June 19, 2000

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

39267

(3) there is a long-standing interest among
State and local regional planners; residents, and river users in undertaking a concerted coopera-
tive effort to manage the river in a productive and meaningful way.

SEC. 3. DESIGNATION FOR STUDY.
Section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(a) is amended—
(1) by designating the undesignated para-
graph following (135) as paragraph (136); and
(2) by adding at the end the following:

'(137) TAUNTON RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS.—The
segment downstream from the headwaters, from
the confluence of the Town River and the
Matthew River in Bridgewater to the confluence
with the Forge River in Raynham, Massachu-
setts.'.

SEC. 4. STUDY AND REPORT.
Section 5(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
(16 U.S.C. 1276(b) is amended—
(1) by redesignating the second paragraph (8)
as paragraph (10); (2) by redesigning the second paragraph (11)as paragraph (12); (3) by redesigning the second paragraph (11)as paragraph (12); (4) by redesigning the first paragraph (11)as paragraph (13); (5) by redesigning the fourth paragraph (11)as paragraph (14); (6) by redesigning the first paragraph (8)as paragraph (15); (7) in paragraph (16), as so redesignated by
paragraph (6) of this subsection, by striking "paragraph (16)"; and
(8) by adding at the end the following:

'(17) TAUNTON RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS.—Not
later than 3 years after the date of enactment of
this paragraph, the Secretary of the Interior—
"(A) shall complete the study of the Taunton
River, Massachusetts; and
"(B) shall submit to Congress a report describ-
ing the results of the study.".'

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.
There are authorized to be appropriated such
sums as are necessary to carry out this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant
to the rule, the gentleman from Indiana
(Mr. SOUDER) and the gentleman from
Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY) each will control 20
minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. SOUDER.

GENERAL LEAVE.
Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I ask
unanimous consent that all Members
may have 5 legislative days within
which to revise and extend their
marks and to include extraneous mate-
rial on H.R. 2778.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there
objection to the request of the gen-
tleman from Indiana?

There was no objection.

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, I yield
myself such time as I may con-
sume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of
H.R. 2778, as amended, and introduced
by the gentleman from Massachusetts
(Mr. MOAKLEY), the sponsor of
this bill authorizes a study of the Taunton River for inclu-
sion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Taunton River contains a vari-
ety of natural and cultural resources
important to America's heritage. H.R.
2778 will assess these resources and de-
termine whether the river meets the require-
ments for inclusion into the
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The study
authorized by H.R. 2778 has strong pub-
lic support from State and local offi-
cials, residents, and river users.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R.
2778, as amended.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the bal-
ance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speak-
er, I yield myself such time as I may
consume.

Madam Speaker. H.R. 2778, intro-
duced by our colleague, the gentleman
from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY),
amends the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
to provide for a study of the Taunton
River in the Commonwealth of Massa-
chemutts for potential addition to the
National Wild and Scenic Rivers Sys-
tem.

The Taunton River is located in
southeastern Massachusetts, about 30
miles from Boston. The Taunton and
its tributaries form the second largest
watershed in the Commonwealth. Much
of the river corridor is forested or in
agricultural use.

H.R. 2778 is a noncontroversial bill.
The administration has testified in
support of the study. Further, it is our
understanding that there is strong
local support for this initiative.

During consideration of the bill by
the Committee on Resources, an
amendment was adopted that made a
number of technical corrections to the
bill and the underlying Wild and Scenic
Rivers Act. These changes improve the
legislation, and we support the bill as
amended.

Madam Speaker, I also have a state-
ment from the gentleman from Massa-
chemutts (Mr. MOAKLEY), the sponsor
of H.R. 2778, who is unavoidably unable to
be here during the consideration of this
bill; and I include his statement for the
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during consid-
eration of this bill.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Madam Speaker, I would
like to thank my colleagues, Representative
GEORGE MILLER, Representative DON YOUNG,
Representative CARLOS ROMERO-BARCÉLÓ,
and Representative JAMES HANSEN for bring-
ing this important bill to the floor.

H.R. 2778 would direct the National Park
Service to study the Taunton River in Massa-
chemutts to determine if it should be added to
the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The 70-
mile river is threatened by an alarming rate of
residential and commercial development. If the
river meets the necessary federal require-
ments and is added to the system, then its
flow could not be hindered or diverted and
local regional planners would be able to re-
ceive federal assistance to help manage the
river.

The Taunton River is of tremendous histori-
cal and ecological value to the Common-
wealth of Massachusetts and also the nation.
In the early 1600's, the Taunton River was
the first river the Pilgrims encountered as they
moved inland, and they used the river as a
meeting spot with the Native Americans. Chief
Massasoit of the Wompanoag tribe befriended
the Pilgrims, who were ill-prepared for New
England winters Without the help of
the Native Americans, the early settlers
would have perished. As a result of the goodwill
of the local Native Americans, the Pilgrims dedi-
cated a day in celebration of the harvest and
their good fortune. This day is celebrated
throughout the country today and is better
known as our national holiday of Thanks-
giving.

From an ecological standpoint, the Taunton
River is a tremendous resource because of its
improved water quality and the various spe-
cies of marine life that thrive there. There
have been numerous sightings of the Amer-
ican Bald Eagle. The improved water quality of
the river has resulted in the river becoming a
tremendous recreational resource for thou-
sands of Southeastern Massachusetts resi-
dents. The river is part of a river water trail
called the Wampanoag Commemorative
canoe passage. The course, which was the
main travel route for the Wampanoag Native
Americans, is now used by scouting groups,
conservation leaders, and recreational enthu-
asiasts.

The river is of tremendous historical and
scenic value to the Commonwealth of Massa-
chemutts. I strongly support H.R. 2778 and
thank my colleagues for bringing the measure
to the House floor.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speak-
er, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The
question was taken; and (two-
thirds having voted in favor thereof)
the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2778, as
amended.

The motion to reconsider was laid on
the table.

CAT ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE
REFUGE ESTABLISHMENT ACT

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the
bill (H.R. 3292) to provide for the estab-
lishment of the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge in West Feliciana Par-
ish, Louisiana, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3292

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Rep-
resentatives of the United States of America in Congress assem-
bled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
This Act may be cited as the "Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge Estab-
lishment Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—
(1) as the southernmost unleveed portion of
the Mississippi River, Cat Island, Louisiana, is
one of the last remaining tracts in the
lower Mississippi Valley that is still influ-
enced by the natural dynamics of the river;

(2) Cat Island supports one of the highest
densities of virgin bald cypress trees in the
entire Mississippi River Valley, including the National champion cypress tree which is 17 feet wide and has a circumference of 53 feet;

(3) Cat Island is important habitat for several declining species of forest songbirds supports thousands of wintering waterfowl;

(4) Cat Island supports high populations of deer, turkey, and furbearers, such as mink and bobcats;

(5) conservation and enhancement of this area through inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System would help meet the habitat conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan;

(6) these forested wetlands represent one of the most valuable and productive wildlife habitat types in the United States, and have extremely high recreational value for hunters, anglers, birdwatchers, nature photographers, and others; and

(7) the Cat Island area is deserving of inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act—

(1) the term ‘‘Refuge’’ means the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge; and

(2) the term ‘‘Secretary’’ means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 4. PURPOSES.

The purposes for which the Refuge is established and shall be managed are,—

(1) to conserve, restore, and manage habitats as necessary to contribute to the migratory bird population goals and habitat objectives as established through the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture;

(2) to conserve, restore, and manage the significant aquatic resource values associated with the area’s forested wetlands and to achieve the habitat objectives of the ‘‘Mississippi River Aquatic Resources Management Plan’’;

(3) to conserve, enhance, and restore the historic native bottomland community characteristics of the lower Mississippi alluvial valley and its associated fish, wildlife, and plant species;

(4) to conserve, enhance, and restore habitat to maintain and assist in the recovery of endangered, and threatened plants and animals;

(5) to provide opportunities for priority public wildlife dependent uses for compatible hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife observation and educational activities, and environmental education and interpretation; and

(6) to encourage the use of volunteers and facilitate partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, local communities, conservation organizations, and other non-Federal entities to promote public awareness of the resources of the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System and public participation in the conservation of these resources.

SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF REFUGE.

(a) ACQUISITION BOUNDARY.—The Secretary is authorized to establish the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge, consisting of approximately 36,500 acres of land and water, as depicted upon a map entitled ‘‘Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge—Proposed’’, dated February 8, 2000, and available for inspection in appropriate offices of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(b) BOUNDARY REVISIONS.—The Secretary may make such minor revisions of the boundary designated under this section as may be appropriate to carry out the purposes of the Refuge or to facilitate the acquisition of property within the Refuge.

(c) ACQUISITION.—The Secretary is authorized to acquire the lands and waters, or interests therein, within the acquisition boundary described in subsection (a) of this section.

(d) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish the Refuge by publication of a notice in the Federal Register and publications of local circulation whenever sufficient property has been acquired to constitute an area that can be efficiently managed as a National Wildlife Refuge.

SEC. 6. ADMINISTRATION.

The Secretary shall administer all lands, waters, and interests therein acquired under this Act in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.). The Secretary may use such additional statutory authority as may be available for the conservation of fish and wildlife, and the provision of fish- and wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities as the Secretary considers appropriate to carry out the purposes of this Act.

SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Department of the Interior—

(1) such funds as may be necessary for the acquisition of lands and waters designated in section 5(c); and

(2) such funds as may be necessary for the development, operation, and maintenance of the Refuge.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

MR. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 3292, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

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

Madam Speaker, H.R. 3292, a bill which would establish the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge in the State of Louisiana.

The biological diversity and ecological significance of Cat Island is most impressive. It would appear by all measures that this habitat in the bayou of southern Louisiana would be a handsome addition to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

I believe that the bill was greatly improved by the Committee on Resources when the total authorization for land acquisition was, by unanimous consent of the House, increased from 9,400 acres to 36,500 acres. It makes sense since the land is presently available and because the entire tract is ecologically significant to ensure the protection of the core 9,400 acres. I want to thank the sponsor of the bill, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BAKER), for agreeing to add these additional lands.

It is also my understanding that the administration fully supports H.R. 3292. The Fish and Wildlife Service has asked for $4.1 million in their fiscal year 2001 budget request to begin the acquisition process for this new refuge. Hopefully, with the passage of this legislation, the Fish and Wildlife Service can get started on this process very soon.

The House should pass H.R. 3292 today, I urge all Members to support this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.
TAKING CERTAIN LAND INTO TRUST FOR MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1967) to make technical corrections to the status of certain land held in trust for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, to take certain land into trust for that Band, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. STATUS OF CERTAIN INDIAN LANDS.

(a) In General.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(1) all land taken in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians on or after December 23, 1944, shall be part of the Mississippi Choctaw Indian Reservation;

(2) all land held in fee by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians located within the boundaries of the State of Mississippi, as shown in the report entitled "Report of Fee Lands owned by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians", dated September 28, 1999, on file in the Office of the Superintendent, Choctaw Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, is hereby declared to be held by the United States in trust for the benefit of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; and

(3) land made part of the Mississippi Choctaw Indians, with some parcels dating back many decades. During the past 20 years, Madam Speaker, the tribe has attempted time and time again to transfer the land through the regular process established by the United States Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Unfortunately, the Department has failed to act on these applications in an efficient and prompt manner.

The applications filed by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians are supported by the State of Mississippi and the county and municipal governments in the vicinity of the property.

What is at stake here are critically needed services for the tribe. A new school, housing, and a medical clinic are among the projects which have been delayed because of inaction by the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The existing school has had dozens of safety violations issued by the BIA, and the medical clinic will not pass its next inspection. Just as important, thousands of Mississippi Choctaw are living in unacceptable conditions due to the lack of available housing.

Madam Speaker, the tribe has followed the regular process and lived up to its obligations. But, for whatever reasons, perhaps a lack of resources, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have failed to meet the Government's duty. That is why we need to provide this legislative remedy and allow the tribe to move forward with building a new school, a medical clinic, and housing for its members.

There was no objection.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to extend the balance of my time to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) for the purpose of controlling the time.

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

Mr. WICKER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I thank my friend from New Jersey for allowing me to control the balance of the time.

Madam Speaker, this is a simple bill which was approved in the Senate last week by unanimous consent. The bill does three things. First, it moves all trust land taken for the benefit of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians since December 23, 1944, shall not be considered to be part of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian Reservation.

Second, the bill takes all land owned in fee by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and incorporates it into trust land. And third, the bill makes these two provisions without affecting the statutes of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

All lands affected by this legislation are owned by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, with some parcels dating back many decades. During the past 20 years, Madam Speaker, the tribe has attempted time and time again to transfer the land through the regular process established by the United States Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Unfortunately, the Department has failed to act on these applications in an efficient and prompt manner.

The applications filed by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians are supported by the State of Mississippi and the county and municipal governments in the vicinity of the property.

What is at stake here are critically needed services for the tribe. A new school, housing, and a medical clinic are among the projects which have been delayed because of inaction by the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The existing school has had dozens of safety violations issued by the BIA, and the medical clinic will not pass its next inspection. Just as important, thousands of Mississippi Choctaw are living in unacceptable conditions due to the lack of available housing.

Madam Speaker, the tribe has followed the regular process and lived up to its obligations. But, for whatever reasons, perhaps a lack of resources, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have failed to meet the Government's duty. That is why we need to provide this legislative remedy and allow the tribe to move forward with building a new school, a medical clinic, and housing for its members.

Led by their capable Chief, Phillip Martin, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is making great strides in education, job creation, and the preservation of their cultural heritage. The Government should not be standing in the way of their continued progress.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the bill and sending it on to the President.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this legislation would bring some 8,700 acres of land into Federal trust status for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians outside of the regulatory framework established for bringing Indian land into trust. It is important for the tribe to have the land put into trust status in order to continue their economic development plans.

The Bureau of Indian affairs has indicated that it will take at least a year for them to process the land in accordance with the land-into-trust regulations. As we hear from numerous tribes, this would have a detrimental effect on the tribe's current and future economic development and expansion.

The administration supports this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support it as well.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WICKER. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's kind remarks in support of this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on S. 1967.

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