

VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK BOUNDARY MODIFICATION ACT

The bill (S. 4994) to modify the boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park in the State of Mississippi, and for other purposes, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 4994

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 “Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act”.

SEC. 2. VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK CONVEYANCE AND BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.

(a) CONVEYANCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Interior (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall convey to the State of Mississippi (referred to in this Act as the “State”) without consideration subject to any terms and conditions that the Secretary determines to be appropriate, the Federal land described in subsection (b).

(2) DESCRIPTION OF FEDERAL LAND.—The Federal land referred to in subsection (a) is the following:

(A) The parcel of approximately 3.66 acres of National Park Service land within the boundary of Vicksburg National Military Park, as depicted on the map entitled “VICK–2024–01”, to be used by the State as a welcome center or other public use.

(B) The approximately 6.48 acres of National Park Service land within the boundary of Vicksburg National Military Park, as depicted on the map entitled “VICK–2024–02”, to be used by the State an interpretive center or a museum or other public use.

(b) BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.—On conveyance of a parcel of Federal land under subsection (a), the Secretary shall modify the boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park to reflect the conveyance of the parcel of Federal land.

Mr. WICKER. I thank my colleagues. I will yield for a moment to my friend from Maryland and then I may say a word after that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, let me start by thanking my friend and colleague, the Senator from Mississippi, for working on these two pieces of important legislation. One which the Senator from Mississippi will talk about in a moment in greater depth is the Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act. And coupled with that is the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, as amended, and unanimously passed by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources just last month.

I introduced the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act in July of 2023, after years of engagement with communities around the Chesapeake Bay and with the support of Senator CARDIN, Senator WARNER, Senator KAINE. And it has also been introduced in the House on a bipartisan basis by Congressman SARBANES and Congressman WITTMAN.

The idea for a Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act was born four decades ago. This has been a long time coming, and I am glad we arrived at this moment. It was motivated by a desire to formally recognize the Chesapeake Bay as the national treasure that it is and to provide all Americans with a greater opportunity to experience it.

The Chesapeake National Recreation Act would unite voluntarily contributed sites and iconic Chesapeake Bay properties under the operation of the National Park Service in what we call a string of pearls that will help to tie together key areas of the Bay.

The establishment of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area would improve public access to the Bay, allowing visitors to experience it firsthand, strengthening the culture of environmental stewardship, and providing visitors with an opportunity to learn about the region’s rich history and culture.

The National Chesapeake National Recreation Area would also create jobs and support economic growth throughout the region, promoting responsible tourism, and boosting the outdoor recreation and tourist economies.

This bipartisan initiative has been driven by local leaders since the beginning, and it was developed through exhaustive public outreach and meaningful collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders.

I want just, for a moment, to describe to my colleagues the outreach effort that brought us to this moment because it included the formation of a working group composed of a bicameral group of lawmakers, State government representatives, and more than 30 regional organizations to help develop the legislation.

It included a public comment period which we used to gather input and compile over 1,300 comments, which we integrated the feedback into the bill.

When we introduced the bill, it was accompanied by over 70 letters of support and 100 endorsements from local elected officials, environmental and historical preservation organizations, seafood and outdoor recreation businesses, and many more. We also worked closely with the National Park Service on technical assistance to guide the bill.

So it has been a great pleasure to work with Senator WICKER on his Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act as we also work on this Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act. This is collaboration for the public good, for people in both of our States and people throughout the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Reclaiming my time simply to say that I appreciate the cooperation of the Senator from Maryland, and I thank the Senate for giving unanimous consent to these two measures.

S. 4994, the Vicksburg National Military Park Modification Act, will modify—simply modify—the boundary of the Vicksburg National Park in my State of Mississippi. This transfer will convey a small parcel of Federal land to the State government and to the Friends of Vicksburg Military Park, an organization that will assist with restoration efforts at the park.

These efforts include a new, state-of-the-art, interactive center, which will guide tourists through the park and teach them the history and importance of Vicksburg, MS, during the Civil War. To execute these plans, the park will need to perform this land transfer.

The State will then be responsible for building and maintaining the connector road as well as the bridge to the new center, relieving the National Park Service from that burden.

So I am glad to see that our partners as well as Friends of Vicksburg are working together to establish a modern, interactive center that will tell the story of the siege and battle of Vicksburg for many generations to come.

I thank the Chair, I thank my colleague, and I thank the Senate for giving unanimous consent to these two measures.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills, en bloc: Calendar No. 276, S. 1088; Calendar No. 297, S. 1059; Calendar No. 301, S. 432; Calendar No. 303, S. 608; Calendar No. 611, S. 4129; and Calendar No. 645, S. 5136.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bills, en bloc.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment, where applicable, be agreed to; the Blumenthal substitute amendment to S. 5136, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; the bills as amended, if amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

NORTH DAKOTA TRUST LANDS COMPLETION ACT OF 2023

The bill (S. 1088) to authorize the relinquishment and in lieu selection of land and minerals in the State of North Dakota, to restore land and minerals to Indian Tribes within the State of North Dakota, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **NORTH DAKOTA ENABLING ACT.**—The term “North Dakota Enabling Act” means the Act of February 22, 1889 (25 Stat. 676, chapter 180).

(2) **RESERVATION.**—The term “reservation” means any Indian reservation located wholly or partially within the State of North Dakota and recognized under United States treaty, Executive order, or Act of Congress.

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(4) **STATE.**—The term “State” means the State of North Dakota, acting through the North Dakota Board of University and School Lands and its agent, the Department of Trust Lands.

(5) **STATE LAND GRANT PARCEL.**—The term “State land grant parcel” means—

(A) a parcel of land granted to the State of North Dakota by Congress—

(i) on statehood; or

(ii) through a grant pursuant to the North Dakota Enabling Act;

(B) a section of land numbered 16 or 36 granted to the State of North Dakota by Congress for school purposes;

(C) a parcel of land selected by the State of North Dakota as indemnity for any section of land numbered 16 or 36; and

(D) a parcel of land other than a parcel of land described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) obtained by the State after statehood.

(6) **UNAPPROPRIATED FEDERAL LAND.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The term “unappropriated Federal land” means public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management located within the State of North Dakota, including public land that is mineral in character.

(B) **EXCLUSIONS.**—The term “unappropriated Federal land” does not include—

(i) land (including an interest in land) acquired by the Bureau of Land Management;

(ii) any area of critical environmental concern established pursuant to section 202(c)(3) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712(c)(3)); or

(iii) land that is—

(I) withdrawn from—

(aa) entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;

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

(cc) disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing or mineral materials;

(II) located within a component of the National Landscape Conservation System;

(III) designated as a Research Natural Area;

(IV) located within any reservation;

(V) located within—

(aa) T. 147 N., R. 95 W.;

(bb) T. 148 N., R. 95 W.;

(cc) T. 148 N., R. 96 W.; or

(dd) T. 149 N., R. 95 W.;

(VI) located within a United States military reservation; or

(VII) designated by Congress or the President for conservation purposes.

SEC. 3. RELINQUISHMENT AND SELECTION; CONVEYANCE.

(a) **RELINQUISHMENT AND SELECTION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to valid existing rights, if the State elects to relinquish all right, title, and interest of the State in and to a State land grant parcel located wholly or partially within the boundaries of any reservation, the Secretary shall authorize the State to select in accordance with this Act 1 or more parcels of unappropriated Federal land of substantially equivalent value.

(2) **APPROVAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the State makes a selection under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall approve or reject, in whole or in part, the selection.

(3) **REVIEW.**—Nothing in this subsection precludes the Secretary from conducting an environmental review of any parcel proposed for relinquishment under paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines that an environmental review is appropriate.

(b) **CONVEYANCE.**—

(1) **CONVEYANCE BY SECRETARY.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 60 days after the date on which the Secretary approves a State selection of unappropriated Federal land under subsection (a)(2), the Secretary shall initiate the actions necessary to convey to the State the unappropriated Federal land.

(B) **REQUIREMENTS.**—Conveyance of unappropriated Federal land by the Secretary under this Act—

(i) shall be by patent or deed in a form acceptable to the State and the Secretary; and

(ii) shall not be considered a sale, exchange, or conveyance for purposes of section 203, 205, 206, or 209 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1713, 1715, 1716, 1719).

(2) **RELINQUISHMENT AND CONVEYANCE BY STATE.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—As consideration for the conveyance of unappropriated Federal land under paragraph (1), on the date on which the unappropriated Federal land is conveyed to the State, the State shall concurrently relinquish and convey to the Secretary all right, title, and interest of the State in and to the State land grant parcel identified for relinquishment under subsection (a)(1).

(B) **TITLE.**—The State shall convey to the Secretary title, free of any financial claims, liabilities, or other financial encumbrances, to all parcels relinquished under subparagraph (A).

(C) **LIMITATION.**—Relinquishment and conveyance by the State of a State land grant parcel under this Act shall not be considered an exchange or acquisition for purposes of section 205 or 206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1715, 1716).

(c) **SUCCESSION TO RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS.**—Each party to which land is conveyed under this Act shall, to the fullest extent allowable under Federal and State law, succeed to the rights and obligations of the conveying party with respect to any lease, right-of-way, permit, or other valid existing right to which the land is subject.

(d) **MANAGEMENT AFTER RELINQUISHMENT.**—

(1) **RESERVATION.**—If a State land grant parcel relinquished by the State and conveyed to the Secretary under this Act is located wholly or partially within the boundaries of any reservation, on request of the applicable Indian Tribe, the portion of the State land grant parcel located within the boundaries of the reservation shall be—

(A) taken into trust by the Secretary on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the Indian Tribe on the date of the conveyance; and

(B) considered to be a part of the reservation of the Indian Tribe.

(2) **CONSULTATION REQUIRED.**—Prior to the conveyance of a State land grant parcel located wholly or partially within the boundaries of any reservation, the State and the Secretary shall consult with affected Indian Tribes, including the Indian Tribe the land of which is subject to conveyance in accordance with Executive Order 13175 (25 U.S.C. 5301 note; relating to consultation and coordination with Indian tribal governments) and other applicable laws.

(e) **WITHDRAWAL.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to valid rights in existence on the date of enactment of this Act, all unappropriated Federal land selected by the State for conveyance under this Act, effective beginning on the date on which the State makes the selection and ending on the date described in paragraph (2), is withdrawn from all forms of—

(A) entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;

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

(C) disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing or mineral materials.

(2) **DATE DESCRIBED.**—The date referred to in paragraph (1) is the date on which, as applicable—

(A) the unappropriated Federal land is conveyed by the Secretary to the State;

(B) the Secretary rejects the selection under subsection (a)(2); or

(C) the State withdraws the selection.

SEC. 4. VALUATION.

(a) **EQUAL VALUE.**—With respect to a State land grant parcel conveyed under this Act in consideration for a parcel of unappropriated Federal land selected in accordance with this Act—

(1) the overall value of the State land grant parcel and the overall value of the parcel of unappropriated Federal land shall be substantially equal; or

(2) subject to subsection (c), if the overall value of the parcels is not equal, the party conveying the parcel of lesser value shall—

(A) equalize the value by the payment of funds to the other party; or

(B) enter the imbalance in value on a ledger account in accordance with subsection (e).

(b) **APPRAISAL REQUIRED.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in subsection (d), the value of the unappropriated Federal land selected in accordance with this Act and the value of a State land grant parcel conveyed under this Act shall be determined by appraisals conducted by 1 or more independent appraisers selected jointly by the Secretary and the State.

(2) **REQUIREMENTS.**—An appraisal under paragraph (1) shall be completed in accordance with—

(A) the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions; or

(B) subject to subsection (d)(1), the Uniform Standards for Professional Appraisal Practice.

(c) **EQUALIZATION.**—With respect to a conveyance to the Secretary of a State land grant parcel of lesser value than the parcel of unappropriated Federal land to be conveyed to the State under this Act, the total value of the equalization payment described in subsection (a)(2)(A) or the ledger entry described in subsection (e), as applicable, may not exceed 25 percent of the total value of the parcel of unappropriated Federal land.

(d) **LOW VALUE PARCELS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary, with the consent of the State, may use mass appraisals, a summary appraisal, or a statement of value made by a qualified appraiser carried out in accordance with the Uniform Standards for Professional Appraisal Practice to determine the value of a State land grant parcel or a parcel of unappropriated Federal land to be conveyed under this Act instead of an appraisal that complies with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions if the State and the Secretary agree that market value of the State land grant parcel or parcel of unappropriated Federal land, as applicable, is—

(A) less than \$500,000; and

(B) less than \$500 per acre.

(2) **DIVISION.**—A State land grant parcel or a parcel of unappropriated Federal land may not be artificially divided in order to qualify for a summary appraisal, mass appraisal, or statement of value under paragraph (1).

(e) **LEDGER ACCOUNTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—With respect to a State land grant parcel conveyed under this Act in consideration for a parcel of unappropriated Federal

land, if the overall value of the parcels is not equal, the Secretary and the State may agree to use a ledger account to make equal the value.

(2) **IMBALANCES.**—A ledger account described in paragraph (1) shall reflect imbalances in value to be reconciled in a subsequent transaction.

(3) **ACCOUNT BALANCING.**—Each ledger account described in paragraph (1) shall be—

(A) balanced not later than 3 years after the date on which the ledger account is established; and

(B) closed not later than 5 years after the date of the last conveyance of land under this Act.

(4) **COSTS.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary or the State may assume costs or other responsibilities or requirements for conveying land under this Act that ordinarily are borne by the other party.

(B) **ADJUSTMENT.**—If the Secretary or the State assume costs or other responsibilities under subparagraph (A), the Secretary or the State shall make adjustments to the value of the unappropriated Federal land conveyed to the State to compensate the Secretary or the State, as applicable, for assuming the costs or other responsibilities.

(5) **MINERAL LAND.**—If value is attributed to any parcel of unappropriated Federal land that has been selected by the State because of the presence of minerals under a lease entered into under the Mineral Leasing Act (30 U.S.C. 181 et seq.) that is in a producing or producible status, and the lease is to be conveyed under this Act, the value of the parcel shall be reduced by the amount that represents the likely Federal revenue sharing obligation under the Mineral Leasing Act (30 U.S.C. 181 et seq.) with the State, but the adjustment shall not be considered as reflecting a property right of the State.

SEC. 5. MISCELLANEOUS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Land or minerals conveyed under this Act shall be subject to all applicable Federal, State, and Tribal law.

(b) **PROTECTION OF INDIAN RIGHTS.**—

(1) **TREATY RIGHTS.**—Nothing in this Act modifies, limits, expands, or otherwise affects any treaty-reserved right or other right of any Indian Tribe recognized by any other means, including treaties or agreements with the United States, Executive orders, statutes, regulations, or case law.

(2) **LAND OR MINERALS HELD IN TRUST.**—Nothing in this Act affects—

(A) land or minerals held in trust by the United States as of the date of enactment of this Act on behalf of, and for the benefit of, any Indian Tribe; or

(B) any individual Indian allotment.

(c) **HAZARDOUS MATERIALS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary and the State shall make available for review and inspection any record relating to hazardous materials on land to be conveyed under this Act.

(2) **CERTIFICATION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Prior to completing a conveyance of unappropriated Federal land under this Act, the Secretary shall complete an inspection and a hazardous materials certification of the land to be conveyed.

(B) **STATE LAND GRANT PARCELS.**—Prior to completing a conveyance of a State land grant parcel under this Act, the State shall complete an inspection and a hazardous materials certification of the land to be conveyed.

(d) **GRAZING PERMITS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—If land conveyed under this Act is subject to a lease, permit, or contract for the grazing of domestic livestock in effect on the date of the conveyance, the Secretary or the State, as applicable, shall allow the grazing to continue for the remainder of the term of the lease, permit, or contract, subject to the related terms and conditions of the user agreements, including permitted stocking rates, grazing fee levels, access, and ownership and use of range improvements.

(2) **CANCELLATION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Nothing in this Act prevents the Secretary or the State from canceling or modifying a grazing permit, lease, or contract if the land subject to the permit, lease, or contract is sold, conveyed, transferred, or leased for non-grazing purposes.

(B) **BASE PROPERTIES.**—If land conveyed by the State under this Act is used by a grazing permittee or lessee to meet the base property requirements for a Federal grazing permit or lease, the land shall continue to qualify as a base property for the remaining term of the lease or permit and the term of any renewal or extension of the lease or permit.

(C) **RANGE IMPROVEMENTS.**—Nothing in this Act prohibits a holder of a grazing lease, permit, or contract from being compensated for range improvements pursuant to the terms of the lease, permit, or contract under existing Federal or State laws.

SEC. 6. SAVINGS CLAUSE.

Nothing in this Act applies to or affects litigation or disputes pending on the date of enactment of this Act regarding the ownership of any land or mineral resources located within the State of North Dakota.

The committee-reported amendment, in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 1088), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT

The bill (S. 1059) to adjust the boundary of Big Bend National Park in the State of Texas, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 1059

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 “Big Bend National Park Boundary Adjustment Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **MAP.**—The term “map” means the map entitled “Big Bend National Park, Proposed Boundary Adjustment”, numbered 155/167,296, and dated November 2022.

(2) **PARK.**—The term “Park” means the Big Bend National Park established under the Act of June 20, 1935 (49 Stat. 393, chapter 283; 16 U.S.C. 156).

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.

(a) **LAND ACQUISITION.**—The Secretary may acquire approximately 6,100 acres of land or interests in land generally depicted on the map as “Tracts to Include in Boundary” by donation, purchase from willing sellers, or exchange.

(b) **AVAILABILITY OF MAP.**—The map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service.

(c) **BOUNDARY REVISION AND ADMINISTRATION.**—On acquisition of any land or interests in land under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(1) revise the boundary of the Park to include the acquired land or interests in land; and

(2) administer the acquired land or interests in land as part of the Park in accordance with applicable laws (including regulations).

(d) **EMINENT DOMAIN OR CONDEMNATION.**—In carrying out this Act, the Secretary may not use eminent domain or condemnation.

NULHEGAN RIVER AND PAUL STREAM WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY ACT OF 2023

The bill (S. 432) to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream in the State of Vermont for potential addition to the national wild and scenic rivers system, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 432

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 “Nulhegan River and Paul Stream Wild and Scenic River Study Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT.

(a) **DESIGNATION FOR STUDY.**—Section 5(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(147) NULHEGAN RIVER AND PAUL STREAM, VERMONT.—The following segments:

“(A) The approximately 22-mile segment of the main stem of the Nulhegan River from the headwaters near Nulhegan Pond to the confluence with the Connecticut River, and any associated tributaries (including the North, Yellow, Black, and East Branches).

“(B) The approximately 18-mile segment of Paul Stream from the headwaters on West Mountain to the confluence with the Connecticut River, and any associated tributaries.”.

(b) **STUDY AND REPORT.**—Section 5(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(24) NULHEGAN RIVER AND PAUL STREAM, VERMONT.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available to carry out this paragraph, the Secretary of the Interior shall—

“(A) complete the study of the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream segments in Vermont described in subsection (a)(147); and

“(B) submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report describing the results of such study.”.

DEERFIELD RIVER WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY ACT OF 2023

The bill (S. 608) to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the Deerfield River for potential addition to the national wild and scenic rivers system, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 608

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