

per acre rental fee zone value schedule by State, county, and type of linear right-of-way use to reflect current values of land in each zone. The Secretary of Agriculture shall make the same revisions for linear rights-of-way granted, issued, or renewed under this title on National Forest System lands.

“(3) The Secretary concerned shall update annually the schedule revised under paragraph (2) by multiplying the current year’s rental per acre by the annual change, second quarter to the second quarter (June 30 to June 30) in the Gross National Product Implicit Price Deflator Index published in the Survey of Current Business of the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

“(4) Whenever the cumulative change in the index referred to in paragraph (3) exceeds 30 percent, or the change in the 3-year average of the 1-year Treasury interest rate used to determine per acre rental fee zone values exceeds plus or minus 50 percent, the Secretary concerned shall conduct a review of the zones and rental per acre figures to determine whether the value of Federal land has differed sufficiently from the index referred to in paragraph (3) to warrant a revision in the base zones and rental per acre figures. If, as a result of the review, the Secretary concerned determines that such a revision is warranted, the Secretary concerned shall revise the base zones and rental per acre figures accordingly.”

(b) RIGHTS-OF-WAY UNDER MINERAL LEASING ACT.—Section 28(l) of the Mineral Leasing Act (30 U.S.C. 185(l)) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: “using the valuation method described in section 2803.1-2 of title 43, Code of Federal Regulations, as revised pursuant to section 504(k) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1764(k))”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) and the gentlewoman from Guam (Mr. BORDALLO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI).

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN).

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 762, the Reasonable Right-of-Way Fees Act of 2003, which I introduced February 13, 2003.

□ 1330

This bill will help to facilitate the deployment of critical infrastructure to States that are made up largely of Federal lands, such as Wyoming and almost every western State. While exploring ways to bring advanced telecommunications services and pipeline infrastructure to Wyoming, I found that Federal land management agencies were considering ways which would actually discourage deployment of critical infrastructure. The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service had started down a road to abandon a commonsense right-of-way fee schedule that had been in place for many years by charging a per-line fee for fiberoptic deployment instead of a fee based on linear footage of the pipe. In other words, when fiberoptics were

being deployed to rural areas, the agencies wanted to charge a right-of-way fee for every single line that went down the pipe which would obviously make it financially impossible to deploy fiberoptics to rural areas. My bill ensures that rights-of-way fees are reasonable and that private users of public lands pay a fair price for that privilege.

This bill creates a policy that protects the value of our Federal lands and at the same time helps to ensure that these Federal lands continue to be available to a multitude of compatible uses. This bill will not increase the environmental impact of the rights-of-way corridors, nor will it reduce any environmental monitoring. I am confident as we work to place the Reasonable Right-of-Way Fee Act into law that there is little public interest in turning our Federal lands into roadblocks on the information superhighway or along the path of any of our Nation’s critical infrastructures.

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

(Ms. BORDALLO asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, investigations conducted by the Department of the Interior’s Inspector General and the General Accounting Office have provided ample evidence that the right-of-way fees currently being charged by the Federal land management agencies are far below fair market values. States, local governments, and private individuals all charge significantly more than the Federal Government for rights-of-way across lands that they own. This undercharging for the use of Federal public lands means that large corporations, who stand to make vast profits from the use of those lands, are not being required to pay the American people a fair rate of return for that privilege.

As a result, we share, the gentlewoman from Wyoming’s desire to correct this problem. This legislation will require the agencies to review their existing fee schedules and the land valuations which underlie them to ensure that they represent current values. In addition, Mr. Speaker, this measure will ensure that once these new fees have been promulgated, they will be adjusted annually for inflation. This approach is a significant improvement over the status quo and should move us closer to a system that adequately compensates the taxpayers for the use of their lands.

We would like to thank the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. CUBIN) for her willingness to work together on this legislation, and we do support H.R. 762.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) that the House

suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 762.

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.

OTTAWA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX EXPANSION AND DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE EXPANSION ACT

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 289) to expand the boundaries of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 289

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 “Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex Expansion and Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the western basin of Lake Erie, as part of the Great Lakes ecosystem—

(A) is the largest freshwater ecosystem in the world; and

(B) is vitally important to the economic and environmental future of the United States;

(2) over the 30-year period preceding the date of enactment of this Act, the citizens and governmental institutions of the United States and Canada have devoted increasing attention and resources to the restoration of the water quality and fisheries of the Great Lakes, including the western basin;

(3) that increased awareness has been accompanied by a gradual shift toward a holistic ecosystem approach that highlights a growing recognition that shoreline areas, commonly referred to as nearshore terrestrial ecosystems, are an integral part of the western basin and the Great Lakes ecosystem;

(4) the Great Lakes account for more than 90 percent of the surface freshwater in the United States;

(5) the western basin receives approximately 90 percent of its flow from the Detroit River and only approximately 10 percent from tributaries;

(6) the western basin is an important ecosystem that includes a number of distinct islands, channels, rivers, and shoals that support dense populations of fish, wildlife, and aquatic plants;

(7) coastal wetland of Lake Erie supports the largest diversity of plant and wildlife species in the Great Lakes;

(8) because Lake Erie is located at a more southern latitude than other Great Lakes, the moderate climate of Lake Erie is appropriate for many species that are not found in or along the northern Great Lakes;

(9) more than 300 species of plants, including 37 significant species, have been identified in the aquatic and wetland habitats of the western basin;

(10) the shallow western basin of Lake Erie, extending from the Lower Detroit River to Sandusky Bay, is home to the greatest concentration of marshes in Lake Erie, including—

(A) Mouille, Metzger, and Magee marshes;
 (B) the Maumee Bay wetland complex;
 (C) the wetland complexes flanking Locust Point; and

(D) the wetland in Sandusky Bay;
 (11) the larger islands of the United States in western Lake Erie have wetland in small embayments;

(12) the wetland in the western basin comprises some of the most important waterfowl habitat in the Great Lakes;

(13) waterfowl, wading birds, shore birds, gulls and terns, raptors, and perching birds use the wetland in the western basin for migration, nesting, and feeding;

(14) hundreds of thousands of diving ducks stop to rest in the Lake Erie area during autumn migration from Canada to points east and south;

(15) the wetland of the western basin provides a major stopover for ducks, such as migrating bufflehead, common goldeneye, common mergansers, and ruddy duck;

(16) the international importance of Lake Erie is indicated in the United States by congressional designation of the Ottawa and Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuges;

(17)(A) Lake Erie has an international reputation for walleye, perch, and bass fishing, recreational boating, birding, photography, and duck hunting; and

(B) on an economic basis, tourism in the Lake Erie area accounts for an estimated \$1,500,000,000 in retail sales and more than 50,000 jobs;

(18)(A) many of the 417,000 boats that are registered in the State of Ohio are used in the western basin, in part to fish for the estimated 10,000,000 walleye that migrate from the lake to spawn; and

(B) that internationally renowned walleye fishery drives much of the \$2,000,000,000 sport fishing industry in the State of Ohio;

(19) coastal wetland in the western basin has been subjected to intense pressure for 150 years;

(20) prior to 1850, the western basin was part of an extensive coastal marsh and swamp system consisting of approximately 122,000 hectares that comprised a portion of the Great Black Swamp;

(21) by 1951, only 12,407 wetland hectares remained in the western basin;

(22) 50 percent of that acreage was destroyed between 1972 and 1987, leaving only approximately 5,000 hectares in existence today;

(23) along the Michigan shoreline, coastal wetland was reduced by 62 percent between 1916 and the early 1970s;

(24) the development of the city of Monroe, Michigan, has had a particularly significant impact on the coastal wetland at the mouth of the Raisin River;

(25) only approximately 100 hectares remain physically unaltered today in an area in which, 70 years ago, marshes were 10 times more extensive;

(26) in addition to the actual loss of coastal wetland acreage along the shores of Lake Erie, the quality of much remaining dike wetland has been degraded by numerous stressors, especially excessive loadings of sediments and nutrients, contaminants, shoreline modification, exotic species, and the diking of wetland; and

(27) protective peninsula beach systems, such as the former Bay Point and Woodtick, at the border of Ohio and Michigan near the mouth of the Ottawa River and Maumee Bay, have been eroded over the years, exacerbating erosion along the shorelines and negatively affecting breeding and spawning grounds.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) INTERNATIONAL REFUGE.—The term “International Refuge” means the Detroit

River International Wildlife Refuge established by section 5(a) of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Establishment Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd note; 115 Stat. 894).

(2) REFUGE COMPLEX.—The term “Refuge Complex” means the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex and the lands and waters in the complex, as described in the document entitled “The Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex” and dated September 22, 2000, including—

(A) the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, established by the Secretary in accordance with the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715 et seq.);

(B) the West Sister Island National Wildlife Refuge established by Executive Order No. 7937, dated August 2, 1937; and

(C) the Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge established by the Secretary in accordance with the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715 et seq.).

(3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(4) WESTERN BASIN.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “western basin” means the western basin of Lake Erie, consisting of the land and water in the watersheds of Lake Erie extending from the watershed of the Lower Detroit River in the State of Michigan to and including Sandusky Bay and the watershed of Sandusky Bay in the State of Ohio.

(B) INCLUSION.—The term “western basin” includes the Bass Island archipelago in the State of Ohio.

SEC. 4. EXPANSION OF BOUNDARIES.

(a) REFUGE COMPLEX BOUNDARIES.—

(1) EXPANSION.—The boundaries of the Refuge Complex are expanded to include land and water in the State of Ohio from the eastern boundary of Maumee Bay State Park to the eastern boundary of the Darby Unit (including the Bass Island archipelago), as depicted on the map entitled “Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex Expansion and Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act” and dated September 6, 2002.

(2) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—The map referred to in paragraph (1) shall be available for inspection in appropriate offices of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(b) BOUNDARY REVISIONS.—The Secretary may make such revisions of the boundaries of the Refuge Complex as the Secretary determines to be appropriate to facilitate the acquisition of property within the Refuge Complex.

(c) ACQUISITION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary may acquire by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange the land and water, and interests in land and water (including conservation easements), within the boundaries of the Refuge Complex.

(2) MANNER OF ACQUISITION.—Any and all acquisitions of land or waters under the provisions of this Act shall be made in a voluntary manner and shall not be the result of forced takings.

(d) TRANSFERS FROM OTHER AGENCIES.—Administrative jurisdiction over any Federal property that is located within the boundaries of the Refuge Complex and under the administrative jurisdiction of an agency of the United States other than the Department of the Interior may, with the concurrence of the head of the administering agency, be transferred without consideration to the Secretary for the purpose of this Act.

(e) STUDY OF ASSOCIATED AREA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, shall conduct a study of fish and wildlife habitat and aquatic

and terrestrial communities in and around the 2 dredge spoil disposal sites that are—

(A) referred to by the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority as “Port Authority Facility Number Three” and “Grassy Island”, respectively; and

(B) located within Toledo Harbor near the mouth of the Maumee River.

(2) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of the Act, the Secretary shall—

(A) complete the study under paragraph (1); and

(B) submit to Congress a report on the results of the study.

SEC. 5. EXPANSION OF INTERNATIONAL REFUGE BOUNDARIES.

The southern boundary of the International Refuge is extended south to include additional land and water in the State of Michigan located east of Interstate Route 75, extending from the southern boundary of Sterling State Park to the Ohio State boundary, as depicted on the map referred to in section 4(a)(1).

SEC. 6. ADMINISTRATION.

(A) REFUGE COMPLEX.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall administer all federally owned land, water, and interests in land and water that are located within the boundaries of the Refuge Complex in accordance with—

(A) the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.); and

(B) this Act.

(2) ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may use such additional statutory authority available to the Secretary for the conservation of fish and wildlife, and the provision of opportunities for fish- and wildlife-dependent recreation, as the Secretary determines to be appropriate to carry out this Act.

(b) ADDITIONAL PURPOSES.—In addition to the purposes of the Refuge Complex under other laws, regulations, executive orders, and comprehensive conservation plans, the Refuge Complex shall be managed—

(1) to strengthen and complement existing resource management, conservation, and education programs and activities at the Refuge Complex in a manner consistent with the primary purposes of the Refuge Complex—

(A) to provide major resting, feeding, and wintering habitats for migratory birds and other wildlife; and

(B) to enhance national resource conservation and management in the western basin;

(2) in partnership with nongovernmental and private organizations and private individuals dedicated to habitat enhancement, to conserve, enhance, and restore the native aquatic and terrestrial community characteristics of the western basin (including associated fish, wildlife, and plant species);

(3) to facilitate partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian national and provincial authorities, State and local governments, local communities in the United States and Canada, conservation organizations, and other non-Federal entities to promote public awareness of the resources of the western basin; and

(4) to advance the collective goals and priorities that—

(A) were established in the report entitled “Great Lakes Strategy 2002—A Plan for the New Millennium”, developed by the United States Policy Committee, comprised of Federal agencies (including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the United States Geological Survey, the Forest Service, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission) and State governments and tribal governments in the Great Lakes basin; and

(B) include the goals of cooperating to protect and restore the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem.

(c) **PRIORITY USES.**—In providing opportunities for compatible fish- and wildlife-dependent recreation, the Secretary, in accordance with paragraphs (3) and (4) of section 4(a) of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)), shall ensure that hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation are the priority public uses of the Refuge Complex.

(d) **COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS REGARDING NON-FEDERAL LAND.**—To promote public awareness of the resources of the western basin and encourage public participation in the conservation of those resources, the Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with the State of Ohio or Michigan, any political subdivision of the State, or any person for the management, in a manner consistent with this Act, of land that—

(1) is owned by the State, political subdivision, or person; and

(2) is located within the boundaries of the Refuge Complex.

SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary—

(1) to acquire land and water within the Refuge Complex under section 4(c);

(2) to carry out the study under section 4(e); and

(3) to develop, operate, and maintain the Refuge Complex.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) and the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI).

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. H.R. 289, introduced by the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), would expand the boundaries of two refuges in Ohio and Michigan. This measure has been thoroughly reviewed; and it has been endorsed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Toledo Chamber of Commerce, the local port authorities, and Ducks Unlimited. Once enacted, this expansion should help to conserve wintering habitat for migratory birds, enhance the natural resources of Lake Erie, and ensure that thousands of sportsmen will have an opportunity to enjoy wildlife-dependent recreation, including fishing, hunting, trapping and wildlife observation. All land acquired by the Federal Government must be obtained in a voluntary manner and absolutely no private property can be added to either refuge as a result of a forced taking.

I urge an "aye" vote on this legislation.

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

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

(Ms. BORDALLO asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, as noted by the previous speaker, the

overall purpose of this legislation is to authorize the expansion of the existing Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge complex in Ohio and to extend the southern boundary of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in Michigan. The overarching goal is to protect and, where possible, to enhance the remaining wetlands and other aquatic habitats within the western basin of Lake Erie. This region provides critical migratory waterfowl habitat and supports the most significant recreational fishery in the entire Great Lakes.

I commend the bill's sponsors, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), for their ingenuity in developing a long-term conservation strategy to protect this regional treasure. They have worked tirelessly to adjust the acquisition boundaries set forth by this legislation so that they meet the priorities of the other body, the States of Ohio and Michigan, and the interests of local stakeholders. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has expressed some concern regarding the scope of the proposed boundaries and about possible impingement on existing management activities. However, considering that the service has proposed its own 5,000-acre expansion of the Ottawa Refuge and also, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that any future acquisition at either refuge will be done on a voluntary basis, H.R. 289 will ensure that future expansion is undertaken to enhance existing refuge resources, to complement operations, and to protect critical habitat areas.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the fish and wildlife resources found in the western basin of Lake Erie are cherished by millions of sportsmen and women. H.R. 289 is innovative legislation necessary to protect this heritage, and it deserves our support.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), the ranking member on the agriculture appropriations subcommittee who has worked so diligently on this legislation on behalf of her district and the entire Lake Erie region.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) for allocating time so that I might speak on behalf of H.R. 289, which would expand the boundaries, as they have said, of two national wildlife refuges along the north coast, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio and the Lower Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in Michigan. Obviously, we are one of the few American flyways that remain.

The bill that is before us today is identical to a measure that passed by unanimous consent here on the House floor late in the 107th Congress. But because of inaction by the other body it was unable to be sent to the President for signature. I would like to thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) and the gentleman from

New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), chairman and ranking member of the Fisheries Subcommittee, for their assistance, and also chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Resources, the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL), for their efforts as well. We deeply appreciate the support they have given on a bipartisan basis throughout.

This bill is modeled on the legislation of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) to create the Lower Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Obviously, our region is right next to Canada, and it builds on the remarkable success of that effort. Let me emphasize that this bill facilitates only voluntary actions. Voluntary cooperation is the byword. Our bill explicitly prohibits any forced takings. It does not force any private landowner or the Federal Government to do anything that both parties are not willing to do. What it does do is create a mechanism and a boundary, again drawing upon the success of the Lower Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, to foster cooperation and teamwork to promote conservation and the national wildlife refuge system.

The bill facilitates a process by which our U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can either purchase land or accept donations of land and conservation easements from willing parties, corporations, nonprofit organizations and individuals. That is well under way in the lower Detroit as I speak. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, which is a part of this, was created in 1961 originally when local conservation and hunting clubs donated pristine Lake Erie marshland to the Federal Government and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The bill enjoys broad and deep support in northern Ohio along the north coast from conservation groups, wildlife groups, and as the gentleman from Arizona mentioned Ducks Unlimited, and local governments. It is supported by the State of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Mr. Speaker, this year we are celebrating as a Nation the 100th anniversary of the national wildlife refuge system that was created by the vision of President Theodore Roosevelt. During this centennial year, obviously the north coast is very grateful to be included. H.R. 289 will help us raise the profile of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, the Lake Erie marshlands and also the Lake Erie islands so that more Americans and people from throughout the world can enjoy their natural splendor.

The refuge now attracts over 130,000 visitors a year, hunters, fishermen, photographers, birders, hikers, artists and schoolchildren. We expect that number to increase dramatically. I might say as a result of our recognition of our dependence on our natural system, when we first began work in this region of our country, we had but

two or three nesting pairs of eagles that were left in our region of the country. That is now up over 84 nesting pairs of eagles. We expect those numbers to increase in ensuing years as well.

We see the natural wonders of the Lake Erie marshlands as an economic boon to our north coast region through ecotourism, which is expanding. We want families to enjoy the roller coasters at Cedar Point in Sandusky and then drive a few miles west to see the bald eagles at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. We want tourists to enjoy some of the greatest fishing on Earth. I would like to say that I represent the bathtub of the Great Lakes. We have more fish and more swimmers than any other part of the region, or anyplace in the world, in the central and western basins of Lake Erie and also some of the greatest bird watching in the world as well.

H.R. 289 will help us build on this momentum, not only for Ottawa but also for the Lower Detroit International Wildlife Refuge. I want to personally express my deep gratitude to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), seniority number one here in the House, for his leadership for our entire region.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Members to vote "yes" on H.R. 289.

Mr. GILCREST. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 289.

This proposal has been the subject of two congressional hearings. We have heard from a diverse group of witnesses testifying in strong support of expanding the boundaries of these two existing refuges. One of those witnesses is the director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. In his statement, Mr. Samuel Speck noted that this measure will "ensure an abundance of ecological and conservation improvements that will truly benefit this "Great Lake" and the millions of Americans who benefit from it".

The fundamental goal of H.R. 289 is to conserve the wetland resources of the western basin of Lake Erie. This shallow body of water is, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, the 11th largest fresh water lake in the world and it has the most productive fishing habitat in all of the Great Lakes.

While sadly more than 98 percent of the original wetlands in Northwest Ohio have been lost, the remaining 12,500 acres provide irreplaceable habitat for 325 species of birds, 300 species of plants and 43 fish species. In fact, the western basin is used by 70 percent of the black ducks that migrate in the Mississippi flyway and it provides nesting habit for 79 breeding pairs of bald eagles.

The remaining wetlands should be protected and the most effective way to accomplish that goal is to include available habitat within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Furthermore, it is my hope that by expanding these refuges, all interested parties will work together to devise a comprehensive strategy to protect and restore the physical and biological integrity of the Lake Erie western basin ecosystem.

I urge an "aye" vote and I compliment my colleagues MARCY KAPTUR and JOHN DINGELL for proposing this innovative legislation.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 289, legislation that I co-authored with the distinguished gentlewoman from Toledo, Ms. KAPTUR. This important fish and wildlife conservation measure will expand the boundaries of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge to encompass important lands in Southeastern Michigan and Northern Ohio. It is of immense importance to the people of Southeast Michigan and our neighbors to the South in Ohio.

I would like to thank Chairman GILCREST and Ranking Member PALLONE for their leadership and their assistance. I would also like to thank the Chairman of the full Committee, RICHARD POMBO, and Ranking Member NICK RAHALL, for their assistance is shepherding this bill to the floor. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, in 2001, thanks to the leadership of the Resources Committee and the support from local grassroots organizations, conservation groups, state and local governments, as well as our Canadian neighbors, we were able to create the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Our refuge on the Detroit River is already demonstrating how—working as a team—federal, state, and local officials in the United States and Canada, can work with businesses, conservationists and private citizens to preserve our remaining wildlife habitat along the River and improve the quality of life. H.R. 289 builds on that success, expanding the refuge south into Ohio, to protect the Lake Erie shoreline.

The lands we are talking about encompass an area of tremendous bio-diversity, with unique geological features and a wide variety of plant life that attracts numerous species of fish, birds, and waterfowl.

In the Great Lakes region, there is a tremendous urgency to protect our remaining high-quality habitats before they are lost to further development. We must also do our utmost to rehabilitate and enhance degraded habitat. This is essential to sustain the quality of life enjoyed by the people living along the Detroit River and the Lake Erie corridor.

The Western basin of Lake Erie is vitally important to the economic and environmental future of the United States. In the 1970s and 1980s, the ecological health of Lake Erie was a running joke—fisherman derisively renamed Lake Erie "The Dead Sea." Water quality was poor, and fish and wildlife suffered as a result.

But in the past two decades, the citizens and governmental institutions of both the United States and Canada have devoted increasing attention and resources to the restoration of the water quality and the fisheries of the Great Lakes, including the Western basin. Numerous grassroots environmental and conservation organizations have worked dutifully to address environmental degradation in the region. I am happy to say that these efforts have been successful, though there is still much more that must be done.

The coastal wetlands of Lake Erie support the largest diversity of plant and wildlife species in the Great Lakes. More than 320 species of birds and 43 species of fish have been identified in the aquatic and wetland habitats of the Western basin. The shallow Western basin is home to the largest concentration of marshes in Lake Erie, which makes it a major migratory bird corridor. Seventy percent of the Mississippi Flyway population of black ducks is concentrated in the Lake Erie marshes during fall migration.

The important of Lake Erie is manifested in the United States congressional designation of the Ottawa and Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuges. Lake Erie has an international reputation for walleye, perch, and bass fishing, as well as duck hunting. On an economic basis, Lake Erie tourism accounts for an estimated \$1.5 billion in retail sales and more than 50,000 jobs.

In Michigan, the Refuge will run from the southern boundary of Sterling State Park to the eastern edge of Sandusky Bay, Ohio. The Secretary of Interior is authorized to acquire by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or grant conservation easements with the boundaries of the Refuge. Any and all acquisitions of lands are voluntary, and federal takings are strictly prohibited. I would note that the Secretary shall administer all federally owned lands, waters, and interests within the Refuge in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act. Thus, the rights of sportsmen and waterfowlers like myself to hunt and fish in accordance with state law will be protected.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank the Resources Committee for their assistance. Ms. KAPTUR's bill is an important piece of legislation which will be great benefit to the people of Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario, and represents a sound approach to protecting, preserving, and restoring the wildlife habitat of the Great Lakes. I urge its adoption.

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

Mr. RENZI. 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 Arizona (Mr. RENZI) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 289, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material in the RECORD on H.R. 622, H.R. 762, and H.R. 289, the three bills just considered.

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

There was no objection.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE BLUE STAR BANNER AND THE GOLD STAR

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 109) expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the Blue Star Banner and the Gold Star, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 109

Whereas the Blue Star Flag (commonly referred to as the "Blue Star Banner") was