

When it became a national park in 1938, the word “battlefield” was left out of its name. Unanimously supported by the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors, this significant fix will help increase public understanding of the deep significance the site holds in our military history and honor the site where so many gave their last full measure of devotion, especially important as we are celebrating our Nation’s semiquincentennial.

I want to express my immense gratitude to my great friend and classmate Chairman BRUCE WESTERMAN and Subcommittee Chair TOM TIFFANY and for their partnership ensuring our battlefields and historic sites in upstate New York and across America are preserved and protected for generations to come, and I urge my colleagues to vote “yes.”

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, this is a simple, bipartisan bill that will distinguish an important site for its pivotal role in the American fight for independence ahead of our Nation’s 250th anniversary.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCLINTOCK). 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. 8931.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NUTRIA ERADICATION AND CONTROL REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2024

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8308) to reauthorize the Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8308

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 “Nutria Eradication and Control Reauthorization Act of 2024”.

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF NUTRIA ERADICATION AND CONTROL ACT OF 2003.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3(e) of the Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 8102(e)) is amended by striking “2025” and inserting “2030”.

(b) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Section 3(a) of the Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 8102(a)) is amended by striking “Secretary),” and inserting “Secretary”).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) 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 to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 8308, 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 HARDER’s legislation which would reauthorize the nutria eradication program and existing funding levels through 2030.

Nutria are invasive rodents native to South America that were imported to the United States in 1899 for fur production. Since then, the nutria population has exploded in places like northern California, Oregon, the Louisiana bayous, and the Chesapeake Bay. These rodents eat, dig, and trample healthy wetland habitats, causing significant erosion and habitat damage to native ecosystems.

When this legislation was first enacted in 2003, an estimated 17 percent of the Chesapeake Bay’s marshlands were estimated to have been destroyed by nutria. Due to the aid of this program, nutria eradication efforts have been very successful.

For example, in Maryland, they have been declared eradicated. In Louisiana, where more than 423,000 acres were damaged or destroyed between 2002 and 2021, over 5 million nutria have been taken.

I thank Representatives GARRET GRAVES and DAVID VALADAO for co-leading this bill with Congressman HARDER.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation by my colleague from northern California, Representative JOSH HARDER.

This bill would reauthorize the Nutria Eradication and Control Act through 2030. This will benefit Maryland, Louisiana, and California, enabling them to manage and eradicate this destructive, invasive species.

The chairman described a little bit about the nutria and how it came to the United States. The reason it is such a problem is it breeds very rapidly, has destructive tendencies towards native wetland vegetation, which has led to erosion and displacement of native species. It can lead to levee breaches and the introduction of diseases and parasites that threaten humans, livestock, and pets.

These effects pose severe threats to our national wetlands which are essential habitats for waterfowl and other

wildlife and which act as buffers from extreme weather events.

To give you an example, according to estimates, had measures not been adopted to control and eradicate the species in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay, nutria could have destroyed 17 percent of the bay’s marshes in just 50 years.

In 2003, the Nutria Eradication and Control Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to provide financial assistance to Maryland and Louisiana for a program to eradicate or control nutria and restore marshland that they had damaged.

In 2020, my friend, Representative JOSH HARDER, passed a bill through Congress that amended that legislation to include California. That was a very timely law because California faced a rapidly expanding breeding population of nutria in the San Joaquin Valley and adjacent areas.

The Nutria Eradication and Control Act has significantly reduced nutria populations in all three States. In Maryland, they were entirely eradicated from the Chesapeake Bay in 2022. In California, nutria captures peaked in 2020 and have been steadily declining, but they are not yet fully eradicated. That is why this bill is needed. It would ensure the critical work of eradicating this destructive, invasive species can continue through fiscal year 2030.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES), my good friend who I believe may be wearing, if I am not mistaken, a nutria hide suit tonight.

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN for the recognition.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California, Mr. HUFFMAN, and I legislatively agree on approximately nothing. This is truly an anomaly. This legislation is something that he and I absolutely agree upon. We have worked together on it. I thank the other gentleman from California, Mr. HARDER, for the introduction. We have worked together on this legislation for years.

Nutria are an unbelievably invasive species. Coastal Louisiana loses a football field of wetlands approximately every 90 minutes. A football field of land is lost, which is a result of wave action and it is a result of saltwater intrusion, a result of subsidence, a result of replumbing of coastal Louisiana in a destructive manner. Nutria absolutely contribute to that.

Mr. Speaker, what happened between probably the late 1950s to the early 1990s, there was a huge fur trade. Tens of millions of nutria were actually harvested to provide fur coats. That market declined. As a result, the population of nutria just absolutely exploded. In fact, one nutria can provide on average about 13 offspring a year.

You do the math very quickly. Mr. Chairman can do the math very quickly. Actually, I take that back. The gentleman is from Arkansas. I will do it for him.

They can proliferate very, very quickly and have a profound impact. They will burrow into levees. They found that they have made these 150-foot burrows that actually compromises flood protection infrastructure like levees. It actually puts our communities in jeopardy. They will eat the vegetation. They will eat all the way down to the roots, and the roots are actually what hold everything together, what hold our coastal landscape together.

What this legislation does is that it helps to put a bounty program, to ensure that we can come in and we can actually harvest and we can retrieve these nutria to prevent the proliferation that goes today from Maryland all the way to California, down to the coast of Louisiana, to prevent this impact to habitat that exacerbates our coastal resiliency and ecological productivity all across the United States.

I thank Mr. HARDER, my friend from California, for working with us on this. This is a reauthorization bill. Members all across the political spectrum support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I will say it again. My good friend, Mr. HUFFMAN, from California and I rarely agree on legislation. We absolutely, absolutely agree on this one. I ask all Members to please support this. This is very helpful. It actually prevents disaster dollars. It improves ecological productivity and certainly will help with the resiliency of my home State of coastal Louisiana.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, the chairman commented on my attire. I want to remind him it is Christmastime. It is Christmastime, and these are colors that are festive and relevant to the time of year.

I think he might have noted that I resemble a nutria or something like that. Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the gentleman from Arkansas is talking about. This is absolutely topflight attire for Christmas 2024.

While I respect my friend, the chairman of the committee, sometimes he is simply in error.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this legislation, and I thank my friend from California and my friend from Arkansas.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, when the last nutria in the United States is eradicated, it will not be missed, but the gentleman from Louisiana will be missed. It has been a pleasure serving with him. He is colorful, both in his rhetoric and in his fashion. We appreciate him and wish him well.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from northern California (Mr. HARDER).

Mr. HARDER of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. HUFFMAN for yielding. I thank my friend from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES), for his leadership

and his sense of style. We are certainly going to miss him and all of the work that he has done to make this critical legislation a reality.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is dead simple. All it does is reauthorize funding to advance eradication efforts for this invasive rodent which is already causing millions of dollars in damage in 18 States including California, Louisiana, and Florida.

These swamp rats threaten our world-class farmland, our critical flood control infrastructure, and our water quality.

With their massive nacho cheese-colored orange teeth, nutria can eat 25 percent of their body weight in vegetation every single day, breaking down our levees and harming our waterways.

To make matters worse, these invasive rats weigh upwards of 40 pounds. One female nutria, to do the math for my friend from Louisiana, can reproduce 200 offspring every single year.

This means that if we don't get this bill done, these nutria will continue to expand and ravage our country, unless the strategic wildlife management plans actually reduce their growth.

This is our last chance to secure 5 additional years of nutria eradication efforts for affected districts across the Nation, and we know that it can work. Our efforts have already shrunk nutria populations across the country. In 2018, the Chesapeake Bay region successfully eradicated nutria from their communities after almost two decades.

□ 1845

We are learning from that in California and Louisiana. This shows that we have the wildlife management techniques that can ensure that we can continue to move forward.

We are reaching a critical point in nutria control efforts. This year alone, we have experienced a 55 percent increase in detected nutria cells, and we are on track to, unfortunately, have a record-breaking year for captive nutria right now.

We must reauthorize these eradication efforts so we can stop the destruction and damage in my district and others like it across the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to pass this bill to keep our levees, waterways, and agricultural lands safe from these dangerous, invasive swamp rats.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this very important bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 8308 would reauthorize a program that has proven to be very effective in protecting our country's vital wetlands and marshes from a destructive, invasive species.

While great work has already been accomplished in controlling these invasive pests, continuing to ensure our native species of plants and ani-

mals are able to recover and thrive is crucial for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank my colleagues for their diligent work on this bill. I urge all Members to support this commonsense, bipartisan 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. 8308.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPAYMENT ACT OF 2023

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3396) to require the standardization of reciprocal fire suppression cost share agreements, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3396

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 "Fire Department Repayment Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO CERTAIN FIRE SUPPRESSION COST SHARE AGREEMENTS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretaries shall—

(1) establish standard operating procedures relating to payment timelines for fire suppression cost share agreements established under the Act of May 27, 1955 (42 U.S.C. 1856a) (commonly known as the "Reciprocal Fire Protection Act"); and

(2) with respect to each fire suppression cost share agreement in operation on such date—

(A) review each such agreement; and

(B) modify each agreement as necessary to comply with the standard operating procedures required under paragraph (1).

(b) ALIGNMENT OF FIRE SUPPRESSION COST SHARE AGREEMENTS WITH COOPERATIVE FIRE PROTECTION AGREEMENTS.—The standard operating procedures required under subsection (a)(1) shall include a requirement that each fire suppression cost share agreement be aligned with each of the cooperative fire protection agreements applicable to the entity subject to such fire suppression cost share agreement.

(c) PAYMENTS PURSUANT TO COST SHARE AGREEMENTS.—With respect to payments made pursuant to fire suppression cost share agreements, the standard operating procedures required under subsection (a)(1) shall require that the Federal paying entity reimburse a local fire department if such fire department submits an invoice in accordance with cost settlement procedures.

(d) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Secretaries should carry out reciprocal fire suppression cost share agreement repayments to local fire suppression organizations as soon as practicable after fire suppression occurs but not later than 1 year after fire suppression occurs.

(e) SECRETARIES DEFINED.—In this section, the term "Secretaries" means—