

refuge, and they will be managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission through a lease from the Bureau of Reclamation.

While title to these lands would remain with the Federal Government, this measure is beneficial to the refuge system and the thousands of Americans who will enjoy utilizing Lake Minatare in the future.

I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 2679, and I compliment the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BARRETT] for his leadership in behalf of his constituents and this legislation.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this has been an exhilarating half hour, and we are for this one, too.

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

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BARRETT], the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding this time to me. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2679, and I would like to thank the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON], and the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. STUDDS], and the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Alaska [Mr. YOUNG], for their support and for their work on this particular measure.

The House is debating this week several pieces of legislation relating to the environment and divestiture of 2,470 acres of land from the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge, which is just outside of Scottsbluff, NE, which would enhance the effectiveness of the national wildlife refuge system.

H.R. 2679 was developed with the support of the community local leaders and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and it is a very good example, Mr. Speaker, of cooperation between Federal, State, and local individuals.

The Lake Minatare refuge was established in the early part of the century as a preserve and breeding ground for water fowl which were native to that particular area. The refuge is also a part of a Bureau of Reclamation irrigation project. The Fish and Wildlife Service managed the wildlife aspect of the project, while the bureau managed the other aspects of the land, like recreation and cabins and so forth. And following a 1990 directive that the Fish and Wildlife Service bring all of the areas under its jurisdiction into compliance local, residents realized that this would essentially prohibit recreational and residential use of Lake Minatare, and this was absolutely and totally unacceptable.

The testimony before the fisheries subcommittee fully illustrated, I think, that Lake Minatare is an essential part of this Scottsbluff area com-

munity, and because of the significant local interest and the complex management nature of the refuge, the Fish and Wildlife Service did an environmental assessment. It determined that the best course of action would be to terminate the service's authority over certain portions of the land, as some areas were no longer effective as a wildlife refuge.

I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, to the House the broad support of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

My Scottsbluff district office, incidentally, reported we have over 5,000 different letters in support of this particular transfer.

The local citizens, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I have had a great amount of success in working together on this project. It is a unique win-win situation, and it sets an example for Congress as we strive to effectively manage our Nation's natural resources.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2679.

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

Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the gentleman from Alaska is, but we could use a little color here. But I do not see him. I have nothing further to say. One would never know the government is coming to an end tomorrow, but apparently it is, and we are having a wonderful afternoon.

We are very strongly for this bill; and I have no requests for time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON].

(Mr. SAXTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding this time to me. I certainly will not use anywhere near 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say to the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BARRETT], that this is obviously the result of a good deal of consideration by a lot of people, and I am pleased that the gentleman has brought this bill to us, which has obviously moved through the committee and is now here for a vote on the floor.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has found nothing significant, that the North Platte wildlife refuge adds nothing, in their words, significant toward the refuge or the National Refuge System purposes and goals. And it is the position of the Department of the Interior to support the bill as well.

So I congratulate the gentleman on the fine job that he has done in ushering this to the House floor, and I am sure it will pass. Congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2679, the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge Act, which was introduced by Representative BILL BARRETT.

H.R. 2679 would remove about 2,470 acres of land from the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge, which the Fish and Wildlife Service

has found to provide "nothing significant towards the Refuge or the National Refuge System purposes and goals."

The title to these lands would remain with the Federal Government, and they would be managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission through a lease with the Bureau of Reclamation.

I think it is important that when the Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes that a refuge is no longer serving the function for which it was founded, it takes steps to remove the land from the Refuge System. This bill is strongly supported by the Department of the Interior, and I urge all Members to support it.

Mr. DON YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2679, introduced by our colleague from Nebraska, BILL BARRETT, will remove about 2,470 acres of land from the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge.

This legislation is a direct result of a report issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that recommended that these lands be divested from the refuge because they provide "nothing significant toward the refuge or the National Refuge System purposes and goals."

While these lands may have limited value within the refuge unit, they offer recreational opportunities to thousands of our citizens who enjoy boating, fishing, sightseeing, and swimming in Nebraska.

Under the terms of this legislation, which is strongly supported by the Department of the Interior, these lands would be removed from the refuge and they will be managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission through a lease from the Bureau of Reclamation.

While title to these lands would remain with the Federal Government, this measure is beneficial to the Refuge System and the thousands of Americans who will enjoy utilizing Lake Minatare in the future.

I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 2679 and I compliment BILL BARRETT for his outstanding leadership on behalf of his constituents and this legislation.

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2679.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 2679, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.