

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 655, sponsored by my colleague, Representative BENTZ.

This straightforward legislation would transfer 150 acres of U.S. Forest Service land to the City of The Dalles, Oregon.

The area encompassed by the legislation includes a dam and reservoir that the City currently operates under a special use permit from the Forest Service.

The Crow Creek Reservoir, located in the Mount Hood National Forest, is key to providing clean water for drinking, residential, and commercial uses in The Dalles. In fact, the existing infrastructure provides 80 percent of the City's annual water supply.

However, in order to access and maintain this critical water infrastructure, the City must perpetually reapply for special use permits from the Forest Service, a time-consuming and expensive process.

In addition to wasting time and personnel resources, the renewal process is estimated to cost the City at least \$150,000.

Between 2010 and 2020, the population of The Dalles increased by more than 11 percent. To address the needs of its current and future population, the City plans to increase the Crow Creek Reservoir's capacity from 900 to 3,000 acre-feet. Allowing the City to take full ownership of the land within the reservoir's watershed will allow local leaders to move ahead with planned capacity and safety improvements to the Crow Creek Reservoir without running into red tape and wasting taxpayer money.

This is a fiscally responsible bill that will cut costs for the local community and for the Forest Service. A land transfer will allow the City to advance upgrades to the Crow Creek Reservoir. H.R. 655 is a simple, practical step that saves money immediately and decreases costs over time by shrinking the Federal estate.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative BENTZ for his leadership on this issue and for his steadfast work on behalf of his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 655, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 655, the Dalles Watershed Development Act, introduced by my colleague from the Pacific Northwest, Representative BENTZ from Oregon.

This bill would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey approximately 150 acres of Federal land in the Mount Hood National Forest to the City of The Dalles, Oregon.

This land is vital to the City's watershed and supports roughly 80 percent of its annual water supply. Local ownership of this land will allow the City to better manage its water resources, protect water quality, and plan for future water infrastructure.

Under the bill, the land transfer would occur at no cost to the City and be subject to valid existing rights.

The City would cover the administrative expenses of the conveyance, including surveying, and the conveyance would be executed by quitclaim deed.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the majority for working with us to include language that guarantees the property is used by the City for the public in perpetuity. With this important update, the legislation offers a practical, bipartisan solution to address clear infrastructure need and to adapt to a changing climate in which water resources are becoming more and more scarce. I thank Representative BENTZ for his leadership on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 655, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BENTZ), the lead sponsor of this bill.

Mr. BENTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my legislation, H.R. 655, the Dalles Watershed Development Act.

The City of The Dalles, located in my district, depends on its municipal watershed for almost all of its supply of drinking water. Protecting and managing this watershed is vital to the health, safety, and future of The Dalles community.

Today, that task is complicated by the fact that critical infrastructure, the Crow Creek Reservoir and the surrounding timbered area, is located on both City-owned and federally managed Forest Service lands.

The City operates these facilities under a special use permit, which is inefficient and costly and limits the City's ability to expeditiously expand and modernize this water supply.

The City of The Dalles is a growing City. It is an important City, and it is one that deserves this kind of help and attention. I am happy to bring this bill to achieve this purpose.

This bill offers a practical solution by transferring 150 acres of Forest Service land within the watershed of the City into the City's ownership. This transfer will allow the City of The Dalles to officially upgrade the Crow Creek Dam, increase its reservoir capacity by 2,100 acre-feet, eliminate the need for ongoing special use permits with Forest Service, and allow implementation of a comprehensive watershed management strategy. We would also save tens of thousands of dollars in administrative costs for both the City and the Forest Service.

Mr. Speaker, this is a narrowly tailored, community-driven proposal that directly supports clean water, public

safety, economic growth, and good government.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chair WESTERMAN and the members of the committee for their support of this bill, and I urge a "yes" vote on H.R. 655.

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

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, this legislation will eliminate the City's need to reapply for a special use permit to access land within its own municipal watershed and allow local leaders to move forward with a vital expansion of its reservoir capacity, which is necessary to serve its growing population.

Expanding the City's water supply will support the growing number of businesses and families that call The Dalles home. This legislation is straightforward, timely, returns power to local government, and saves taxpayer money. I thank Representative BENTZ for sponsoring this critical measure.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 655, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. HURD) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 655, 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.

CORMORANT RELIEF ACT OF 2025

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2293) to require the Secretary of the Interior to reissue certain regulations relating to the taking of double-crested cormorants at aquaculture facilities, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2293

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 "Cormorant Relief Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. REGULATIONS RELATING TO TAKING OF DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS AT AQUACULTURE FACILITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall reissue the original depredation order in accordance with subsection (b).

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—The depredation order reissued under subsection (a) shall be the same as the original depredation order, except that the depredation order reissued under subsection (a) shall—

(1) apply to—

(A) each of the States of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin and any other State or territory of

the United States the Secretary determines appropriate in addition to and in the same manner as each of the States to which the original depredation order applied; and

(B) lake managers and pond managers in addition to and in the same manner as each of the entities to which the original depredation order applied;

(2) incorporate modern terminology;

(3) simplify the provisions contained in the original depredation order related to compliance with other Federal law;

(4) modernize the recordkeeping requirements contained in the original depredation order; and

(5) remove the June 30, 2014, expiration date contained in the original depredation order.

(c) RENEWAL.—Not less than once every 5 years after the date on which the Secretary reissues the original depredation order under subsection (a), the Secretary shall renew the depredation order reissued under subsection (a).

(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act may be construed to waive the obligation of the Secretary to comply with the—

(1) National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.); or

(2) Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.).

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) LAKE MANAGER.—The term “lake manager” means a person that is licensed by a State regulatory agency to manage a private lake.

(2) ORIGINAL DEPREDATION ORDER.—The term “original depredation order” means the depredation order for double-crested cormorants at aquaculture facilities contained in section 21.47 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on January 1, 2016).

(3) POND MANAGER.—The term “pond manager” means a person that is licensed by a State regulatory agency to manage a private pond.

(4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. HURD) and the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. RANDALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HURD of Colorado. 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. 2293, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2293, the Cormorant Relief Act of 2025, sponsored by Representative EZELL from Mississippi. This legislation would require the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reinstate the Aquaculture Depredation Order for double-crested cormorants, which was in place from 1998 until 2016, until it was vacated by a judge in response to yet another activist lawsuit.

Double-crested cormorants are waterbirds common to the Great Lakes States and the Southeast. They are opportunistic and intelligent predators that often feed at aquaculture facilities,

where fish are easy to catch. A variety of studies have determined that predation from double-crested cormorants costs the aquaculture industry nearly \$65 million annually in economic losses.

This legislation would streamline the permitting process to take double-crested cormorants, restoring protections for aquaculture producers without negatively impacting cormorant populations.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Representative EZELL for his continued leadership and urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2293. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. RANDALL. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to speak on H.R. 2293, the Cormorant Relief Act of 2025.

Aquaculture facilities nationwide are facing issues with predatory birds. We experience it in Washington State as well, along with the pinnipeds that we spent some time discussing last week.

Double-crested cormorants consume large quantities of fish from these operations, negatively impacting businesses that provide jobs and support their local communities.

From 2003 to 2014, the Fish and Wildlife Service implemented the 2003 proposed rule adopting the Aquaculture Depredation Order and the Public Resource Depredation Order, a Federal program that allowed aquaculture operators, States, and Tribes to manage cormorant populations in a controlled way with proper oversight. That program was found to be unlawful by the courts.

This bill would lawfully reinstate the depredation order for aquaculture facilities. Further, it would expand coverage to 12 States and allow the Secretary to add others as appropriate. The bill would also include aquaculture lake managers and pond managers who face similar challenges.

I am pleased we were able to work out a bipartisan solution that maintains environmental safeguards under bedrock environmental protections like NEPA and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This approach will provide a reasonable regulatory framework with proper oversight and require renewal every 5 years to ensure that it is working as intended and that, moving forward, the Fish and Wildlife Service conducts proper environmental assessments as it renews the program.

This bill will help U.S.-based aquaculture producers deliver healthy and affordable protein for American families.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a workable approach we can support, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. EZELL), the lead sponsor of this bill.

Mr. EZELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2293, the Cormorant Relief Act of 2025, which reinstates the Aquaculture Depredation Order for double-crested cormorants. The double-crested cormorant is a nuisance, plain and simple.

A single cormorant can eat up to 1½ pounds of fish every day. Even the Fish and Wildlife Service has classified them as opportunist and generalist feeders that prey on a wide range of species.

Yet, farmers are still forced to jump through needless hoops to prevent these birds from wiping out their stock. The Aquaculture Depredation Order is nothing new. It is the same commonsense tool that was easily reinstated in 2003, 2009, and 2014.

Aquaculture farmers have been struggling for years with the importation of nonindigenous catfish flooding the market. Every year, American catfish farmer communities lose up to \$64 million in stock to the cormorants alone.

For far too long, catfish farmers in Mississippi and across the Southeast have been weighed down by burdensome permits and processes created by people too far removed from the realities of everyday, working-class Americans.

It is past time we restore a commonsense approach to this and ensure that our farmers can finally defend their ponds without any Federal red tape in the way.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WESTERMAN, Leader SCALISE, the Gulf Coast officials, and numerous Mississippians who have worked hard to bring this bill to the floor. I urge my colleagues to vote “yes.”

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

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, this commonsense bill allows aquaculture producers to effectively manage the overpopulation of double-crested cormorants, which threatens their way of life and harms coastal economies. I once again thank Mr. EZELL for his diligent work and attention to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the passage of H.R. 2293 and yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. HURD) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2293, 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.

SNOW WATER SUPPLY FORECASTING REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2025

Mr. HURD of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3857) to amend the Snow Water Supply Forecasting Program Authorization Act, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows: