

The comprehensive approach will help mitigate the threat of ROD and protect Hawaii's native forests and ecosystems, so that we can safeguard Hawaii's ohia trees for future generations and preserve the unique ecosystems and rich biodiversity that make our Nation so exceptional.

I commend my colleague, Representative TOKUDA, for championing this important legislation. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill and reserve the balance of my time.

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

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. TOKUDA), the sponsor of the bill.

Ms. TOKUDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1726, the Continued Rapid Ohia Death Response Act of 2023.

Ohia lehua trees form the backbone of Hawaii's forests and watersheds. It is the first tree that you will see spring up from a recent lava flow.

It grows from the sea level to 8,000 feet, and it protects our communities by literally keeping our mountains from eroding.

Ohia lehua also provides critical habitat for Hawaii's federally endangered forest birds and many other species.

They are what you call a keystone species in Hawaii's forests, and its catastrophic decline has the potential to cause major ecosystem imbalances that would impact watersheds, cultural traditions, natural resources, and the safety and quality of life of our people.

Because of this vital role they play in maintaining Hawaii's forest canopies and watersheds, rapid ohia death, or ROD, poses a lethal threat to the ecological balance and everyday life in our islands.

Initially reported in 2010, ROD has already spread to tens of thousands of acres and killed over a million trees on Hawaii island alone.

Large swaths of dead ohia trees pose a fire risk and a danger and are more prone to habitat-modifying noxious weeds and trees like miconia and strawberry guava, all of which are known to greatly impact watershed health and alter ecosystem function.

Despite efforts to contain the spread of ROD to Hawaii island through restrictions on the movement of plant material and increased sanitation protocols, ROD has now been found on the islands of Oahu, Kauai, and Maui.

Because there is no known cure for ROD, it has the potential to kill off ohia trees statewide and devastate our precious island ecosystems.

While ROD creates acres of deadly fire fuel with its dry and dead trees and poses a critical threat to our native birds, our native forests, watersheds, critically endangered forest birds, and I should note, natural beauty, support for combating ROD has been extremely limited.

For example, the Lyon Arboretum, a local research facility on Oahu, relied on funding through a GoFundMe campaign to further the vital seed banking of ohia lehua.

My bill, the Continued Rapid Ohia Death Response Act, seeks to address ROD and the urgent threat it presents.

The bill requires the Secretary of the Interior to partner and collaborate with the Secretary of Agriculture and the State of Hawaii to address ROD. It also supports ongoing detection, prevention, and restoration efforts to combat rapid ohia death.

I thank Chairman WESTERMAN, Ranking Member GRIJALVA, and especially Federal lands Ranking Member NEGUSE and his staff for their support and assistance on this bill.

We cannot stand alone, and we cannot lose our native forests in Hawaii. It protects and sustains our people and provides critical habitat for native species.

This bill is essential in turning the tide in the fight against rapid ohia death and protecting and preserving ohia lehua and Hawaii's unique ecosystems for our future generations.

I thank again all who have supported it, and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes".

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, the ohia tree is important to Hawaii's ecosystem, people, and the economy. This legislation will help focus Federal and State resources on conserving one of the most important tree species in Hawaii.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize and support my colleague Ms. TOKUDA's work on this issue, 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. 1726, 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.

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GEOTHERMAL COST-RECOVERY AUTHORITY ACT OF 2024

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7422) to amend the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 to provide cost-recovery authority for the Department of the Interior, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7422

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 "Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. COST RECOVERY FROM GEOTHERMAL LEASING, PERMITTING, AND INSPECTIONS.

Section 6 of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1005) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(j) COST RECOVERY.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—During the period that begins on the date of enactment of this subsection and ends September 30, 2031, the Secretary may require an applicant for, or a holder of, a geothermal lease to reimburse the United States for all reasonable administrative and other costs incurred by the United States from—

"(A) processing the application for the geothermal lease, including any application for an operations plan, geothermal drilling permit, utilization plan, site license, facility construction permit, commercial use permit, and any other approval associated with a geothermal lease; and

"(B) inspecting and monitoring—

"(i) geophysical exploration activities;

"(ii) the drilling, plugging, and abandonment of wells; and

"(iii) the construction, operation, termination, and reclamation of any well site or facility for the utilization of geothermal resources pursuant to the geothermal lease.

"(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In determining whether to require reimbursement under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider whether there is in existence a cooperative cost share agreement between the United States and the holder of a geothermal lease.

"(3) ADJUSTMENTS.—The Secretary may reduce the amount to be reimbursed under paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines—

"(A) that full reimbursement would impose an economic hardship on the applicant; or

"(B) that a less than full reimbursement is necessary to promote the greatest use of geothermal resources.

"(4) USE.—The amounts reimbursed under this subsection shall be credited to the currently applicable appropriation, account, or fund of the Department of the Interior as discretionary offsetting collections, and shall be available only to the extent provided in advance in appropriations Acts for—

"(A) processing the application for geothermal leases, including any application for operations plans, geothermal drilling permits, utilization plans, site licenses, facility construction permits, commercial use permits, and any other approval associated with geothermal leases; and

"(B) inspecting and monitoring—

"(i) geophysical exploration activities;

"(ii) the drilling, plugging, and abandonment of wells; and

"(iii) the construction, operation, termination, and reclamation of any well site or facility for the utilization of geothermal resources pursuant to geothermal leases."

SEC. 3. REPORT.

(a) REPORT.—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the geothermal industry and other stakeholders, shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate, and make publicly available on the website of the Department of the Interior, a report that includes—

(1) an assessment of how the amendments made by section 2 of this Act affected the Bureau of Land Management's geothermal program;

(2) any recommendations for reauthorization of section 6(j) of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970, as added by this Act; and

(3) any other recommendations for updates to such section and the Bureau of Land Management's geothermal program.

(b) **CONSIDERATIONS.**—In developing the report required in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Interior shall solicit facts or information from the geothermal industry and other stakeholders.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) 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. 7422, 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.

H.R. 7422, the Geothermal Cost Recovery Authority Act of 2024 grants the Department of the Interior the authority to impose fees on geothermal leaseholders. The fees would cover costs related to geothermal lease applications, production and development plans, site licenses, permits, and approvals, as well as inspection and monitoring activities.

In 2022, BLM updated its regulations and created new geothermal cost recovery fees but did not include a fee for geothermal permits to drill. BLM argued that there is no mechanism under FLPMA to charge cost recovery fees for geothermal facilities like there is for wind and solar.

This bill would provide DOI with explicit authority to charge geothermal leaseholder fees to recover costs for geothermal lease applications and other approvals associated with exploration, drilling, construction, and operation of well sites.

As we have seen in the past, agencies have blamed slow permitting processes on a lack of funding. However, when Congress provided additional funding, permitting timelines did not improve, and taxpayer dollars were squandered.

I appreciate the changes made to the bill during the committee process to ensure fees charged under the legislation will be used explicitly for geothermal permitting. Reporting language was also included to better enable Congress to ensure these funds are used appropriately.

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

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of my bill, H.R. 7422, the Geothermal Cost Recovery Authority Act of 2024. As colleagues on both sides of the aisle can agree, geothermal energy is an extremely promising and growing source of renewable energy.

Since the 1960s, geothermal energy has been used as a sustainable and reliable source of electricity, but even though it has grown significantly since then, it still only makes up less than half of one percent of our energy generation mix.

Fortunately, new breakthroughs in technology are massively expanding where geothermal energy can be developed. This is particularly exciting because of some of the unique benefits of geothermal energy for the clean energy transition.

Geothermal provides consistent baseload power, which is available 24/7 with minimal emissions. This complements the mix of solar, wind, and storage needed to build a clean grid and is crucial for maintaining stability in our energy systems, replacing dirty baseload energy like coal.

Many of the skills needed for geothermal development are directly transferrable from industries like oil and gas. As geothermal technologies advance, we will be able to site those power plants at places like retired coal plants where fossil fuel workers can find jobs.

Better yet, many of these fossil trades are already organized and unionized. Everyone from the laborers to the workers in the power plant control rooms, to the steamfitters, pipefitters, and operating engineers can find work in geothermal. Geothermal shows truly exciting promise to help union workers transition to a clean energy economy.

As all this growth occurs, the Federal Government will also have an important role to play. The Department of Energy is supporting pilot projects and advancements in technology. Within the jurisdiction of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, where I serve as ranking member, the Department of the Interior is often in charge of permitting.

In fact, the first renewable energy project sited on U.S. public lands back in 1978 was geothermal energy. Right now, nearly 70 percent of geothermal energy capacity is on federally managed Bureau of Land Management lands.

With the technological advancements we are seeing now, the Bureau of Land Management needs to be ready to scale up the deployment of this clean energy while remaining diligent about permitting responsibly, considering public input and respecting indigenous knowledge and Tribal consultation.

We have heard from geothermal developers that there can be challenges when it comes to permitting new geothermal plants. Much of that stems from capacity constraints, the need for more expertise or more staff in the right locations.

My bill, the Geothermal Cost Recovery Authority Act of 2024, will allow BLM the flexibility to charge companies cost recovery for things like inspections and monitoring, and my bill will enable BLM to hire third-party experts to help review permit applica-

tions. This flexibility will improve permitting capacity and timelines without sacrificing any of the important steps for environmental review and community input.

At a time when permitting is a contentious word in Washington, this bill shows both parties can come together around commonsense approaches to advance commonsense solutions.

I greatly appreciate my colleagues across the aisle who worked with us on the language in my bill, and I am excited to see it moving forward today, along with other positive bills for geothermal energy, like Congressman CURTIS' GEO Act.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, as part of an all-of-the-above approach to energy security, geothermal energy has great potential to help meet the United States' growing energy demands.

I appreciate Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ' work with my team to address concerns raised about H.R. 7422 during the committee's hearing and markup process. I yield back the balance of my time.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore (Mr. MOORE of Utah). 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. 7422, 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.

COASTAL HABITAT CONSERVATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2950) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, through the Coastal Program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to work with willing partners and provide support to efforts to assess, protect, restore, and enhance important coastal landscapes that provide fish and wildlife habitat on which certain Federal trust species depend, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2950

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 "Coastal Habitat Conservation Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to legislatively authorize the Coastal Program of the Service in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act to conduct collaborative landscape-level planning and on-the-ground coastal habitat assessment, coastal habitat protection, coastal habitat restoration, and coastal habitat enhancement projects in priority coastal landscapes to conserve and recover Federal trust species.