

Notably, the Heigs purchased extra acreage in 2021 after an out-of-State mega resort developer sought to purchase a parcel of land, which would have changed the face of Lake Winnie forever. Now Bowen Lodge is seeking to convey that extra acreage to the Chippewa National Forest.

It is in the best interest of the public that the Forest Service take stewardship of this land rather than out-of-State developers who may not prioritize public access for our local community. Additionally, this land will make it easier for the Forest Service to access and responsibly maintain their other acreage in the area.

The bill before us today would facilitate the land exchange between Bowen Lodge and the Forest Service: 17 acres of shoreline to Bowen Lodge, so they can continue to operate their marina in exchange for 37 acres of nearby land to the Forest Service, which would then be added to the Chippewa National Forest.

This exchange would better align boundaries, put the right acreage under the right management, and ensure Minnesotans have the ability to boat, fish, and enjoy beautiful Lake Winnie. Thanks to the Heigs' quick thinking and strong advocacy, our way of life will be preserved.

I am proud that this land exchange is supported by the local community in Itasca County, including the local county board of supervisors who testified in support of the bill before the Natural Resources Committee last Congress, as well as the Mississippi Headwaters Board and other local environmental organizations. It is also supported by the U.S. Forest Service and leadership of the Chippewa National Forest Service.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. STAUBER. The House of Representatives passed this bill unanimously last September, but the Senate, unfortunately, never took it up. It is my hope that after this House passes the bill today, the Senate will quickly take it up and send this good piece of legislation to President Trump for his signature.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

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 have no further requests for time.

In closing, Madam Speaker, this is a straightforward bill that benefits the people of northern Minnesota and our public lands.

Once again, I applaud Representative STAUBER for his work on the legislation. I urge its passage today. I hope the Senate will take up this legislation quickly, 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. 197.

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.

ACCURATELY COUNTING RISK ELIMINATION SOLUTIONS ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 204) to require that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit accurate reports regarding hazardous fuels reduction activities, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 204

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 "Accurately Counting Risk Elimination Solutions Act" or the "ACRES Act".

SEC. 2. ACCURATE HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION REPORTS.

(a) INCLUSION OF HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION REPORT IN MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning with the first fiscal year that begins after the date of the enactment of this Act, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Secretary concerned shall include in the materials submitted in support of the President's budget pursuant to section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, a report on the number of acres of Federal land on which the Secretary concerned carried out hazardous fuels reduction activities during the preceding fiscal year.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—For purposes of the report required under paragraph (1), the Secretary concerned shall—

(A) in determining the number of acres of Federal land on which the Secretary concerned carried out hazardous fuels reduction activities during the period covered by the report—

(i) record acres of Federal land on which hazardous fuels reduction activities were completed during such period; and

(ii) record each acre described in clause (i) once in the report, regardless of whether multiple hazardous fuels reduction activities were carried out on such acre during such period; and

(B) with respect to the acres of Federal land recorded in the report, include information on—

(i) which such acres are located in the wildland-urban interface;

(ii) the level of wildfire risk (high, moderate, or low) on the first and last day of the period covered by the report;

(iii) the types of hazardous fuels activities completed for such acres, delineating between whether such activities were conducted—

(I) in a wildfire managed for resource benefits; or

(II) through a planned project;

(iv) the cost per acre of hazardous fuels activities carried out during the period covered by the report;

(v) the region or system unit in which the acres are located; and

(vi) the effectiveness of the hazardous fuels reduction activities on reducing the risk of wildfire.

(3) TRANSPARENCY.—The Secretary concerned shall make each report submitted under paragraph (1) publicly available on the website of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior, as applicable.

(b) ACCURATE DATA COLLECTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned shall implement standardized procedures for tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities carried out by the Secretary concerned.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The standardized procedures required under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) regular, standardized data reviews of the accuracy and timely input of data used to track hazardous fuels reduction activities;

(B) verification methods that validate whether such data accurately correlates to the hazardous fuels reduction activities carried out by the Secretary concerned;

(C) an analysis of the short- and long-term effectiveness of the hazardous fuels reduction activities on reducing the risk of wildfire; and

(D) for hazardous fuels reduction activities that occur partially within the wildland-urban interface, methods to distinguish which acres are located within the wildland-urban interface and which acres are located outside the wildland-urban interface.

(3) REPORT.—Not later than 2 weeks after implementing the standardized procedures required under paragraph (1), the Secretary concerned shall submit to Congress a report that describes—

(A) such standardized procedures; and

(B) program and policy recommendations to Congress to address any limitations in tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities under this subsection.

(c) GAO STUDY.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

(1) conduct a study on the implementation of this Act, including any limitations with respect to—

(A) reporting hazardous fuels reduction activities under subsection (a); or

(B) tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities under subsection (b); and

(2) submit to Congress a report that describes the results of the study under paragraph (1).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION ACTIVITY.—The term "hazardous fuels reduction activity"—

(A) means any vegetation management activity to reduce the risk of wildfire, including mechanical treatments and prescribed burning; and

(B) does not include the awarding of contracts to conduct hazardous fuels reduction activities.

(2) FEDERAL LANDS.—The term "Federal lands" means lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture.

(3) SECRETARY CONCERNED.—The term "Secretary concerned" means—

(A) the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to National Forest System lands; and

(B) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to public lands and units of the National Park System.

(4) WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE.—The term "wildland-urban interface" has the meaning given the term in section 101 of the Healthy

Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511).

(e) NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.—No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act, and the activities authorized by this Act are subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purposes.

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 Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous material on H.R. 204, 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 strong support of Representative TIFFANY's legislation, H.R. 204, the Accurately Counting Risk Elimination Solutions, or ACRES Act. This is a commonsense, good-governance bill that will bring sorely needed transparency and accountability to the misleading way our Federal land managers are tracking and reporting hazardous fuel treatments.

This month, wildfires in southern California leveled entire communities and took the lives of at least 24 people. Local residents forced to flee their homes described the scene as a war zone.

Unfortunately, the tragedies in southern California are just the latest consequences in what has been a historic wildfire crisis, devouring an average of 7 million acres every year for the last two decades. This alarming figure is more than double the annual losses seen during the 1990s. This worsening problem is directly linked to insufficient forest management, which has created a dangerous build-up of hazardous fuels in our forests.

Despite the clear need to confront this crisis head-on, Federal land management agencies like the Forest Service are still failing to increase the pace and scale of their treatments. Alarmingly, investigative reporting from "NBC News" found that the Forest Service is overreporting the number of acres they treat annually by over 20 percent, but that is not all. The same report found that overcounting was worse in areas of greater risk, such as California, where the total acres treated were overcounted by 35 percent in the wildland-urban interface. In one example, the Forest Service reported that they treated 744 acres of land when, in fact, only 173 acres of land had been treated.

This means that the Forest Service suggested to Congress and the public

that they had done four times more work than they had actually accomplished. This is unacceptable, particularly in an area where wildfire risk and the risk to communities and lives is extremely high.

This inaccurate and misleading reporting results from the Forest Service counting the same piece of land towards its risk reduction goals multiple times if different treatments, such as prescribed thinning and burning, are completed on that land. In some cases, the Forest Service counted the same parcel of land 30 times, meaning the agency reported to Congress that they reduced hazardous fuels on 30 acres when, in fact, only 1 acre received treatment.

This legislation simply requires the Forest Service to submit data to Congress annually that details their hazardous fuels reduction work by only counting each acre once, even if multiple treatments were performed. This exact idea has been supported in reports from the Government Accountability Office and the USDA's Office of Inspector General.

The fact that we even need to pass legislation to tell the Forest Service how to count makes it clear just how deep this problem runs when it comes to confronting our catastrophic wildfire crisis. Holding our Federal land managers accountable for their actual work on the ground is a good first step. We need to improve the health of our Nation's forests as we fight against these catastrophic wildfires, and this bill will help us do that.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, 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. 204, the "ACRES 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. 204 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. 204, the "ACRES 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. 204 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. The Forest Service manages millions of acres of forestland, including vital watersheds, critical wildlife habitat, and countless outdoor recreational areas.

The Forest Service's 10-year wildlife crisis strategy implementation plan stresses the importance of fire-adapted landscapes and hazardous fuel treatments to build resilient forests. These critical wildfire risk reduction projects are complex, multistep processes requiring significant planning and investments often carried out over several years.

In order for these projects to operate effectively, we must receive accurate, transparent, and accessible data on how they are planned and implemented. This bill proposes requiring the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to include in the President's annual budget a report on hazardous fuel activities carried out in a given fiscal year to account for each treated acre.

The ongoing reporting requirement would enhance transparency and accountability, providing critical information that could help guide investments in the management of our national forests, including how we deploy the historic funding for wildfire risk reduction efforts that were included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and in the Inflation Reduction Act if we can hang on to that historic funding in the coming months. I certainly support this bill for proposing that idea of an ongoing reporting requirement. However, I want to clarify that the bill does not actually require or even authorize it. The Congressional Budget Office found that the reporting requirements proposed by this bill would need significant funding, including for hiring 30 additional Federal employees.

Now, I think that would be a worthwhile investment for wildfire risk reduction. These days the Freedom Caucus tends to call the shots on these matters, and they don't allow us to consider bills that authorize that kind of money without spending reductions elsewhere.

So what we have before us is a revised version of the bill, a workaround, that doesn't even authorize the reporting activities that it describes. It is right there on the last page of the bill in all caps: No additional funds authorized.

Madam Speaker, you will notice that the CBO score on this bill is now zero. That is because the revised bill doesn't actually do anything.

We need to do better than this. We have a serious, real fire crisis in front of us. We can't fight climate change with window dressing or thoughts and prayers. I am going to support this bill because it doesn't do any harm and it does bring attention to a good idea, but this is nowhere near enough.

I will point out that the Biden-Harris administration achieved record acres of annual forest treatments thanks to the investments secured by House Democrats in both the IIJA and the IRA. This includes vegetation management to reduce hazardous fuels and prescribed burns.

That is important work worth doing, and I look forward to continuing to work with the majority and the new administration if they are willing to make those investments. We have to ensure that agencies have resources so they can continue reporting back with record-breaking numbers that we achieved under the last administration.

Unfortunately, this bill and the so-called Fix Our Forests Act that we will be considering later this week simply fail to provide any resources. Team extreme might be unhappy with a bill that includes a price tag, but I guarantee that it would be far less than the cost of the mass destruction from fires that we are seeing in places like L.A., and it is certainly worth the lives that would be saved.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I thank my friends across the aisle, Mr. HUFFMAN and the minority, for supporting forestry bills both small and large. This is, I think, a small step in the right direction, and it shouldn't cost any more to report accurate data than to report inaccurate data.

I look forward to passing this bill as well as some larger bills like the Fix Our Forests Act that we hope to have before the body this week.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. TIFFANY), who is the lead sponsor of the bill.

Mr. TIFFANY. Madam Speaker, in spite of what was just said on the other side of the aisle, I want to invite the gentleman from California to Wisconsin. He can get some good fishing in

in northern Minnesota, good musky fishing, but if the gentleman wants the best, then come to northern Wisconsin. I have an invitation for my friend.

This bill will bring transparency, Mr. Speaker, to the misleading and inaccurate way hazardous fuels treatments are reported.

Decades of mismanagement of our Federal lands have left our forests overstocked with trees and created tinderbox conditions, and we have long known the reported pace and scale of forest management has been insufficient to truly address our catastrophic forest health crisis.

There is a better way to actively manage our public lands, and that starts with holding our Federal land management agencies accountable by requiring accurate reporting on the effectiveness of their work in fuel reduction.

According to troubling reports, the situation is even worse than we have been led to believe, as agencies have been overstating their treatments by over 20 percent. Accurate reporting is necessary to broadly track the progress made on our larger wildfire mitigation targets as well as individual projects.

The ACRES Act is a simple solution to hold our Federal agencies accountable to see the actual work they are doing to reduce the enormous risks of wildfire. American taxpayers deserve to know they are getting what they paid for. This bill will help ensure that happens.

Mr. Speaker, this is a small step in what needs to be a number of steps to get back to active forest management to protect the life and health of our forests and the people who live around them in the United States of America. I hope this incoming administration and this Congress are active in getting us back to active forest management here in America.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

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Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with our friends across the aisle on the accounting issue that has been discussed here today. Obviously, we want to make sure that the Forest Service is not taking advance credit for phases of projects that haven't happened yet.

I think that is for the most part what has happened that the gentleman from Arkansas identified. I don't believe there has been any actual double or triple counting, but either way, we want it to be accurate. We all need good, accurate data on that reporting.

We will work together on that. In the meantime, I urge my colleagues to support this bill. I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, as we continue to pray for communities

across the Nation that have been impacted by wildfire, we do need to put feet to our prayers to ensure that our forests are being properly managed.

The ACRES Act is a step in the right direction and a commonsense solution to a problem that really shouldn't even exist in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOST). 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. 204.

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.

WOUNDED KNEE MASSACRE MEMORIAL AND SACRED SITE ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 165) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to complete all actions necessary for certain land to be held in restricted fee status by the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 165

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 "Wounded Knee Massacre Memorial and Sacred Site Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) RESTRICTED FEE STATUS.—The term "restricted fee status" means a status in which the Tribal land—

(A) shall continue to be owned by the Tribes;

(B) shall be part of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and expressly made subject to the civil and criminal jurisdiction of the Oglala Sioux Tribe;

(C) shall not be transferred without the consent of Congress and the Tribes;

(D) shall not be subject to taxation by a State or local government; and

(E) shall not be subject to any provision of law providing for the review or approval by the Secretary of the Interior before the Tribes may use the land for any purpose as allowed by the document titled "Covenant Between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe" and dated October 21, 2022, directly, or through agreement with another party.

(2) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(3) TRIBAL LAND.—The term "Tribal land" means the approximately 40 acres (including the surface and subsurface estate, and mineral estate, and any and all improvements, structures, and personal property on those acres) on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in Oglala Lakota County, at Rural County Road 4, Wounded Knee, South Dakota, and generally depicted as "Area of Interest" on the map entitled "Wounded Knee Sacred Site and Memorial Land" and dated October 26,