

that was closed to fishing was the part of the lake where they were permitted to fish.

This is unacceptable. Passing this bill would prevent incidents like this by ensuring this information is easily available to the public.

The House passed a nearly identical version of this bill by voice vote in December. The bill language we are considering today incorporates technical edits that have been agreed to with the Senate, helping to ensure that this bill can advance through both Chambers in a timely fashion.

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, January 10, 2025.

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

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This letter confirms our mutual understanding regarding H.R. 187, the "MAPWaters Act." Thank you for collaborating with the Committee on Agriculture on the matters within our jurisdiction.

The Committee on Agriculture will forego any further consideration of this bill. However, by foregoing consideration at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over any subject matter contained in this or similar legislation. The Committee on Agriculture also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees should it become necessary and ask that you support such a request.

We would appreciate a response to this letter confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 187 and request a copy of our letters on this matter be published in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during Floor consideration.

Sincerely,

GLENN "GT" THOMPSON,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, January 13, 2025.

Hon. GLENN "GT" THOMPSON,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I write regarding our mutual understanding of H.R. 187, the "MAPWaters Act."

I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Agriculture and appreciate your willingness to forgo further consideration of the bill. I acknowledge that the Committee on Agriculture will not formally consider H.R. 187 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 Agriculture 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. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,

BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Chairman.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I support this bill. It is a good idea to standardize infor-

mation to improve the accessibility of that information if we want to help users, such as recreational fishers, navigate and access Federal waterways. This includes access, fishing restrictions, and navigation information, which are all very important.

On the Natural Resources Committee, we strive to ensure that Federal outdoor spaces are accessible to fishers, hunters, boaters, and other recreational users. It is important that they have up-to-date, easily accessible maps. This will allow us to improve outdoor recreation experiences while protecting existing natural, cultural, and recreational values.

To that end, this bill will direct agencies to develop and adopt inter-agency standards, ensuring that their databases are compatible and interoperable. They can more effectively collect and disseminate geospatial data to help inform folks about recreational opportunities.

I see multiple important applications for collecting and publishing this data. It could include vessel speed restrictions, the types of watercraft allowed in certain areas, the location of boat ramps, fishing sites, equipment and bait usage restrictions, and even waterway catch and release policies which can vary from place to place.

By standardizing and digitizing all of this, it gives Americans the information they need and the confidence to engage in recreation without the nightmare of searching through and trying to decipher a tangled web of information on numerous agency websites.

Madam Speaker, this is a good bill. I support this bill. I urge my colleagues to support it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I again thank Representative MOORE from Utah for his work on this bill and as a Member of this body to increase recreational access to our public lands. It is something he cares deeply about. I thank Mr. HUFFMAN and the minority for supporting this good legislation.

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

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, the Modernizing Access to Public Waters, or MAPWaters Act.

This legislation builds upon the success of my MAPLand Act, enacted in 2022, and MAP Army Corps language included in last year's Water Resources Development Act to ensure Americans can quickly see the public resources around them and spend more time recreating on the land and water they love.

The MAPWaters Act will improve the standardization, consolidation, and availability of information on the recreational opportunities on Federal waterways, allowing recreationalists in Utah and around the country with the most up-to-date information on what is available to them.

In addition to providing chances for families to experience the outdoors and instill a love of nature in new generations, recreational boat-

ing and fishing are major drivers of Utah's economy, contributing over \$536 million in 2023.

As our love for the outdoors continues to grow, accessing these public treasures should be as easy as possible.

I thank my friends Mr. PANETTA from California, Mr. FULCHER from Idaho, and Mrs. DINGELL from Michigan, as well as our Senate companions, Senators BARRASSO and KING, for partnering with me on this effort. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 187.

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. 187, 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. Madam 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.

□ 1430

SUPPORTING THE HEALTH OF AQUATIC SYSTEMS THROUGH RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE AND EN- HANCED DIALOGUE ACT OF 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 207) to direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force regarding shark depredation, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 207

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 of 2025" or the "SHARKED Act of 2025".

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 DEPREDAION 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 section shall be construed to affect the authority and responsibility of the Secretary of Commerce in carrying out the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1351 et seq.) or the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Mem-

bers may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 207, 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. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 207, sponsored by the Committee on Natural Resources vice chairman, Congressman ROB WITTMAN of Virginia.

Concerns over shark depredation are increasingly common in the Florida Keys, the Gulf of Mexico, and North Carolina's Outer Banks. Shark interactions can be frustrating for anglers, resulting in loss of catch, damaged gear, and degraded fishing experiences. They also potentially impact the post-release survival of both target fish and bycatch.

As the number of reports of shark depredation has increased, the underlying cause remains uncertain. It could be due to an increase in the number of sharks as stocks rebuild, a learned behavior by sharks as they recognize motors, fishing techniques, or shark feeding locations as a source of food. We simply don't have enough information to answer all the questions.

To emphasize the scale of this issue, during the consideration of this legislation, we heard from Captain Jack Graham, who fishes out of the renowned Oregon Inlet in North Carolina. Captain Graham has been keeping records of tuna depredation impacting his small marina of about 25 boats. By his estimates, a staggering 250,000 pounds of tuna are depredated each month during tuna season just within his marina.

To make matters worse, shark depredation involves many Federal and State jurisdictions, but because no single entity is responsible for addressing it, very little is being done.

H.R. 207 would require the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force to address shark depredation. The task force membership would include representatives from NOAA, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, marine fisheries commissions, State fish and wildlife agencies from the States within the Regional Fishery Management Councils, and non-Federal experts.

In the 118th Congress, this legislation was passed unanimously through the Committee on Natural Resources, and it passed the House by voice vote. I am grateful that we are again considering this legislation that will help the Federal Government respond to the challenge.

Madam Speaker, I applaud Representative WITTMAN for his work, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this bill would establish a new task force led by the National Marine Fisheries Service to

identify shark conservation needs and depredation research. That is fine.

Before getting into that, I want to point out that the suspensions today are supposed to reflect some of the bipartisan work of the Committee on Natural Resources to find common ground and move bills that had process last Congress. This legislation should certainly be one of those, but committee Republicans blocked an accompanying bill, Representative KEATING's Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Act. We should be voting on that bill today, and we are not.

Last year's hurricanes and floods damaged key sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation facilities, forcing them to lose money and space that would otherwise go toward recovering stranded turtles. Representative KEATING's legislation would help support these facilities as they care for Endangered Species Act-listed sea turtles.

The Committee on Natural Resources and the Senate Commerce Committee secured a deal in December to move that bill, along with this SHARKED Act and two other bills. Unfortunately, unelected billionaire Musk's last-minute power play on the CR scuttled that modest package, and here we are.

It is disappointing that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have decided to forgo those bipartisan commitments and move this legislation as a standalone. If House Republicans won't even follow through on these easy bipartisan agreements, it is hard to see how Democrats can trust them to keep their word in the midst of the tougher negotiations that lie ahead. It is very disappointing and part of a growing pattern of striking deals and then immediately walking away from them.

Turning to this bill, sharks are critical to healthy ocean ecosystems. As the oceans' apex predators, they help shape marine food webs, and they are a key indicator of ocean health. Unfortunately, many shark species are also threatened or endangered. Oceanic sharks and rays have declined by a whopping 71 percent since 1970. That happened in many of our lifetimes. Three-quarters of these remaining species are at risk of going extinct.

In the seventies and eighties, a fundamental lack of understanding of shark biology and their ecological importance, combined with widespread fear, was partially responsible for dramatic increases in the recreational harvest of sharks in the U.S.

Some shark populations are recovering now, but human activities are reversing even those meager gains. Scientific estimates are that humans are causing nearly 100 million shark deaths every single year, and current levels of fishing pressure will cause the majority of shark populations to continue to decline. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, overfishing threatens half of coastal sharks and rays with extinction.

Given these declines and their causes, any effort to address shark depredation must align with our Nation's goal to recover shark populations and consider the impact of heightened fishing pressure and climate change.

Last year, we passed the SHARKED Act in the House. However, I recognize the concern over whether this legislation goes far enough to ensure good outcomes for shark populations and isn't just a slippery slope toward increasing shark harvests.

Through a collaborative effort, we refocused this bill on changing angler behavior and managing expectations, as well as building out the scientific understanding of shark ecology and the impacts of climate change on predators and prey in the ocean. This is vital because nonlethal deterrents and simple changes in angler behavior are proven to reduce the probability of sharks taking fish by 65 percent.

NOAA admitted in the legislative hearing on this bill that depredation research is complex and requires sustained investment due to sharks' high intelligence and adaptability.

Another area of concern is that this bill doesn't include funding. Without it, NOAA will be unable to expand their work to address shark conservation and depredation.

I hope my colleagues who support this bill will also work with us to ensure robust funding for shark conservation priorities, like increased shark stock assessments.

This bill should promote better collaboration between the fishing community and shark researchers. That is a good thing. This partnership is necessary to reduce risks to both sharks and humans from depredation events and build our understanding of the importance of sharks and how to conserve them. These are goals we should all support.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN), the lead sponsor of this bill.

Mr. WITTMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge support for my bill, H.R. 207, the Supporting the Health of Aquatic Systems through Research Knowledge and Enhanced Dialogue Act, also known as the SHARKED Act. As a lifelong recreational fisherman, I am particularly passionate about this bill.

Picture this: A charter boat fisherman takes an excited group of anglers 90 miles off the coast in hopes of reeling in a bluefin tuna, tarpon, or other big game species. One of the individuals hooks the first fish and starts to fight to reel it in, but before the fish ever gets to the boat, sharks have bitten and eaten the fish. This phenomenon is called depredation, which occurs when sharks interfere with fishing activities. It is essentially a massive impact on the coastal recreational fishing industry, especially the charter industry.

Shark depredation is accepted as a natural part of fishing, but it has become a widespread issue in our waters and has increased rapidly in recent years.

During the House Natural Resources Committee hearing for the SHARKED Act last year, we heard from experts discussing the impact of this phenomenon.

According to the American Sportfishing Association, 52.4 million people went fishing in the United States in 2023, supporting 826,000 jobs and contributing \$129 billion to the economy.

The American Sportfishing Association also found that 87 percent of charter guides surveyed said they experienced depredations with clients, resulting in negative impacts on their business.

Anglers are losing their catch and tackle to sharks at alarming rates, and they are understandably becoming increasingly frustrated by it.

I introduced the SHARKED Act to study this issue and evaluate how we can improve sportfishing conditions for anglers while protecting sharks.

This bill establishes a fishery management task force to focus on identifying research opportunities, recommending management strategies, and developing educational materials for fishermen. The task force's membership would be appointed by the Secretary of Commerce and include representatives from the Regional Fishery Management Councils, marine fisheries commissions, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and State fish and wildlife agencies, as well as folks who enjoy recreational fishing.

This legislation will help fishermen and -women understand which species of sharks have higher rates of depredation and where you are most likely to run into that species. It will also serve as the first major step in improving communication and coordination among fisheries managers in addressing shark depredation nationwide.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 207.

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

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

Madam Speaker, I again thank my colleague, Mr. WITTMAN, for taking action to address the challenge that fishing communities across the United States currently face.

I have had the opportunity to do some recreational fishing in the western and eastern Gulf. I have had the opportunity to go out on research vessels and even down in the Florida Keys and on the Atlantic Coast. There is one thing in common, and it is you can be certain somebody is going to be reeling in a fish and a shark is going to take everything but pretty much the lips off of the hook.

People who fish more than I do and who are around this will tell you that it has gotten much more common over the years. Improving coordination between fisheries managers, State agencies, and other experts to solve the challenge of shark depredation is an approach that respects the bottom-up approach that has allowed the United States to be the gold standard in fisheries management.

Madam Speaker, I encourage 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. 207.

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.

LAKE WINNIBIGOSHISH LAND EXCHANGE ACT OF 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 197) to provide for a land exchange in the Chippewa National Forest, Minnesota, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 197

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 "Lake Winnibigoshish Land Exchange Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) BWLT.—The term "BWLT" means Big Winnie Land and Timber, LLC, a Minnesota Limited Liability Corporation.

(2) MAP.—The term "Map" means the map entitled "Heig Land Exchange" and dated December 14, 2023.

(3) FEDERAL LAND.—The term "Federal land" means the approximately 17.5 acres of Federal land in Itasca County, Minnesota, generally depicted as the "Federal Parcel" on the Map.

(4) NON-FEDERAL LAND.—The term "non-Federal land" means the approximately 36.7 acres of non-Federal land in Itasca County, Minnesota, generally depicted as the "Non-Federal Parcel" on the Map.

(5) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service.

SEC. 3. EXCHANGE OF LAND.

(a) EXCHANGE AUTHORIZED.—Subject to the provisions of this Act, if BWLT offers to convey the non-Federal land to the United States, the Secretary shall, not later than 1 year after the date on which such offer is made—

(1) accept the offer;

(2) convey to BWLT all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the Federal land, excepting and reserving an easement for road access to National Forest System land west of the Federal Parcel; and

(3) accept from BWLT all right, title, and interest of BWLT in and to the non-Federal land.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—The exchange under subsection (a) shall be—