

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2381

To amend title 23, United States Code, to encourage and facilitate efforts by States and other transportation right-of-way managers to adopt integrated vegetation management practices, including enhancing plantings of native forbs and grasses that provide habitats for pollinators, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 24, 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois, Mr. BLUMENAUER, and Mr. BOSWELL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To amend title 23, United States Code, to encourage and facilitate efforts by States and other transportation right-of-way managers to adopt integrated vegetation management practices, including enhancing plantings of native forbs and grasses that provide habitats for pollinators, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Highways Bettering
5 the Economy and Environment Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) The roadside vegetation management prac-
4 tices of both State governments and the Federal
5 Government aim to secure motorist safety, reduce
6 the presence of noxious weeds, and stabilize the soil.

7 (2) Federal and State highway departments are
8 facing severe budget shortfalls.

9 (3) Native forbs and grasses are less likely to
10 encroach onto roads than invasive species, such as
11 kudzu.

12 (4) Integrated vegetation management practices
13 will reduce the cost of maintaining roadside vegeta-
14 tion.

15 (5) Native forbs and grasses are best adapted
16 to local conditions and thus require less active man-
17 agement, reducing the need to replant, weed, and
18 mow the areas adjacent to the road.

19 (6) Pollinators, such as bees, birds, bats, and
20 butterflies, are suffering drastic population loss, due
21 in part to loss of habitat.

22 (7) Pollinators are vital for American agri-
23 culture. Responsible for 1 out of every 3 bites of
24 food we eat, a diverse pollinator population is nec-
25 essary for maintaining the diversity of our plant life
26 and food supply.

1 (8) Studies have shown supporting native forbs
2 and grasses along the roadside can be beneficial to
3 the pollinator population by providing migratory cor-
4 ridors and habitat connectivity and by helping such
5 populations adapt to climate change.

6 (9) Enhancing pollinator populations on rights-
7 of-way can result in improved pollination services for
8 neighboring lands, including agriculture and wildlife
9 ecosystems.

10 (10) Highway rights-of-way managed by States
11 represent 17 million acres of pollinator habitat con-
12 servation opportunity, and similar opportunities and
13 benefits exist on other transportation rights-of-way.

14 **SEC. 3. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS TO ENCOURAGE**
15 **POLLINATOR HABITAT ON TRANSPORTATION**
16 **RIGHTS-OF-WAY.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 319 of title 23, United
18 States Code, is amended—

19 (1) in subsection (a) by striking “beauty adja-
20 cent” and inserting “beauty (including the enhance-
21 ment of habitat for pollinators) adjacent”; and

22 (2) by adding at the end the following:

23 “(c) ENCOURAGEMENT OF POLLINATOR HABITAT
24 DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION ON TRANSPORTATION
25 RIGHTS-OF-WAY.—In carrying out any program adminis-

1 tered by the Secretary, the Secretary shall, in conjunction
2 with the States, as appropriate—

3 “(1) conduct or encourage integrated vegetation
4 management practices on roadsides and other trans-
5 portation rights-of-way, including reduced mowing;

6 “(2) enhance the development of habitat for
7 pollinators through plantings of native forbs and
8 grasses;

9 “(3) encourage leveraging through partnerships
10 and coordination with stakeholders in support of pol-
11 linators and plantings of native forbs and grasses,
12 such as environmental groups, research institutions,
13 other agencies, businesses, and community organiza-
14 tions; and

15 “(4) conduct or facilitate research and dem-
16 onstration projects on the economic and environ-
17 mental benefits and best practices for integrated
18 vegetation management, reduced mowing, and plant-
19 ings of native forbs and grasses for pollinator habi-
20 tat.”.

21 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the
22 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transpor-
23 tation shall transmit to Congress a report that includes—

1 (1) an analysis of current programs and au-
2 thorities available to carry out section 319(c) of title
3 23, United States Code;

4 (2) a summary of programs and authorities
5 being used to implement such section;

6 (3) an assessment of actions being taken by
7 State transportation departments and other man-
8 agers of transportation rights-of-way to implement
9 integrated vegetation management practices, reduce
10 mowing, and enhance habitat for pollinators through
11 plantings of native forbs and grasses, and

12 (4) any recommendations for further action.

13 **SEC. 4. PROVISION OF HABITAT FOR POLLINATORS.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 329(a)(1) of title 23,
15 United States Code, is amended by inserting “provision
16 of habitat for pollinators,” before “and aesthetic enhance-
17 ment”.

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