

which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2997, 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 strongly support Representative BOEBERT's bill, the Clifton Opportunities Now for Vibrant Economic Yields Act, or the CONVEY Act.

H.R. 2997 conveys land from the Federal Government to Mesa County in Colorado. As the House Committee on Natural Resources considered and ultimately passed this bill through our committee last year, it was clear Representative BOEBERT had done good work to build consensus and solve an important issue in a local Colorado community.

The bill is good policy. Representative BOEBERT worked with her constituents, county leaders, and the Bureau of Land Management to draft legislation they all support.

Many of our Western States are largely owned by the Federal Government. In Colorado, over 36 percent of the land is federally owned. In Mesa County, an astonishing 72 percent of the land is owned by the Federal Government, and this presents many local challenges.

As communities grow in proximity to Federal lands, there simply is not enough space for new homes, schools, hospitals, or other necessities to sustain a growing population. Large swaths of Federal land limit the tax base to support the local community. While creative solutions have been enacted by Congress to address this issue, there are still setbacks to communities lacking a strong tax base.

The growing population in this Colorado community has encouraged county leaders to seek out new land for development. The land in question is on the Bureau's disposal list, meaning the agency has determined it no longer wants to manage the land and the land does not serve the taxpayers' interest.

While both the Bureau of Land Management and Mesa County are supportive of this land exchange, the process has continued to run into bureaucratic delays. Mesa County has been working for 5 years to acquire a mere 31 acres—let me repeat that: 5 years to acquire 31 acres—all because of bureaucratic delays. We now need an act of Congress to speed up this process.

This is evidence of a much larger problem. There should not be excessive delays preventing the conveyance of land when all parties agree this land would be put to more productive use outside of Federal management and there is a willing buyer.

The House Committee on Natural Resources will continue to conduct oversight on how we can expedite the process of disposing of unwanted Federal

land, especially land that could be better utilized to support small, rural communities and their economies.

While the committee continues its work to address the larger issue of Federal land management, I applaud Representative BOEBERT for her leadership in addressing this important issue for her constituents.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2997 would authorize the Bureau of Land Management, or BLM, to convey 31 acres of Federal land to Mesa County in Colorado.

This parcel of land was once used by the Bureau of Reclamation for irrigation under the Grand Valley Reclamation Project. It has since been designated suitable for disposal by BLM, with agencies having started the withdrawal revocation process.

Following the completion of this process, BLM will engage in a direct sale with Mesa County.

The CONVEY Act is designed to facilitate and expedite the ongoing parcel conveyance process. Following the conveyance, Mesa County will use the land for economic development and growth opportunities in and around Clifton, Colorado.

I thank the majority for working with us to ensure that, under this bill, Mesa County is responsible for paying for all the costs associated with the conveyance, as is typical in these types of transactions.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Colorado (Ms. BOEBERT), the author of the legislation.

Ms. BOEBERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2997, my Clifton Opportunities Now for Vibrant Economic Yields Act, the CONVEY Act.

This commonsense bill directs the Secretary of the Interior to convey 31.1 acres of land that the Federal Government no longer wishes to manage to Mesa County for economic development in Clifton, Colorado. Mesa County will purchase the land for fair market value.

For over 5 years, Mesa County has been stuck in red tape as they have been diligently pursuing the acquisition of this parcel of land that is on the BLM disposal list. This land holds immense value for Mesa County as it presents a critical opportunity for economic development in Clifton, an area of the county that has struggled economically.

I have worked closely with BLM, the committee, and the Mesa County commissioners to cut through the bureaucracy and expedite this process. The Principal Deputy Director at the Bureau of Land Management, Nada Wolff Culver, said: "The BLM supports H.R. 2997," the CONVEY Act, "and the direct sale of the parcel to Mesa County."

The economic potential of this land will allow Mesa County to attract job creators and foster an environment that encourages economic prosperity for Clifton.

Once Mesa County is able to secure the land, they will establish an economic development board to solicit input from local stakeholders.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, this bill would reduce Federal spending. It also ensures the funds from the sale of this land will be deposited into the Federal Land Disposal Account, established by the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act, and retained by the Bureau of Land Management Colorado office, so the funds from the sale will actually be used in Colorado.

More than 55 percent of Colorado's Third District and 73 percent of Mesa County's land area is Federal land. As Mesa County continues to grow, the county is significantly limited in the land it has available to develop.

These large Federal footprints often stifle local communities that lack power in decisionmaking over the land in their own backyards from moving forward on important development opportunities.

I am proud to empower local communities and jump-start rural economies through innovative solutions that reduce our Federal footprint and cut bureaucratic red tape that is stifling economic growth with the CONVEY Act.

It has been a pleasure to work on this piece of legislation and to offer this to Mesa County to see what they come up with for their economic development.

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

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank Representative BOEBERT for her hard work and leadership and the effort she put into crafting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the adoption of 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. 2997, 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.

#### PILOT BUTTE POWER PLANT CONVEYANCE ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3415) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey to the Midvale Irrigation District the Pilot

Butte Power Plant in the State of Wyoming, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3415

*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 “Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act”.

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **AGREEMENT.**—The term “Agreement” means the agreement entered into under section 3(a).

(2) **DISTRICT.**—The term “District” means the Midvale Irrigation District located in Pavillion, Wyoming.

(3) **POWER PLANT.**—The term “Power Plant” means the Pilot Butte Power Plant and other appurtenant facilities in the State of Wyoming authorized under the Act of March 2, 1917 (39 Stat. 969, chapter 146), transferred to the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation under the Act of June 5, 1920 (41 Stat. 874, chapter 235), and incorporated into the Riverton Unit of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program under Public Law 91–409 (84 Stat. 861), including the underlying land.

(4) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Commissioner of Reclamation.

#### SEC. 3. AGREEMENT, CONVEYANCE, AND REPORT.

(a) **AGREEMENT.**—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall enter into good faith negotiations with the District to enter into an agreement to determine the legal, institutional, and financial terms for the conveyance of the Power Plant from the Secretary to the District.

(b) **CONVEYANCE.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In consideration for the District assuming from the United States all liability for the administration, operation, maintenance, and replacement of the Power Plant, the Secretary shall offer to convey and assign to the District all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the Power Plant—

(A) subject to valid leases, permits, rights-of-way, easements, and other existing rights; and

(B) in accordance with—

(i) the terms and conditions described in the Agreement; and

(ii) this Act.

(2) **STATUS OF LAND.**—Effective on the date of the conveyance of the Power Plant to the District under paragraph (1), the Power Plant shall not be considered to be a part of a Federal reclamation project.

(c) **REPORT.**—If the conveyance authorized under subsection (b)(1) is not completed by the date that is 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report that describes—

(1) the status of the conveyance under that subsection;

(2) any obstacles to completing the conveyance under that subsection; and

(3) an anticipated date for the completion of the conveyance under that subsection.

#### SEC. 4. LIABILITY.

(a) **DAMAGES.**—Except as otherwise provided by law and for damages caused by acts of negligence committed by the United States or by employees or agents of the United States, effective on the date of the conveyance of the Power Plant to the District under section 3(b)(1), the United States

shall not be held liable by any court for damages of any kind arising out of any act, omission, or occurrence relating to the Power Plant.

(b) **TORTS CLAIMS.**—Nothing in this section increases the liability of the United States beyond that provided in chapter 171 of title 28, United States Code (commonly known as the “Federal Tort Claims Act”).

#### SEC. 5. COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS.

(a) **COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION LAWS.**—Before making the conveyance authorized under section 3(b)(1), the Secretary shall complete all actions required under—

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

(2) the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.);

(3) subtitle III of title 54, United States Code; and

(4) any other applicable laws.

(b) **COMPLIANCE BY THE DISTRICT.**—Effective on the date of the conveyance of the Power Plant to the District under section 3(b)(1), the District shall comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws (including regulations) with respect to the operation of the Power Plant.

#### SEC. 6. PAYMENT OF COSTS.

(a) **ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.**—Administrative costs for the conveyance of the Power Plant to the District under section 3(b)(1) shall be paid in equal shares by the Secretary and the District.

(b) **REAL ESTATE TRANSFER COSTS.**—The costs of all boundary surveys, title searches, cadastral surveys, appraisals, and other real estate transactions required for the conveyance of the Power Plant to the District under section 3(b)(1) shall be paid in equal shares by the Secretary and the District.

(c) **COSTS OF COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS.**—The costs associated with any review required under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), subtitle III of title 54, United States Code, or any other applicable laws for conveyance of the Power Plant to the District under section 3(b)(1) shall be paid in equal shares by the Secretary and the District.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. DINGELL) 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 in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3415, 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. 3415 sponsored by Congresswoman HAGEMAN of Wyoming. This legislation would direct the Bureau of Reclamation to enter negotiations with the Midvale Irrigation District to transfer the Pilot Butte Power Plant to the district.

Under current law, the Bureau of Reclamation holds title to the power plant and related facilities, and ownership of the power plant cannot be transferred unless authorized by Congress.

This plant has not produced electricity since 2008, when the Bureau of Reclamation determined that increasing operation and maintenance costs made electricity generation at the plant economically infeasible.

The district has expressed interest in taking ownership and rehabilitating and operating the power plant and related facilities to provide power to the district's water users.

This legislation is the first step in achieving that goal. It would allow the Midvale Irrigation District to harness additional hydroelectric power resources, a carbon-free, reliable source of energy.

At a time when good stewardship of taxpayer resources and access to reliable energy are at the forefront of so many debates in Washington, I am proud that our committee advanced legislation that accomplishes both objectives.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman HAGEMAN for her leadership. I urge adoption of this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, this bill would authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to convey the title of the Pilot Butte Power Plant in Wyoming to the Midvale Irrigation District. The transfer would follow negotiation of a mutually beneficial transfer agreement that must ensure full compliance with environmental laws and other applicable laws.

Following a title transfer, the irrigation district will explore opportunities to rehabilitate the facility for improved power generation.

I am pleased to support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1630

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN), the bill's sponsor.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my bill, the Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act.

This important legislation initiates the transfer of the Pilot Butte Power Plant from the Bureau of Reclamation to the Midvale Irrigation District.

Specifically, the Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act requires the Bureau of Reclamation to enter good-faith negotiations with the Midvale Irrigation District for the conveyance of the Pilot Butte Power Plant, located in Pavillion, Wyoming. This is a critical step towards improving responsible resource management.

Several months ago, we had the privilege of learning from Wyoming's Midvale Irrigation District on this important topic in a hearing in the Subcommittee of Water, Wildlife and Fisheries.

In this hearing, we learned from both Midvale and the Bureau that this conveyance will allow the district to more easily maintain and operate the plant after the title transfer.

The message from each party involved in the conveyance was that this is a win-win for everyone involved. Transferring ownership of the power plant to Midvale will provide for greater flexibility and relieve administrative burdens for the Bureau of Reclamation.

As we all know, local communities and entities are often better equipped to understand the unique needs and challenges of their communities.

Placing control of the hydro plant in the hands of Midvale Irrigation District will empower them to make decisions that directly impact their region. This conveyance promotes a sense of ownership and accountability that will lead to more efficient operations and responsive governance.

This transfer will have positive economic benefits. Hydroelectric plants have the potential to generate substantial revenue. By allowing Midvale to control these resources, they can reinvest profits into the community. This will ultimately mean improved infrastructure and more support for local businesses.

The economic ripple effect can be profound and positively impact the lives of those living in the district.

Moreover, it is important to note that Midvale is intimately familiar with the intricacies of water management and distribution in their area. Updating and repairing this hydro plant will expand the State's portfolio, allowing for a more holistic approach to resource management.

This will help Wyoming to optimize water usage, balancing the needs of agriculture, industry, and the environment more effectively.

We have an obvious need to increase the amount of water stored through surface infrastructure and groundwater storage projects.

This particular conveyance will allow us to more effectively manage our water and provide power to our communities. Additionally, environmental stewardship is a critical consideration.

Wyomingites are more attuned to the ecological nuances of their surroundings. By placing the hydro plant under local control, we increase the practice of responsible environmental practices. This includes measures to protect aquatic life, maintain water quality, and ensure the responsible operation of the plant without compromising our ecosystems.

The Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act will empower Wyoming communities, boost Wyoming's economy, enhance resource management, and promote responsible environmental practices.

It is a decision that reflects the values of decentralization, self-determination, and self-reliance.

I thank Senator BARRASSO and Senator LUMMIS for their leadership on

this issue on the Senate side, and Midvale Irrigation District manager Steve Lynn, who was critical in elevating this issue and the solution we have before us this evening.

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

Mrs. DINGELL. 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 to close.

Mr. Speaker, the principle of cooperative federalism means that decisions are made at the appropriate level of government, at the Federal, State, and local levels.

H.R. 3415 embodies this principle by transferring control of the Pilot Butte Power Plant to the Midvale Irrigation District, putting local project beneficiaries in charge of resource management, harnessing additional hydroelectric power resources, and ultimately, lowering cost.

I once again thank Congresswoman HAGEMAN for her leadership. I urge my colleagues to support this 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. 3415.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### SUPPORTING THE HEALTH OF AQUATIC SYSTEMS THROUGH RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE AND ENHANCED DIALOGUE ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4051) to direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force regarding shark depredation, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4051

*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 "Supporting the Health of Aquatic systems through Research Knowledge and Enhanced Dialogue Act" or the "SHARKED Act".*

#### SEC. 2. SHARK DEPREDACTION TASK FORCE AND RESEARCH PROJECTS.

(a) SHARK DEPREDACTION TASK FORCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Commerce shall establish a task force (referred to in this

subsection as the "task force") to identify and address critical needs with respect to shark depredation.

(2) MEMBERSHIP.—The Secretary of Commerce shall appoint individuals to the task force, including—

(A) 1 representative from—

(i) each Regional Fishery Management Council established under section 302(a)(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1852(a)(1));

(ii) each Marine Fisheries Commission, as such term is defined in section 3 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1802);

(iii) the fish and wildlife agency of a coastal State from each Regional Fishery Management Council established under section 302(a)(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1852(a)(1)); and

(iv) the National Marine Fisheries Service;

(B) an individual with expertise in the management of highly migratory species;

(C) a researcher with expertise in shark management and behavior; and

(D) a researcher with expertise in shark ecology.

(3) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The task force shall—

(A) develop ways to improve coordination and communication across the fisheries management community and shark research community to address shark depredation;

(B) identify research priorities and funding opportunities for such priorities, including—

(i) identifying shark species involved in interactions;

(ii) shark stock assessments;

(iii) how sharks become habituated to humans and thus lead to more interactions between sharks and humans;

(iv) how angler behavior and fishery regulatory frameworks may influence shark interactions;

(v) techniques and strategies to reduce harmful interactions between sharks and humans, including the development and use of non-lethal deterrents;

(vi) the role of healthy shark populations in the ocean food web; and

(vii) climate change impacts on shifting shark populations, prey, and shark behavior;

(C) develop recommended management strategies to address shark depredation; and

(D) coordinate the development and distribution of educational materials to help the fishing community minimize shark interactions including through changed angler behavior and expectations.

(4) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this section, and every 2 years thereafter until the termination of the task force in accordance with paragraph (5), the task force shall submit to Congress a report regarding the findings of the task force.

(5) SUNSET.—The task force shall terminate not later than 7 years after the date on which the Secretary of Commerce establishes the task force.

(6) COASTAL STATE DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term "coastal State"—

(A) means a State of the United States in, or bordering on, the Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Arctic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, or Long Island Sound; and

(B) includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa.

(b) SHARK DEPREDACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS.—Section 318(c) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1867(c)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(6) Projects to better understand shark depredation, including identifying what causes increases in shark depredation and determining how to best address shark depredation."

(c) EFFECT.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to affect the authority and responsibility