

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM D. SHADDOX, CHIEF, LAND RESOURCES DIVISION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 3388, TO AMEND THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT TO DESIGNATE A SEGMENT OF THE BEAVER, CHIPUXET, QUEEN, WOOD, AND PAWCATUCK RIVERS IN THE STATES OF CONNECTICUT AND RHODE ISLAND FOR STUDY FOR POTENTIAL ADDITION TO THE NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

APRIL 17, 2012

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 3388, a bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a segment of the Beaver, Chipuxet, Queen, Wood, and Pawcatuck Rivers in the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Department supports enactment of H.R. 3388. The river segments and tributary areas proposed for study, which comprise the Wood-Pawtucket Watershed, exhibit the types of qualities and resource values that would make it a worthy and important candidate for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. However, we feel that priority should be given to the 36 previously authorized studies for potential units of the National Park System, potential new National Heritage Areas, and potential additions to the National Trails System and National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that have not yet been transmitted to Congress.

H.R. 3388 directs the Secretary of the Interior to study named segments of the Pawcatuck, Beaver, Chipuxet, Queen and Wood Rivers. The bill also specifies that the headwaters segments of the Wood and Queen Rivers include all tributaries, ensuring that virtually the entire Wood-Pawtucket Watershed is assessed. The bill requires the study to be completed and transmitted to Congress within three years after funding is made available for it.

Several segments of the Pawcatuck, Wood and Chipuxet Rivers are listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) as potential candidates for Wild and Scenic River designation. These NRI-listed segments were the focus of a 1980s planning and conservation study undertaken through the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance program, which concluded in part, "The Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers corridor is Rhode Island's least developed and most rural river system. Its waters are the cleanest and purest and its recreational opportunities are unparalleled by any other river system in the state." The Queen and Beaver Rivers have been recognized for their pristine headwaters nature, critical to the high water quality and biological diversity of the upper Pawcatuck, and have been the focus of significant conservation efforts by the Nature Conservancy and Rhode Island Audubon Society, among others. In 2004, the

legislatively-established Rhode Island Rivers Council classified the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed as “Rhode Island's premier freshwater recreational resource.”

If enacted, the National Park Service intends to undertake the study in close cooperation with the affected communities, the relevant agencies of the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut, and interest groups such as the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association through a partnership-based study approach. This is the approach that has been used since the 1980s for studies of rivers located in New England and other parts of the Northeast Region. The partnership-based approach is recognized in Section 10(e) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as a means of encouraging state and local governmental participation in the administration of a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The partnership-based approach also allows for development of a proposed river management plan as part of the study, which helps landowners and local jurisdictions understand their potential future roles in river management should Congress decide to designate part or all of the rivers being studied.

This concludes my prepared remarks, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members may have regarding this bill.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM D. SHADDOX, CHIEF OF LAND RESOURCES DIVISION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS, COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, CONCERNING H.R. 4193, TO PROVIDE THAT THERE SHALL BE NO NET INCREASE IN THE ACRES OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LAND UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, OR THE FOREST SERVICE UNLESS THE FEDERAL BUDGET IS BALANCED FOR THE YEAR IN WHICH THE LAND WOULD BE PURCHASED.

April 17, 2012

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 4193, a bill to provide that there shall be no net increase in the acres of certain Federal land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Forest Service unless the Federal budget is balanced for the year in which the land would be purchased.

The Department strongly opposes H.R. 4193. Land acquisition for our national parks, wildlife refuges, and public lands is a critically important way in which the Federal government invests in the protection of our nation's valuable natural resources for the benefit of the public now and for future generations. This bill would unwisely single out land acquisition to address a large national problem, the Federal budget deficit, while arbitrarily disregarding any benefits that would accrue to the American public in protecting important historical, natural, or cultural resource sites.

H.R. 4193 would prohibit the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from using Federal funds to purchase land that would result in a net increase of land acreage that would be under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, or that would result in a net increase in acreage in the National Forest System, unless the Federal budget is balanced for the year in which the land would be purchased. An exception would be made for land purchased using funds from the sale of Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps (the Federal Duck Stamp). This legislation would, therefore, block nearly all Federal land purchases by the four land management agencies in the time it will take for overall Federal revenues to equal overall Federal expenditures. The bill would also prohibit land purchases if the Federal budget had a surplus, rather than a deficit, since it would not be in balance under that circumstance either. Furthermore, the legislation is ambiguous, including as to whether the limit on a net increase of land acreage would apply to the four agencies collectively or individually. As each agency has varying legal authorities and practices for land transactions, this ambiguity would make the implementation of this bill difficult for the two Departments.

Our opposition to this bill is based upon a number of factors, chief among them the prospective loss of irreplaceable cultural and natural resources for this and future generations. If such invaluable areas as the battlefields of the Civil War, the wild lands of the Olympic Peninsula, the waterways of the Everglades, or the archeological sites in the Four Corners area had not been acquired by the Federal government as they reached the market, they would likely not have been saved from development. Their value as cultural and natural resources—and as a legacy to future generations—would have been lost forever. Because vast resources remain unprotected, limiting the flexibility of land management agencies to use funds to acquire those lands while they are available for acquisition would be a huge disservice to the public.

The ability to acquire land, including conservation easements, is an important tool for the Fish and Wildlife Service to protect important wildlife habitats. In the United States, lands with some form of protection are often highly fragmented. Many species, such as salmon or Florida panthers, try their best to navigate barriers, including hydroelectric dams and interstate highways, but are usually unsuccessful, leaving their populations vulnerable. The Fish and Wildlife Service uses its acquisition authority to obtain new properties for national wildlife refuges, which enables these species to benefit from renewed connections between already protected parcels.

The Bureau of Land Management uses its land acquisition authority to acquire intermingled and adjacent non-Federal lands through purchase, exchange, and donation for specified public benefits. Consolidation of the public lands through land acquisition increases management efficiency, maintains open space, provides opportunities for environmentally responsible recreation, preserves natural and cultural heritage resources, restores at-risk botanical, fisheries and wildlife resources, and maintains functioning ecosystems.

And the ability to acquire land ensures that the National Park Service can protect and manage the resources of the National Park System. Today, there are 84.4 million acres within the authorized boundaries of the National Park System, of which 2.7 million acres are privately owned. Each year, the National Park Service prioritizes for acquisition those parcels within park boundaries that are available for purchase and that would provide the greatest protection for threatened resources of the park unit. In addition, parks are often greatly enhanced when the National Park Service is able to purchase inholdings that become available when private owners decide to sell and want to ensure that the property is protected permanently.

In addition to the protection of resources, land acquisition reduces operational costs by facilitating cost-effective management of the resources that are currently being protected. The strategic acquisition of land often serves to maximize management efforts and results in direct management cost savings through efficiencies and economies of scale, including simplifying management and reducing expenses related to signage, fencing, law enforcement patrols, legal permits, rights-of-way conflicts, fire-fighting, road maintenance, habitat management and restoration, fighting invasive species, and meeting other important landscape-level conservation objectives. The National Park Service, for example, is working on acquiring a number of inholdings that cost the Federal government more to monitor and provide infrastructure to support than if the lands are acquired and managed as part of the park in which they are located. The same situation applies to the National Wildlife Refuge System -- the Fish and Wildlife

Service's land acquisitions often purchase inholdings that make management of an existing refuge more cost effective and that greatly enhance the ability of the refuges to carry out their purposes.

It is important to recognize that the acquisition of land by these Federal agencies can and does have a significant positive impact on the local economy. For example, recreational opportunities afforded through lands managed by four Federal land management agencies stimulate local economies without creating a demand for increased infrastructure. They create and foster jobs in the tourism industry in the local economies. A recent National Park Service economic impact report shows that visitor spending in national parks in 2010 generated more than \$31 billion of sales that supported more than 258,000 jobs in the U.S. economy. Wildlife refuges are also economic engines for local communities. Forgoing the creation of new refuges, or enhancing existing refuges through land acquisition, would deny local communities such benefits to the local economy. A 2006 Fish and Wildlife analysis found that each federal dollar invested in the National Wildlife Refuge System returns four dollars to the economy. Refuges also generate new tax revenues, the federal portion of which offsets, to a degree, federal land acquisition expenditures. Similarly, recreational activities on the Bureau of Land Management's public lands provide major economic benefits to the economy in nearby communities. Nearly 58 million recreational visits took place on Bureau of Land Management lands in 2011 alone. A recent Department of the Interior economic impact report shows that in 2010, recreation on Bureau of Land Management lands supported an estimated 59,000 jobs and resulted in about \$7.4 billion in economic output.

Finally, from a budgetary perspective, the effort to use limitations on land purchases as a path toward balancing the Federal budget is highly questionable. For all of its benefits, land acquisition funding is a very small amount relative to the size of the Federal budget. For FY 2013, the Administration has proposed spending only approximately \$270 million for land acquisition by the four agencies.

Furthermore, we note that the funding for the Federal acquisition of land is primarily financed from offshore mineral extraction royalties, rents and bonuses. In passing the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act in 1965, Congress determined that revenue generated through extraction of a non-renewable resource should be used to preserve another non-renewable resource: land with its recreation and preservation benefits. Since its enactment, Congress and the Executive Branch have worked together to achieve this congressional intent in order to acquire, as appropriate, lands for recreational purposes and to benefit future generations.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared testimony on H.R. 4193, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.