall not include the cost of replacement power purchased to offset modifications to the operation of the Colorado River Storage Project to benefit threatened or endangered fish species under the Recovery Implementation Programs.”;

(5) in subsection (f) (as so redesignated), in the first sentence, by inserting “or threatened” after “endangered”;

(6) in subsection (g) (as so redesignated), by striking “unless the time period for the respective Cooperative Agreement is extended to conform with this Act” and inserting “, as amended or extended”;

(7) in subsection (h) (as so redesignated), in the first sentence, by striking “Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program or the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program” and inserting “Recovery Implementation Programs”; and

(8) in subsection (i)(1) (as so redesignated)—

(A) by striking “2022” each place it appears and inserting “2030”;

(B) by striking “2024” each place it appears and inserting “2031”; and

(C) in subparagraph (C)(ii)(III), by striking “contributions by the States, power customers, Tribes, water users, and environmental organizations” and inserting “non-Federal contributions”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

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. 4596, the bill now under consideration.

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 Representative BOEBERT’s bill, the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Reauthorization Act of 2024.

The Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins endangered fish recovery programs provide Endangered Species Act compliance for over 2,500 water and hydroelectric power projects.

Without these recovery programs, projects would be open to litigation and disruptions to operations that would negatively impact millions of Americans’ water and power supplies.

These programs have been a conservation success story. Their goal is to recover four ESA-listed fish species: the Colorado pikeminnow, the razorback sucker, the humpback chub, and the bonytail. Yet, they also allow for the continuation of operations to meet current and future needs.

In recent years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has recognized the program’s success by reclassifying the humpback chump from an endangered species to a threatened species.

□ 2000

This service has also proposed to reclassify the razorback sucker from an endangered species to a threatened species.

In a report submitted to Congress in March of 2023, the service stated: “When the recovery programs were initiated in 1988 and 1992, the trajectory of all four listed species was toward extinction. The implementation of these recovery elements not only prevented extinctions, but substantially improved the prospect for recovering the listed fishes.” This is a rare occurrence and should be celebrated.

I urge my colleagues to allow this success to continue by supporting this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4596, the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Reauthorization Act.

This bill would reauthorize two fish recovery programs in the Colorado River Basin: the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program, and the San Juan River Basin Implementation Program.

The Colorado River is known as the hardest working river in the West, supporting a multitude of uses, including irrigation, municipal water use, recreation, and sustaining numerous fish and wildlife species.

Established in the late eighties and early nineties, these two fish recovery programs allowed the Bureau of Reclamation to partner with other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and hydro-power customers, water users, and conservation groups to work collaboratively on species recovery and ensure water-related projects are in compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

Without this reauthorization, these two programs will expire, and we risk the long history of collaboration and successful recovery of four native fish species. We need to get this done as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Colorado (Ms. Boebert), the lead sponsor of this bill.

Ms. BOEBERT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his support, and I appreciate the bipartisan support here in the House.

I rise in support of H.R. 4596, the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Reauthorization Act of 2024. This bicameral bill, which passed through the House Natural Resources Committee with unanimous bipartisan support, provides a clean, 7-year reauthorization of the Upper Colorado and San Juan Recovery Programs that protect four threatened and endangered native fish species in the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins by extending conservation programs at current funding levels for 7 additional fiscal years.

These programs provide Endangered Species Act compliance to ensure 2,500 water projects continue to function and provide legal certainty for water users throughout Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

These projects, including 1,200 in Colorado alone, include major water reservoirs, agricultural water users, ski areas, and power-generation facilities that use more than 3.7 million acre-feet of water per year.

The Upper Colorado and San Juan Recovery Programs were established in 1988 to achieve full recovery for four federally listed endangered fish species, including the humpback chub, bonytail, Colorado pikeminnow, and razorback sucker.

Those designations led to the threat of significant water- and power-use restrictions. For over three decades, States, Tribes, local communities, environmental groups, energy users, and water users have partnered to help recover four threatened and endangered fish species while continuing water and power facility development and operations in the Upper Colorado River Basin and the San Juan River Basin.

Without these programs, these 2,500 water and power users would have to perform extremely burdensome Section 7 consultations for all 2,500 individual projects. Because of the success of these programs, the humpback chub and the razorback sucker are success stories and have been downlisted from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Last Congress, I worked on a short-term extension to reauthorize these programs until September 30 of 2024. I

am proud to report that this bill today is the result of months of hard work with local stakeholders, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Senators Hickenlooper and Romney to provide a long-term solution by reauthorizing these vital programs until 2031.

My bill has significant support from more than 30 Colorado and Western stakeholder organizations, including Denver Water, Pueblo Water, both of the Colorado Indian Tribes, Utah Water Users Association, and many more.

I urge the passage of this critical bipartisan and bicameral legislation.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, I am prepared to close, and I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Endangered Fish Recovery Programs are essential to the region's future. These programs have been successful in conserving and recovering endangered species, which is the goal of the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. Speaker, as an Arkansas Razorback, I rise in strong support of this legislation that will continue to help recover the razorback sucker.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4596, 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.

AMENDING THE ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2005 TO EXPEDITE GEOTHERMAL EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN PREVIOUSLY STUDIED OR DEVELOPED AREAS

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6474) to amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to expedite geothermal exploration and development in previously studied or developed areas.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6474

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

SECTION 1. NEPA REVIEW.

Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 15942) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by inserting “, or the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.) for the purpose of exploration or development of geothermal resources” after “or gas”; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (2), by striking “or gas” and inserting “, gas, or geothermal”; and

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking “or gas” and inserting “, gas, or geothermal”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 6474, the bill now under consideration.

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.

I rise today in support of H.R. 6474, which will amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to expedite geothermal exploration and development in previously studied or developed areas.

First, I would like to thank my colleague, Representative STEEL, for all the good work she has done on this issue.

Duplicative leasing and the permitting process for geothermal development result in timelines longer than those of many other energy projects. With such a high potential for geothermal access across the country, it is imperative we enact pragmatic reform to give all energy industries the same opportunity.

Categorical exclusions, or CEs, expedite the NEPA process for energy projects when the area being disturbed has already undergone environmental review.

Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 granted five different CEs to expedite the development of oil and gas projects.

It is necessary that these fees also apply to geothermal exploration and development because the processes utilized by these two industries are very similar, as is the technology and equipment used to drill.

Establishing categorical exclusions for geothermal energy in areas with existing production or areas that have been recently studied is a responsible way to increase the utilization of geothermal energy, expediting the permitting process without reducing environmental standards.

This bill would expedite the approval process for certain geothermal projects by adding geothermal energy development to section 390.

Again, I applaud my colleague, Mrs. STEEL, for this commonsense and bipartisan bill.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise to comment on H.R. 6474, Representative STEEL's bill, which aims to

expedite geothermal exploration and development in previously studied or developed areas. I thank my colleague for her attention to this important issue.

I strongly support deploying geothermal energy on Federal lands. We have heard from geothermal developers that there can be challenges when it comes to permitting new geothermal plants. That is exactly why several of the bills we are discussing here today are designed to address those very challenges.

Now, what H.R. 6474 would do is legislate the creation of a new categorical exclusion for certain geothermal-related activities. Categorical exclusions are used when there is a class of actions that Federal agencies have determined do not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the human environment, and therefore, do not require either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA.

Currently, the oil and gas industries have a relatively narrow categorical exclusion for minor disturbances in already developed oil fields; that is, oil fields that have recently been analyzed under NEPA.

This bill attempts to put geothermal on a level playing field by taking that existing categorical exclusion and applying it basically as is to geothermal.

At the legislative hearing on this bill, the Bureau of Land Management testified that it is skeptical that this policy will provide significant benefits for geothermal because the existing categorical exclusion was designed for oil and gas, and there are considerable differences between those types of energy and geothermal.

Fortunately, the Bureau of Land Management already has the authority to establish new categorical exclusions administratively without the need for legislation.

Using that authority, the Bureau has recently finalized new categorical exclusions for geothermal energy that were adopted from other agencies and are better tailored to this unique type of energy.

The Bureau is currently working on establishing more categorical exclusions to ensure that geothermal can be deployed responsibly and efficiently on Federal land.

While I have some concerns about the expansion of existing categorical exclusions for oil and gas, I strongly support the Bureau of Land Management's work on geothermal, and again, I am grateful for my colleague's attention to this important issue.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. STEEL), the lead sponsor of this bill.

Mrs. STEEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge passage of H.R. 6474, my legislation to expedite geothermal energy growth and development.