

security and law enforcement activity, commercial and recreational fishing, and energy production that was previously permitted or authorized.

I commend my colleague, Representative CARL, for his efforts to advance the legislation. Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 897, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 897 would establish the Alabama Underwater Forest National Marine Sanctuary, which would safeguard a remarkable and ancient natural reserve.

In 2004, Hurricane Ivan unearthed a well-preserved ancient cypress forest, still rooted in the mud, 60 feet underwater in the Gulf of Mexico, south of Gulf Shores, Alabama.

Scientific analysis of the cypress trees reveals that they are over 50,000 years old, dating back to a time when the sea levels were approximately 400 feet lower than today.

This forest is a unique relic of our planet's past and the only known site where a coastal forest of such antiquity remains preserved.

The Alabama underwater forest is a valuable source of information, offering insights into ancient climate conditions, regional rainfall patterns, insect populations, and plant life on the Gulf Coast before humans inhabited the Americas.

However, its preservation is under threat.

In 2020, a furniture company applied for a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers to harvest the ancient cypress wood for profit.

Establishing this marine sanctuary will prevent commercial exploitation and protect this irreplaceable ecosystem for future generations. It will ensure that the site remains undisturbed, allowing for continued scientific research and environmental education.

Additionally, the sanctuary will provide opportunities for ecotourism and research, boosting the local economy while fostering a greater understanding of our natural heritage.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation to protect and preserve this unique piece of natural history. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. CARL), the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. CARL. Mr. Speaker, my bill, the Alabama Underwater Forestry National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act is an important measure to safeguard Alabama's ancient underwater cypress forest.

Importantly, this bill strikes a balance between conservation and recreational use of this site. By designating the underwater forest as a national marine sanctuary, we are preserving a one-of-a-kind, 60,000-year-old natural marvel. There isn't anything

quite like Alabama's underwater forest that has been discovered in terms of the size and the age that we are dealing with here.

The underwater forest offers an opportunity for recreational opportunities such as scuba diving and fishing. The bill ensures that the site remains protected, prohibiting the removal of ancient trees while allowing responsible access for the public. Just like Yellowstone or Yosemite, this forest should be accessible to tourists while protected from disruptive activities—and this bill does just that.

It is critical to recognize the benefits that will ripple through south Alabama's economy. We are not just preserving a natural wonder; we are laying the foundation for sustained economic gains. This legislation ensures the underwater cypress forest remains a source of pride, wonder, and economic opportunity for generations to come.

I urge my colleagues to support the passage of this bill.

Ms. LEE of Nevada. 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.

Adoption of H.R. 897 will protect the underwater forest in the Gulf of Mexico for future scientific and research efforts while allowing for the multiple uses of the Gulf to continue to occur.

This legislation also ensures that the Department of Commerce and NOAA work with State and local officials in Alabama, including the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. This approach to conservation and the protection of natural resources is consistent with the approach that Republicans have taken toward these issues ensuring that the State and local officials are consulted and that voices with varying perspectives are heard and accommodated.

Mr. Speaker, I will just add that this is a very unique opportunity. A little over 20 years ago we had no idea this forest was even there, and because the hurricane had deep waves that scoured the forest floor, they found this marvelous resource of a cypress forest that once grew obviously on dry land when the ocean was at least 60 and probably many feet less deep than it is right now.

To be able to have this to study to tell us more about our past which should inform us about our future is truly remarkable.

Mr. Speaker, 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. 897, as amended.

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, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

#### LONG ISLAND SOUND RESTORATION AND STEWARDSHIP REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5441) to reauthorize Long Island Sound programs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5441

*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 “Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023”.

#### SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF LONG ISLAND SOUND PROGRAMS.

(a) LONG ISLAND SOUND GRANTS.—Section 119(h) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1269(h)) is amended by striking “2019 through 2023” and inserting “2024 through 2028”.

(b) LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP GRANTS.—Section 11(a) of the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act of 2006 (33 U.S.C. 1269 note; Public Law 109-359) is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “2019 through 2023” and inserting “2024 through 2028”.

(c) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 119(g) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1269(g)) is amended by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (3).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. LEE) 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 include extraneous material on H.R. 5441, 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. 5441, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023.

Representative LALOTA's legislation reauthorizes programs that promote collaboration between Federal agencies, State and local governments, and other stakeholders to protect and preserve the Long Island Sound.

H.R. 5441 reauthorizes the Long Island Sound Study through 2028 at current funding levels. The Long Island

Sound Study was created in 1985, and for several decades it has been instrumental in protecting the sound and its broader watershed. The Long Island Sound Study established the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan that focuses on habitat restoration, water quality monitoring, and sets ecosystem targets for the next 20 years.

A component of the program also provides grants to local officials deploying restoration projects. The program has been responsible for the restoration of more than 2,000 acres of habitat.

With 4 million people living in the sound's communities, and 9 million in its watershed, protection of this resource helps to safeguard the region's economy and the environment.

The Long Island Sound Study has been updated in recent decades to create more effective partnerships to manage the sound, to ensure that all stakeholders are at the table, and to provide resources to local officials carrying out projects.

I thank Representative LALOTA for his work on a bipartisan basis to reauthorize these important programs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, June 21, 2024.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,  
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN WESTERMAN: I am writing to you concerning H.R. 5441, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023. The bill was referred primarily to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, with an additional referral to the Committee on Natural Resources. Specifically, there are certain provisions of H.R. 5441 that fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

I recognize and appreciate your desire to bring this legislation before the House of Representatives in an expeditious manner, and accordingly, agree the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure shall be discharged from further consideration of the bill. However, this is conditional on our mutual understanding that by foregoing consideration of H.R. 5441 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation that falls with the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Rule X jurisdiction, and the Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved on this or similar legislation as it moves forward. Further, this does not prejudice the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with respect to the appointment of conferees and should a conference on the bill be necessary, I would appreciate your agreement to support my request to have the Committee represented on the conference committee.

Finally, I would ask that a copy of this letter and your response acknowledging our jurisdictional interest in the bill be included in the Committee Report and Congressional

Record during consideration of H.R. 5441 on the House floor.

Sincerely,

SAM GRAVES,  
Chairman, Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,  
Washington, DC, June 21, 2024.

Hon. SAM GRAVES,  
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure, House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN GRAVES: I write regarding H.R. 5441, the "Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023." The bill was referred primarily to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and additionally to the Committee on Natural Resources, and was ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources on June 12, 2024.

I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and appreciate your willingness to forgo any further consideration of the bill. I acknowledge that the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will not formally consider H.R. 5441 and agree that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained therein.

I am pleased to support your request to name members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to any conference committee to consider such provisions. I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill and will include such letters in the committee report on H.R. 5441. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,

BRUCE WESTERMAN,  
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources.

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 5441 would reauthorize the Long Island Sound programs at the current funding level of \$40 million annually through fiscal year 2028. These vital programs include the Long Island Sound Grants and the Long Island Sound Stewardship Grants.

The Long Island Sound is a tidal estuary and marine sound, and it is a unique and irreplaceable natural resource. It stretches approximately 110 miles across the north shore of Long Island and the coast of Connecticut.

Its extensive watershed reaches into Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Quebec.

The sound was formed around 15,000 years ago when a terminal moraine dam failed, allowing freshwater from glacial Lake Connecticut to mix with the Atlantic Ocean. This newly formed estuary supported indigenous communities for over 11,000 years before European colonization.

Today, the areas surrounding Long Island Sound are heavily developed, leading to significant degradation of its water quality and ecosystems due to pollution from industry, agriculture, sewage, and runoff.

Despite this, the sound's unique hydrology and geology support diverse

coastal ecosystems, including marshes, tidal pools, dunes, and eelgrass meadows.

These habitats are home to abundant wildlife, including the endangered shortnose sturgeon. Protecting these ecosystems and species remains an ongoing and critical challenge that requires continuous support.

The management of Long Island Sound falls to the States, not the Federal Government. In 1985, Congress established the Management Conference of the Long Island Sound Study to address significant environmental issues affecting the sound.

This conference brings together the EPA, New York State, Connecticut, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions to restore and protect the sound and its watershed.

The conference oversees numerous initiatives, including monitoring and pollution control programs, grant coordination, public education, outreach, and policy development.

Reauthorizing these programs through H.R. 5441 is essential for the sound's continued recovery and conservation. These efforts will help restore water quality, protect vital ecosystems, and ensure the sound remains a vibrant and healthy resource for future generations.

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

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Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LALOTA).

Mr. LALOTA. Mr. Speaker, for so many communities across Suffolk County and beyond, the Long Island Sound is so much more than a body of water. It is a way of life that has sustained and provided for our communities for generations. The Long Island Sound is a cornerstone of our environmental makeup, a driver of our local economy, and a hub of recreational and cultural activities for millions of people, Mr. Speaker.

For decades, the sound has faced numerous environmental challenges, including pollution, habitat loss, and the impacts of a changing world. These challenges have threatened the health of the sound and the well-being of the communities that rely on it.

That is why it is incredibly important that, later today, we will be voting on and hopefully passing my legislation, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023. This critical piece of legislation seeks to reauthorize vital programs that have been essential in preserving and restoring one of our Nation's most treasured natural resources, the Long Island Sound.

My legislation addresses these challenges head-on by authorizing robust funding and strategic initiatives to improve water quality, restore habitats, and enhance the resilience of the

sound's ecosystems. This bill also reauthorizes crucial programs that have already made significant strides in reducing nitrogen pollution, protecting wetlands, and promoting sustainable development along the shoreline.

This legislation is not only about environmental protection but investing in the future of our communities and the people who rely on the sound. By continuing to safeguard the sound, we are supporting the local economies that depend on tourism, fishing, and other maritime industries. We are also ensuring that future generations can enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities that the sound offers.

I thank my colleague from across the aisle and the sound, Congressman JOE COURTNEY of Connecticut, members of the bipartisan Long Island Sound Caucus who have worked tirelessly on this legislation for more than a year, including my good friends Representatives D'ESPOSITO and GARBARINO, and Chairman GRAVES and Chairman WESTERMAN, whose leadership was instrumental in getting this legislation to the floor. Our collective efforts reflect a shared commitment to the health and prosperity of the entire region.

I also thank the various stakeholders, environmental organizations, and community leaders who all pitched in and who have tirelessly advocated for the protection and restoration of the sound, especially my friends at Save the Sound and Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Long Island Sound is an irreplaceable natural asset, and we have to protect it. This legislation provides the tools and resources necessary to continue the important work of restoring and preserving this vital ecosystem. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill and reaffirming our commitment to the Long Island Sound.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York (Mr. D'ESPOSITO).

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Mr. Speaker, as a son of a mariner and someone who has grown up on Long Island and in its waterways, I am proud to have cosponsored Congressman LALOTA's legislation, H.R. 5441, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023.

The bill reauthorizes Federal funding for the EPA to implement the Long Island Sound Conservation and Management Plan, as well as provide stewardship grants to New York State, municipal governments, and community stakeholder groups engaged in conservation activities around the sound.

By passing this critical piece of legislation, we can work to ensure the Long Island Sound program is reauthorized at adequate funding levels and the

sound's watershed and coastal habitats receive the attention they deserve. Not only will the program and grants provided help enhance the aesthetic beauty of the sound, but they will also help provide critical support for water-quality enhancement initiatives, which remain a key policy priority of mine.

The Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Reauthorization Act of 2023 represents the latest iteration of Long Island's commitment to preserving our local environment, which is a tradition that stretches back to President Theodore Roosevelt, who spent many years of his life advancing conservation initiatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to support conservation efforts that benefit my constituents, New York at large, and this great Nation. I applaud Congressman LALOTA for introducing this legislation, as it is critical to preserving the Long Island that we love and call home. I look forward to helping get this bill across the floor.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, the management of the United States' natural resources requires effective coordination between all levels of government and local stakeholders. The legislation sponsored by Representative LALOTA reauthorizes programs that support the health and well-being of the Long Island Sound.

By reauthorizing these programs, we allow this critical work to continue, conserving an important resource that is vital for the region's economy and the environment.

Mr. Speaker, 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. 5441.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

#### WATER MONITORING AND TRACKING ESSENTIAL RESOURCES (WATER) DATA IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5770) to reauthorize certain

United States Geological Survey water data enhancement programs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5770

*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 "Water Monitoring and Tracking Essential Resources (WATER) Data Improvement Act".*

#### SEC. 2. WATER DATA ENHANCEMENT BY UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

*Section 9507 of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (42 U.S.C. 10367) is amended—*

*(1) in subsection (a)—*

*(A) by striking the heading and inserting "FEDERAL PRIORITY STREAMGAGE PROGRAM";*

*(B) in paragraph (1), by striking "national streamflow information program, as reviewed by the National Research Council in 2004" and inserting "Federal priority streamgaging program";*

*(C) in paragraph (2), by striking "national streamflow information program" each place it appears and inserting "Federal priority streamgaging program";*

*(D) in paragraph (4)—*

*(i) in subparagraph (A)—*

*(I) by striking "2009" and inserting "2023"; and*

*(II) in clause (ii), by inserting "precipitation" before "water-quality sensors"; and*

*(ii) in subparagraph (B), by striking "National Streamflow Information Program as reviewed by the National Research Council," and inserting "Federal needs established through regular solicitation of feedback, such as that documented in the report titled 'Reprioritization of the U.S. Geological Survey Federal Priority streamgaging program, 2022' (Openfile Report 2023-1032).";*

*(E) in paragraph (5), by striking "national streamgaging network" each place it appears and inserting "Federal priority streamgaging network"; and*

*(F) in paragraph (6)—*

*(i) in subparagraph (A)—*

*(I) by striking "national streamflow information program" and inserting "Federal priority streamgaging program"; and*

*(II) by striking "2023" and inserting "2028"; and*

*(ii) in subparagraph (B), by striking "2019" and inserting "2028";*

*(2) in subsection (b)—*

*(A) in paragraph (2)—*

*(i) in subparagraph (B), by inserting "and Tribes" after "agencies" and*

*(ii) in subparagraph (C)—*

*(I) by inserting "or Tribal lands" after "within a State"; and*

*(II) by inserting "or Tribe" after "water resource agency";*

*(B) in paragraph (6), by inserting ", a Tribe" after "a State"; and*

*(C) in paragraph (7)—*

*(i) by striking "such sums as are necessary" and inserting "\$4,000,000 per fiscal year"; and*

*(ii) by striking "2009 through 2023" and inserting "2023 through 2028";*

*(3) by striking subsection (c);*

*(4) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (c); and*

*(5) in subsection (c)(4) (as so redesignated by this subsection), by striking "2019" and inserting "2028".*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.