

fish and wildlife habitats throughout the bay watershed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. WITTMAN. This ACE Reauthorization Act is truly a testament to our commitment to future generations and to the treasure of the natural resources that this Nation has at its avail. It ensures that our children and grandchildren will inherit a world that is as rich in biodiversity and natural beauty as the one we cherish today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support America's Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization Act.

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

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

While we are on the topic of conservation, I thank my colleagues for working with Democrats not just on this conservation bill but also on the WILD Act, which I am pleased to hear will be included in the NDAA this month.

Like the bill before us today, the WILD Act is a bipartisan effort to maximize conservation impacts through partnerships; specifically, the Multinational Species Conservation Funds, which help conserve iconic wildlife species, including elephants, rhinos, tigers, great apes, and turtles, and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which supports habitat restoration efforts across the United States, including the territories.

I am pleased to be the Democratic co-lead of the WILD Act, and I thank my Republican colleague, Representative JOYCE of Ohio, for his partnership.

I hope all of us can continue finding ways to work together on conservation and other issues, just like we are doing today with the ACE Reauthorization Act.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN).

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for yielding me time again.

It is incredibly valuable, I think, for folks across the Nation to understand that America's Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization Act is really one of those efforts where we take a lot of separate bills which by themselves do a lot of good, and we bring them together to do even a greater good. With that, we also are able to look at how these programs relate to each other. Our effort at this level is to make sure that we coordinate and that we look at how we utilize resources.

These bills are critically important because it is not just about utilizing

Federal resources. In fact, I would argue, with these bills it is actually more about leveraging the opportunities and the resources we have at the State and local levels because these bills are incredibly important to localities across the Nation. They are incredibly important to the experience that we all have as Americans in enjoying these natural resources. That is why the ACE Reauthorization Act, I think, has such far-reaching impacts on our Nation.

It is great that today we can come together in a bipartisan way and say we are in favor of this. This is one of the places where we know working together we can get things done that are in the best interests of our communities and the best interests of our States and Commonwealths across the Nation.

We understand, too, that as much as sometimes people focus on the things that we disagree on, there are some pretty significant things that we agree on.

Today is one of those days where we look at this, and we say these bills are all about a greater good. They are really about enhancing the quality of life in our communities. They are about achieving things that we look to do in common with each other. We look for the private sector to leverage the dollars that are there, people that want to participate in these programs that have really been shown to be a success across the spectrum through the years and that leverage resources.

We look today at the challenges we face in the Nation about a deficit in resources that come in versus the resources that go out. This is one of those programs where it really is a success story about how we take a small amount of Federal dollars that come from sportsmen that voluntarily pay for these dollars, and they leverage it with private dollars. What a great example of a successful program.

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

By passing S. 3791, Congress will ensure that vital conservation work that has benefited countless at-risk species can be improved and continue on into the future.

When we think about conservation, the word "conservation" denotes that it is usage of our resources, it is good stewardship, and these programs promote good stewardship. They not only promote good stewardship, it gets a lot of skin in the game, not just from the Federal Government and the general public, but from all of these conservation organizations and private funds that go into true conservation work to create the wildlife habitat that benefits so many species.

We know that it not only benefits species that we like to hunt and fish for, but it also benefits us because clean air and clean water and a healthy, safe environment benefits everyone. That is what these programs promote.

This bill has brought together a diverse group of sportsmen and conservation organizations who see the benefit of the programs included in this bill, as my friend from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) has already stated. These organizations are groups we have all heard of like Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. Many of us are members of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the American Sportfishing Association, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Again, I encourage my colleagues to support the bill, 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, S. 3791, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WESTERMAN. 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 motion will be postponed.

LAHAINA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA STUDY ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8219) to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Lahaina National Heritage Area, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8219

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 "Lahaina National Heritage Area Study Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(2) STATE.—The term "State" means the State of Hawaii.

(3) STUDY AREA.—The term "study area" means the census-designated place of Lahaina in Maui County in the State.

SEC. 3. LAHAINA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA STUDY.

The Secretary, in coordination with the County of Maui and in consultation with State and local historic preservation officers, State and local historical societies, State and local tourism offices, and other appropriate organizations and governmental agencies, shall carry out, in accordance with section 120103(a) of title 54, United States Code, a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a National Heritage Area, to be known as the "Lahaina National Heritage Area".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL) 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. 8219, 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 to support Representative TOKUDA's bill, the Lahaina National Heritage Area Study Act.

The town of Lahaina, located on the Hawaiian island of Maui, has an incredibly rich history. As the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom from 1820 to 1845, it remains a center of commerce, tourism, and local pride. Until recently, Lahaina's historic district featured many impressive cultural sites, including a historic hotel, church, and courthouse.

Tragically, on August 8, 2023, a wildfire caused catastrophic destruction in Lahaina, becoming the deadliest wildfire in over a century. The fire destroyed over 2,200 structures and caused approximately \$5.5 billion in damages. Many lost structures dated back centuries and held immeasurable value to Lahaina's people and culture.

Just one week after this devastating fire, a bipartisan congressional delegation I was leading joined the members of the Hawaii congressional delegation, including Representative TOKUDA, to see the damage for ourselves firsthand. We were all stunned by the utter devastation that we witnessed there.

As Lahaina continues to recover from the trauma of that brutal natural disaster, local leaders have been exploring options that would allow the community to honor its past while promoting the natural and cultural resources it still retains.

H.R. 8219 takes a strong step in the right direction. This bill would require the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with State and local partners, to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the town of Lahaina as a national heritage area. A feasibility study is generally the first step in considering a national heritage area designation because it helps ensure that the studied area meets all appropriate criteria.

I commend Representative TOKUDA for leading this effort that will empower local decisionmaking with respect to resource conservation and economic development. In the aftermath of a tragic event like the Lahaina wildfire, this emphasis on local concerns strikes me now as more critical than ever.

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

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

I rise in support of the Lahaina National Heritage Area Study Act, introduced by my colleague from Hawaii, Representative TOKUDA.

This bill would direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a feasibility study to determine the suitability of designating Lahaina, in Maui County, Hawaii, as a national heritage area.

It is the historical capital of the Kingdom of Hawaii and a significant area for Native Hawaiians' history and culture. Today, it still serves as a significant site for Native Hawaiians but also is a vital economic and touristic hub for the island of Maui.

However, in August of 2023, Maui experienced a series of deadly wildfires that took over 100 lives, destroyed thousands of buildings and historic cultural landmarks, and displaced thousands of people. More than a year later, recovery efforts are still underway and are expected to exceed tens of billions of dollars.

□ 1700

Mr. Speaker, designating this national heritage area would help preserve Lahaina's rich cultural heritage and support recovery efforts by unlocking Federal funding to rehabilitate important sites and establish exhibits, programming, and other public awareness initiatives.

I would like to thank the majority for working with us on this bill. It is an important link to the past as the community of Lahaina rebuilds and ensures their heritage lives on.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the sponsor of this bill, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. TOKUDA).

Ms. TOKUDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, H.R. 8219, the Lahaina National Heritage Area Study Act.

On August 8, 2023, Hawaii experienced one of its very darkest days when the town of Lahaina was consumed by the worst wildfire in modern American history. We lost 102 members of our "family," "ohana," and we are still searching for 2 more that are missing.

I stand on the House floor today, as I have dozens of times this Congress, to advocate on behalf of those impacted by this tragedy. As we approach the 16-month anniversary of the fires, there is still so much more that needs to be done.

While I will continue to fight for disaster funding and continued Federal assistance for Lahaina and all of our communities touched by disaster, every action that we take to support the rebuilding of our community helps in the healing, which is why I am so grateful that we are here today to debate my Lahaina National Heritage Area Study Act.

Currently of the 62 national heritage areas in the United States, none are in Hawaii. I cannot think of a better place to designate as Hawaii's first national heritage area than Lahaina.

Even before the fires, community-driven efforts led by generational descendants and local leaders were focused on preserving Lahaina's rich history, tradition, and culture for future generations.

My bill would be the first step in ensuring that Lahaina finally gets the recognition that she has long deserved. In consultation with State and local partners, the Lahaina National Heritage Area Study Act would direct the National Park Service to study the feasibility and suitability of this designation for Lahaina.

At this time, I want to thank Chairman WESTERMAN for coming with other Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources to Lahaina literally days after the fire. I will forever be grateful for your compassion, kindness, and support that you showed all of our people. I can honestly say that during this time of grieving, it gave them much hope and helped them start toward that process of healing to have you present there, to offer words of comfort and support.

I know that this bill would not be here today without your leadership and support of this initiative. Mr. Speaker, I say, "thank you," "mahalo" to you and to all who came to our islands.

I also want to thank all of my colleagues who cosponsored this bill and supported it throughout the committee process. I especially want to thank members of this committee, including Ranking Member NEGUSE and Congressmen LAMALFA, CASE, HUFFMAN, and SABLAN as well for their support and help. It is greatly appreciated.

Two weeks ago, I stood inside one of the first transitional homes built by FEMA, looking out at what was once the vibrant and thriving town of Lahaina. For many who see it now, there are only cleared lots stretching from the hills to the sea. If you close your eyes, you can feel the deep pang of loss and grief. It is a pain that we all carry, softened only by the hope that comes with the very first steps towards rebuilding.

In seeking to designate Lahaina a national heritage area, we are daring to look beyond what is in front of us. Beyond the devastation, there is history and culture that predates us all. There was a time when canals and waterways nourished the land, when bread, fruit, and taro flourished, and when our "kings and queens," "ali'i," resided and governed there.

Once known as Lele, before it became Lahaina, this special place was the former capital of the Kingdom of Hawaii. Amid centuries of political and economic change, she has remained a gathering place for our people.

As we work to rebuild Lahaina, my bill seeks to ensure that this is about not just restoring what was lost but

also anchoring our future in the rich history and culture of this sacred place so that they may endure long after we are gone.

With the help of this Congress, we can honor Lahaina's past, while laying the foundation for a resilient and enduring future.

I humbly ask my colleagues to support H.R. 8219, the Lahaina National Heritage Area Study Act.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, this is a straightforward bill that will help a hard-hit community and provide it with options for how it can best bounce back.

I thank Representative TOKUDA for advancing this important legislation on behalf of her constituents. I strongly support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

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. 8219, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WESTERMAN. 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 motion will be postponed.

ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA EXPANSION

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6843), to expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6843

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

SECTION 1. ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA EXPANSION.

Section 213 of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Act (subtitle B of title II of Public Law 109-338) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by striking “and Ascension Parish” and inserting “Ascension, and Lafourche Parish”; and

(2) in subsection (c)(2), by striking “14” and inserting “15”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Mem-

bers may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 6843, 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 to support Leader Scalise's bill, H.R. 6843, which will modestly expand an existing national heritage area located in his district.

Currently encompassing 14 parishes in southern Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin, this national heritage area promotes the region's unique traditions, language, culture, and landscape.

The Atchafalaya is the Nation's largest river swamp, boasting abundant natural resources such as ancient live oaks, towering cypress, sugarcane, and cotton. The region is also home to residents of European, African, Caribbean, and Native-American descent who all contribute to the area's famous Cajun culture.

By promoting heritage development and tourism, the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area protects the region's very cultural and physical resources, while contributing to the local economy.

H.R. 6843 will build on that success by expanding the boundaries of the national heritage area to include nearby Lafourche Parish. This humble expansion will help create jobs and safeguard the region's natural and cultural resources.

I want to commend Leader Scalise for leading this effort to help promote local natural and cultural resources without Federal management or ownership and empower local approaches and do not hinder economic development.

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

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6843, a bill introduced by our colleague and my friend from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE).

The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area was established by Congress in 2006. It is known for its rich cultures and ecologically varied regions. It stretches across 14 parishes in southern Louisiana, where it helps preserve and promote Cajun culture and the area's diverse abundance of wildlife and natural history.

This bill would expand the current boundaries of the national heritage area to encompass the Lafourche Parish in southern Louisiana. The National Park Service studied and approved the expansion, making this an easy bill to support.

National heritage areas preserve landscapes of significant importance to communities through natural, cultural, and historical resources. These areas also serve communities by providing recreational and economic opportunities.

Expanding the boundary's areas will promote grassroots conservation efforts and expand economic opportunities in those regions. This is a win-win.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote “yes,” and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE), the lead sponsor of this bill and the majority leader.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman WESTERMAN, as well as the House Committee on Natural Resources for moving this bill forward. I thank my good friend, Mrs. DINGELL, for her strong support as well, as she just expressed.

I am honored to speak on behalf of my bill to update the boundaries of the existing Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish which is in my district. Stretching across 14 parishes in Louisiana, the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area protects our region's storied culture and resources.

From Cajun music, to zydeco, to our bayous and abundant natural resources, Louisiana has unparalleled culture and heritage and is home to some of the most unique and special landscapes in the world.

The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area brings awareness to this region and tells the rich story of Louisiana's treasured culture and history.

I am proud to lead the effort with my delegation colleagues to ensure that Lafourche Parish, the only parish in the historic boundary area that is left out of the original designation, is finally included in this national heritage area. This bill corrects a long-overdue oversight that will complete the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area.

I would especially like to thank my fellow Louisiana delegation members, as well as the executive director of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, Justin Lemoine, the Lafourche Parish President, Archie Chaisson, the parishes originally included in the designation, and the other stakeholders for their support in this effort.

I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in voting “yes” for this bill and in celebrating the great, unique heritage that we enjoy in south Louisiana.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, this straightforward bill will help strengthen the economic development, resource protection, and cultural heritage of a unique part of the country, while keeping Federal involvement to a minimum.

I thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE) for leading this important effort and for his tireless work on behalf his constituents.

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