

the health, education, and welfare of the trust beneficiaries, and preserving the Native heritage and culture, of the community of Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, or Wrangell, as applicable.

“(2) PROCEEDS AND INCOME.—The proceeds and income from the principal of a trust established under paragraph (1) shall—

“(A) first be applied to the support of those enrollees, and the descendants of the enrollees, who are elders or minor children; and

“(B) thereafter to the support of all other enrollees.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY) 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 to include extraneous material on H.R. 41, 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 today in support of H.R. 41, the Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act, introduced by Mr. BEGICH of Alaska. This bill amends the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA, to recognize the Alaska Native communities of Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell.

ANCSA was signed into law to resolve the longstanding issues surrounding the land claims of Alaska Natives. Under ANCSA, roughly 200 village corporations and 12 regional corporations were established. However, those five communities I just mentioned were excluded from the list of southeast Alaska Native villages. As a result, they have missed out on numerous opportunities afforded to other Alaska Native communities.

Although the five communities objected to their exclusion, no right of appeal was provided for the southeast villages, so their challenges were rejected outright.

Recognizing these five communities under ANCSA has been a longstanding goal of the Alaska delegation. Accordingly, this legislation amends ANCSA to allow them to organize into Alaska Native urban corporations and select one township each within the Tongass National Forest. The lands covered by this legislation were selected in consultation with the affected Alaska Native communities, local stakeholders, the U.S. Forest Service, and the general public.

I commend Representative BEGICH for this work on behalf of his constituents, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 41, the Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act, would amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA, to address the exclusion of five southeast Alaska Native communities.

When ANCSA was enacted in 1971 to resolve Alaska Native land claims, Congress created the Alaska Native Corporations, a structure that is vastly different than the framework established for Tribal nations in the lower 48. Most Alaska Natives were enrolled into both a village corporation and a regional corporation. However, the communities of Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell were left off the eligibility list for establishing village corporations under ANCSA.

H.R. 41 seeks to address that omission by creating Alaska Native Urban Corporations for each of the five communities and authorizing the conveyance of approximately 23,040 acres of land, consistent with the acreage provided to the other southeast Alaska Native communities under ANCSA, from the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that, over the years, this legislation has generated debate, particularly regarding the conveyance of Federal lands within the Tongass National Forest. As the legislation advances, we remain committed to working with our colleagues in the Senate to address the historic injustices that occurred for these communities while safeguarding the cultural, ecological, and economic importance of the Tongass National Forest.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH), who is the lead sponsor of the bill.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 41, the Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act.

This bill rights a wrong that has endured for more than 50 years.

When Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971, it made a promise to Alaska Native people: land and the right to form their own corporations to manage that land and build their futures. However, five southeast Alaska communities, Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell, were left out.

Through no fault of their own, the Native people of these communities were given a name no Native community should ever have to carry: the Landless.

For half a century, the people of these five communities have come to Washington, made their case, and waited patiently and persistently for this body to keep its word. They have done everything that was ever asked of them.

My predecessors have introduced this bill ten times in this body, and in all those years, this House has yet to pass this bill.

Today, we change that.

H.R. 41 finally allows these communities to do what every other Alaska Native community was able to do decades ago: organize their corporations, receive their land, and chart their own course.

This action fulfills a promise and recognizes that Alaska Native self-determination was always meant to include these communities.

To the elders and leaders of Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell who never gave up: We thank them for persevering.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 41.

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

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 41 amends ANCSA to recognize the communities of Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell. For over 50 years, these communities have missed out on the opportunities afforded under ANCSA. This legislation will deliver the fairness these communities deserve.

I, again, thank Mr. BEGICH for his work on behalf of his constituents, I urge passage of H.R. 41, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISSA). 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. 41, 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.

BENTON MACKAYE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY ACT OF 2026

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2768) to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a national scenic trail, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2768

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 “Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2026”.

SEC. 2. BENTON MACKAYE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY.

Section 5(c) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(c)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(50) BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Benton MacKaye Trail, a scenic, nonmotorized trail that traverses approximately 287 miles in the States of Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

“(B) STUDY.—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this paragraph, the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with interested organizations, including the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, shall complete and submit to Congress the feasibility study for designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a national scenic trail.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY) 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 add extraneous material on H.R. 2768.

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 H.R. 2768, the Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2026, sponsored by Representative FLEISCHMANN.

Named after the American forester who envisioned the Appalachian Trail, the Benton MacKaye Trail, or BMT for short, is a roughly 280-mile backcountry trail that extends across Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

Beginning at Springer Mountain in northern Georgia, the BMT crosses several national forests and ultimately connects with the Appalachian Trail in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Approximately 95 percent of the trail is on land managed by the Forest Service or the National Park Service.

H.R. 2768 authorizes a study to evaluate the feasibility of designating the BMT as a National Scenic Trail. There are currently 11 National Scenic Trails across the country. These routes generally extend 100 miles or more, are primarily nonmotorized, and offer exceptional recreational opportunities. This legislation will evaluate the BMT to ensure that it meets the criteria for designation as a National Scenic Trail before any designation is made. Importantly, this bill will not add any land to the Federal estate, and any designation of the BMT would require a separate act of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague Representative FLEISCHMANN for his bipartisan work on this effort. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2768, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2768 would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to study the feasibility of designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a National Scenic Trail.

This study is the first step toward securing a well-deserved national designation for this historic “sister trail” of the Appalachian Trail.

Honoring the legacy of Benton MacKaye, the visionary regional planner who first proposed the Appalachian Trail and cofounded The Wilderness Society, the Benton MacKaye Trail spans nearly 300 miles across Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, running through some of the most treasured national landscapes, including 93 miles within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

This is exactly the type of trail meant for this official designation under the National Trails System Act, and it is encouraging to see bipartisan enthusiasm for the potential of expanding this system.

I recognize and thank Representative COHEN, who was the former sponsor of this bill, for his leadership and dedication to this issue.

I am strongly supportive of efforts to designate new trails and expand the conservation of our public lands. As we navigate the escalating biodiversity and climate crises, protecting these natural spaces and ensuring public access and recreation is more critical than ever. It is my sincere hope that we will work more frequently together on a bipartisan basis to pass conservation efforts just like this one moving forward.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. FLEISCHMANN), the lead sponsor of this bill.

Mr. FLEISCHMANN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill. The Benton MacKaye Trail runs approximately 287 miles from Springer Mountain in north Georgia through east Tennessee and western North Carolina into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ending in Big Creek in the northeast corner of the park.

The Benton MacKaye Trail provides numerous opportunities for easy, moderate, and challenging day hikes, many routes for multiday backpacking and camping, and of course, for the most serious hikers, end-to-end hikes.

More than 200 volunteers do maintenance work on the trail each year, generating approximately 8,000 hours of volunteer maintenance annually.

It offers quite an alternative to the heavily used section of the Appalachian Trail from north Georgia to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Congress has not designated a new National Scenic Trail since 2009. This trail is long overdue for that recognition.

The feasibility study is the next step. It is a low-cost, low-footprint measure. The trail is already on Federal land for about 95 percent of its length and would be administered by the Forest Service. This is bipartisan legislation that passed committee with unanimous consent.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this great bill.

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. STANSBURY for yielding, and I appreciate her mentioning me in her remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I was the original sponsor of this bill, and I am happy that Mr. FLEISCHMANN, whose district is much closer to it and probably encompasses part of it, accepted the proud sponsorship that has got it to this point.

The Benton MacKaye Trail is a beautiful and long trail. It is the longest trail in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. It overlaps the Appalachian Trail at six separate points and passes through three national forests. It would be a good idea for the Federal Government to make this a national trail, and this just sets up the study.

It is good work on Mr. FLEISCHMANN's part to get the study considered. Hopefully, the study will come up with the right answer, which is yes to the trail and take care of it.

North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee all have parts in the trail, and a lot of residents from Chattanooga, Knoxville, Asheville, and Atlanta visit for camping and adventures. I am pleased to be a cosponsor and appreciate that.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I commend Representative FLEISCHMANN and Representative COHEN for their leadership on behalf of Mr. FLEISCHMANN's constituents. This legislation initiates an important process to evaluate a prominent trail in the South for potential designation as a National Scenic Trail.

Mr. Speaker, I urge 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, H.R. 2768, 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.

FLORIDA SAFE SEAS ACT OF 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3831) to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to prohibit feeding sharks in the exclusive economic zone off the State of Florida.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3831

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 “Florida Safe Seas Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON FEEDING SHARKS IN EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE OFF STATE OF FLORIDA.

Section 317 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1866) is amended—

(1) by striking “the State” and inserting “the States”; and

(2) by inserting “and Florida” after “Hawaii”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY) 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. 3831, 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 H.R. 3831, the Florida Safe Seas Act of 2025, sponsored by Representative WEBSTER of Florida.

In recent years, shark populations have exploded in our waters. In Florida, this has posed considerable safety concerns, especially for those participating in the State’s commercial and recreational fishing sectors, as well as in other recreational activities on or near the ocean.

To address this issue, Florida enacted a ban more than two decades ago on feeding sharks while diving and snorkeling in State waters. While this ban has been effective in State waters, threats still exist in Federal waters. H.R. 3831 extends the existing State ban on shark feeding to Federal waters, aligning State and Federal policies.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Representative WEBSTER for his leadership on this important issue for the State of Florida, and I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3831 amends the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to prohibit the feeding of sharks within the exclusive economic zone surrounding Florida. Currently, the Magnuson-Stevens Act only bans shark feeding in Federal waters around Hawaii and the U.S. territories.

Feeding sharks can alter their natural behavior by creating an association between humans and food sources. This behavioral conditioning may increase the risk of human-shark interactions, placing both people and sharks in danger. These changes in behavior can also disrupt the balance of marine ecosystems overall.

The increased risk of negative human and shark interactions is bad for the economy, too. It harms ecotourism and recreation, which is a multibillion-dollar industry that fuels coastal towns.

In addition, the fishing community is increasingly concerned that shark feeding encourages depredation, which is the partial or complete removal of a hooked fish from an angler’s line by a shark.

NOAA Fisheries has noted that one of the reasons shark depredations have increased is that sharks are able to identify boats as an easy source of food.

Florida State law already prohibits the feeding of sharks in State waters. This amendment would expand that ban to Florida’s adjacent Federal waters, creating continuity and a cohesive approach to protecting the coast, supporting a strong coastal economy, safeguarding those who rely on these waters for work and recreation, and preserving Florida’s cherished marine life.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3831, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will improve administrative efficiency and enhance the safety of the ocean-going public by aligning State and Federal regulations. Congressman WEBSTER’s legislation is just the latest of several different bills that our committee has advanced to address issues related to shark depredation, which was exacerbated when Congress enacted the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act of 2021. I thank Mr. WEBSTER for his work on advancing this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, 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 Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3831.

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.

FUTURE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CATAWBA INDIAN TRIBE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4463) to amend the Catawba Indian Tribe of South Carolina Land Claims Settlement Act of 1993.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4463

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

SECTION 1. FUTURE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CATAWBA INDIAN TRIBE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

Subsection (d) of section 7 of the Catawba Indian Tribe of South Carolina Land Claims Settlement Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-116), is amended by striking “; however, in no event may an individual be enrolled as a tribal member unless the individual is a lineal descendant of a person on the final base membership roll and has continued to maintain political relations with the Tribe”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY) 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 to add extraneous material on H.R. 4463, 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, H.R. 4463, introduced by Representative NORMAN of South Carolina, amends the Catawba Indian Tribe of South Carolina land Claims Settlement Act of 1993 to remove Federal restrictions on future membership in the Catawba Indian Nation.

This is a straightforward Tribal sovereignty bill. In 1993, Congress passed the Catawba settlement act. That statute restored the Catawba Indian Nation’s Federal recognition, resolved its land claims, and set out several rules for the Tribe in Federal law.

The law also did something unusual. It put future membership rules for the