



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: Subcommittee on Federal Lands Republican Members
From: Subcommittee on Federal Lands; Aniela Butler, Jason Blore, and Colen Morrow – Aniela@mail.house.gov, Jason.Blore@mail.house.gov, and Colen.Morrow@mail.house.gov; x6-7736
Date: Thursday, June 27, 2024
Subject: Legislative Hearing on 6 Bills

The Subcommittee on Federal Lands will hold a legislative hearing on 6 bills:

- H.R. 390 (Rep. Stefanik), “*Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Enhancement Act*”;
- H.R. 3971 (Rep. Hill), “*Flatside Wilderness Additions Act*”;
- H.R. 6826 (Rep. Mfume), To designate the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine as the Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center;
- H.R. 6843 (Rep. Scalise), To expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana;
- H.R. 8206 (Rep. Franklin), To ensure that Big Cypress National Preserve may not be designated as wilderness or as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and for other purposes; and
- H.R. 8219 (Rep. Tokuda), “*Lahaina National Heritage Area Act*”.

The hearing will take place on **Thursday, June 27, 2024, at 10:15 a.m.** in room 1334 Longworth House Office Building.

Member offices are requested to notify Will Rodriguez (Will.Rodriguez@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 26, 2024, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

I. KEY MESSAGES

- The Republican bills on today’s hearing have broad support in their local communities and represent locally-led efforts to promote each area’s unique natural and cultural resources.
- Legislation offered by Representatives Scalise and Stefanik would expand existing heritage areas to bolster local economies without allowing the federal government to acquire land or impose new regulations.
- Bills offered by Representatives Hill and Franklin highlight the dichotomy between conservation designations with and without local support. Representative Franklin’s legislation would prevent the potential designation of hundreds of thousands of acres of

wilderness in southern Florida. This proposed wilderness designation is opposed by a bipartisan coalition of Members of Congress, the local community, and Tribal stakeholders. In contrast, Representative Hill’s legislation would add new lands to the existing Flatside Wilderness and is supported by a broad coalition of state and local stakeholders.

II. WITNESSES

Panel I (Members of Congress):

- *To Be Announced*

Panel II (Administration Officials and Outside Experts):

- **Ms. Joy Beasley**, Associate Director – Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. [*H.R. 390, H.R. 6826, H.R. 6843, H.R. 8206, and H.R. 8219*]
- **The Honorable Talbert Cypress**, Chairman, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Miami, Florida [*H.R. 8206*]
- **Mr. Sean Kelleher**, Historian, Town of Saratoga, Saratoga, New York [*H.R. 390*]
- **Ms. Katherine Andrews**, Director – Office of Outdoor Recreation, Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, Little Rock, Arkansas [*H.R. 3971*]
- **Mr. Justin Lemoine**, Executive Director, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, Baton Rouge, Louisiana [*H.R. 6843*]
- *Additional Witnesses To Be Announced*

III. BACKGROUND

[H.R. 390 \(Rep. Stefanik\), “Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Enhancement Act”](#)

In 1984, President Reagan signed bipartisan legislation establishing the country’s first national heritage area (NHA), which broadly “recognize certain areas of the United States that tell nationally significant stories [and] conserve, enhance, and interpret those nationally significant stories and the natural, historic, scenic, and cultural resources of areas.”¹ Today, there are 62 NHAs in 36 states that “illustrate significant aspects of the heritage of the United States.”² NHAs are unique public-private partnerships that allow for the promotion of natural or cultural resources without federal management or ownership.³ In the typical NHA, land is not federally owned but is instead held by state or local governments, private landowners, or some combination of those groups.⁴ As such, NHAs are not units of the National Park System, although the National Park Service (NPS) may provide NHAs with financial and technical assistance. Because NHAs are “lived-in landscapes,” they are designed to empower locally-led

¹ Pub. Law. 117-339, <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ339/PLAW-117publ339.pdf>. “National Heritage Areas,” National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/upload/Final-printed-NHA-unigrid-2021-55-areas-508-L.pdf>. “What is a National Heritage Area?” National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, June 17, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/what-is-a-national-heritage-area.htm>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

approaches to resource conservation and economic development.⁵ To elevate grassroots-level decision-making, Congress frequently assigns a local coordinating entity (LCE), such as a state or local agency or non-profit organization, to be an NHA’s lead management organization.⁶

NHAs receive funding from varied sources, including private charities and donors, state and local governments, and federal appropriators.⁷ Federal funding is usually divided during the annual appropriations process between direct grantmaking support for individual NHAs and general administrative costs for the overall NHA program.⁸ NPS then distributes authorized federal funds to NHA entities, typically through the designated LCEs.⁹ In turn, the LCEs are generally required to match all federal funding received one-to-one.¹⁰ Once distributed, federal funds can be used for locally guided projects, such as rehabilitating important sites, developing tours, establishing exhibits and programs, and improving public awareness of the NHA.¹¹ Most NHAs are subject to an annual funding limit of \$1 million, but actual expenditures have historically tended to be lower than that amount.¹²

After NHAs exploded in popularity, Congress passed the “National Heritage Area Act” (NHA Act) during the 117th Congress to formalize the NHA System and protect private property rights.¹³ The NHA Act established the National Heritage Area System, set formal criteria for designating NHAs, and created uniform funding and management standards.¹⁴ Through these changes, the NHA Act sought to minimize the differences and administrative inefficiencies that had resulted from creating NHAs under separate enabling acts.¹⁵ The NHA Act also set forth stringent requirements protecting private property rights and development activity in NHAs, ensuring that designations did not confer any regulatory or land use authority to the local LCE.¹⁶ In addition to NHA Act requirements, an individual NHA’s enabling statute often includes provisions that protect the rights of existing property owners within the designated area and prevent any federal land acquisitions.¹⁷

Established in 1996, the Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (Hudson River Valley NHA) was among the earliest NHAs to be designated by Congress.¹⁸ Following the Hudson River for 154 miles of its course through New York state, the Hudson River Valley NHA encompasses 10 counties, 250 communities, and approximately 3 million

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Mark K. DeSantis, “National Heritage Areas: Background and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, April 17, 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33462>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ “What is a National Heritage Area?” National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, June 17, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/what-is-a-national-heritage-area.htm>. Mark K. DeSantis, “National Heritage Areas: Background and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, April 17, 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33462>.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

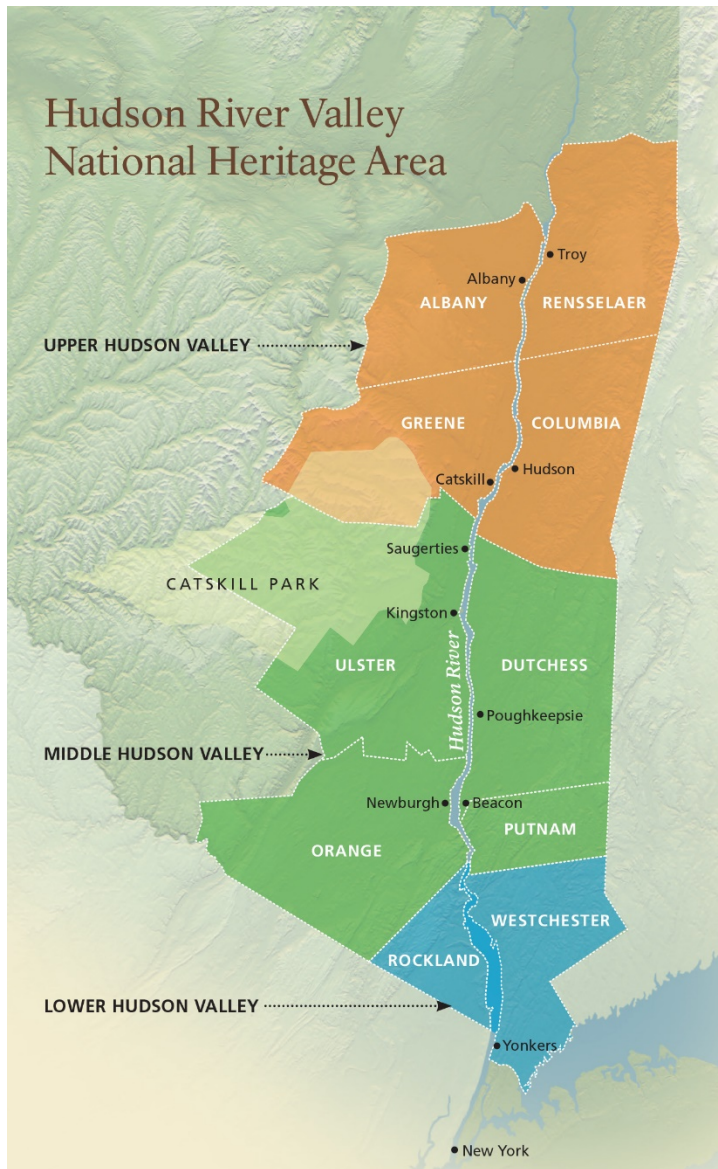
¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ “About the Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area,” Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, <https://www.hudsonrivervalley.com/>.



Current boundaries of the Hudson River Valley NHA. H.R. 390 would add parts of two counties above the Upper Hudson Valley portion of the NHA. **Source:** Hudson River Valley NHA, 2024.

acres of diverse geography, woods, and farmland.¹⁹ From north to south, the Hudson River Valley NHA extends from the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers near Albany down to the northern suburbs of New York City.²⁰ This vast region contains 107 distinct heritage sites, reflecting the Hudson River Valley’s natural, historic, and cultural contributions to the nation.²¹ This includes sites related to the American Revolutionary War, Civil War, and Underground Railroad.²²

Recognizing the vital importance of this region to the national story, H.R. 390, the “Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Enhancement Act,” would expand the boundaries of the Hudson River Valley NHA to include all of Saratoga and Washington Counties. Large portions of these counties are already within the Hudson NHA, and this legislation would bring the federal boundaries of the NHA in line with the state’s boundaries.²³ H.R. 390 would help enhance the interpretation of the Hudson River Valley NHA and expand opportunities for Saratoga and Washington Counties to attract more tourism and support local economic development.²⁴ This bipartisan bill is led by Representatives Elise Stefanik (R-NY) Paul Tonko (D-NY).²⁵

¹⁹ “Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area: Overview & Boundaries,” Hudson River Valley Greenway, <https://hudsongreenway.ny.gov/hudson-river-valley-national-heritage-area>.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ “Hudson River Valley: Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area,” Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, 2024, <https://www.hudsonrivervalley.com/documents/nationalheritagearea1-pdf>.

²² *Id.* “Themes of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area,” Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, <https://www.hudsonrivervalley.com/about/themes>.

²³ Pub. L. No. 104–333, <https://www.congress.gov/104/plaws/publ333/PLAW-104publ333.pdf>. “Stefanik, Tonko Work to include Washington, Saratoga Counties in National Heritage Area,” The Office of Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, January 18, 2023, https://stefanik.house.gov/press-releases?ContentRecord_id=A7ABA6AB-C9FE-4F87-88B6-D6DF0A127206.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ H.R. 390, 118th Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/390>.

H.R. 3971 (Rep. Hill), “Flatside Wilderness Additions Act”

The Ouachita National Forest (ONF) is the oldest and largest national forest in the southern United States, spreading across nearly 1.8 million acres in Arkansas and Oklahoma.²⁶ The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manages the ONF for a variety of uses, including timber harvesting, wildlife habitat conservation, outdoor recreation, and resource protection.²⁷ The ONF’s large expanses of hickory and pine draw an estimated 670,000 visitors annually.²⁸ Congress has designated six wilderness areas within the ONF, which account for little more than 65,000 acres, or a mere 3.6 percent of the ONF’s total area.²⁹ This includes the 9,507-acre Flatside Wilderness area near the ONF’s eastern boundary.³⁰ The Flatside Wilderness contains portions of the 223-mile Ouachita National Recreation Trail and “a popular, 1,550-foot-high rock outcropping called Flatside Pinnacle that overlooks the Ouachita Mountains.”³¹

H.R. 3971 would add four parcels totaling roughly 2,215 acres of ONF lands to the Flatside Wilderness. USFS recommended the inclusion of these parcels in 2021 after completing a Congressionally directed study.³² Congress previously expanded Flatside Wilderness in the 115th Congress by 640 acres.³³ H.R. 3971’s additions include Forked Mountain, whose distinctive topography culminates in a 1,350-foot summit that offers panoramas of nearby waterfalls and streams.³⁴ The bill is supported by Arkansas Governor Sarah Sanders, Arkansas Parks and Tourism, and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.³⁵

H.R. 6826 (Rep. Mfume), To designate the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine as the Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center.

H.R. 6826 would name the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine (Fort McHenry) in Baltimore, Maryland, as the “Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center.” Fort McHenry is known as the site of the 1814 attack by British troops against 1,000 American soldiers, a battle which inspired Francis Scott Key to write the Star-

²⁶ “USDA Forest Service - Ouachita National Forest,” U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/ouachita>.

²⁷ “Ouachita National Forest - About the Area,” U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ouachita/about-forest/about-area>. Debbie Ugbade, “Ouachita National Forest,” Encyclopedia of Arkansas, November 29, 2023, <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/ouachita-national-forest-3148/>.

²⁸ Annual visitation estimate for the Ouachita National Forest, using FY 2020 figures generated from the U.S. Forest Service’s National Visitor Use Monitoring Program, available at <https://apps.fs.usda.gov/nvum/results/A08009.aspx/FY2020>.

²⁹ “Wilderness Areas: Ouachita National Forest,” U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, September 2008, https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5085891.pdf.

³⁰ Hunter Field, “U.S. Rep. French Hill proposes further expansion of Central Arkansas wilderness area,” Arkansas Advocate, June 13, 2023, <https://arkansasadvocate.com/briefs/u-s-rep-french-hill-proposes-further-expansion-of-central-arkansas-wilderness-area/>. “Ouachita National Forest - Flatside Wilderness,” U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/ouachita/recarea/?recid=10774>.

³¹ *Id.*

³² On file with the Committee.

³³ H. Rept. 115-989 – Flatside Wilderness Enhancement Act.

³⁴ “Forked Mountain,” Explore the Ozarks,

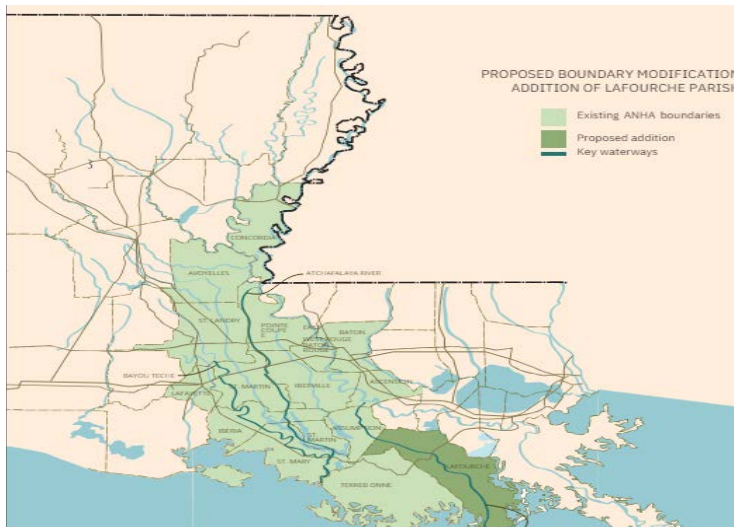
<https://www.exploretheozarksonline.com/activities/parksnature/nationalforests/ouachita/jessieville/flatside/forkedmountain.html>. Rex Nelson, “Rugged terrain,” The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, January 29, 2023,

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2023/jan/29/rugged-terrain/>.

³⁵ *Id.*

Spangled Banner.³⁶ The Honorable Paul S. Sarbanes served the State of Maryland in the House of Representatives for six years and in the U.S. Senate for three decades. During his tenure, Senator Sarbanes helped secure funding for constructing the new visitor center at Fort McHenry, increasing capacity and visitor access.³⁷ Naming the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry would honor Senator Sarbanes’s long history of service to Maryland and his connection with the Fort McHenry site. This bipartisan legislation is cosponsored by the entire Maryland Congressional delegation.

[H.R. 6843 \(Rep. Scalise\), To expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.](#)



A map of the proposed expansion of the Atchafalaya NHA.
Source: Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Report, NHA.

In 2006, Congress established the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA), encompassing fourteen parishes in Louisiana to promote the “local cuisine, music, traditions, language, and cultural landscapes of the Atchafalaya Basin in south central Louisiana.”³⁸ The Atchafalaya is the nation’s largest river swamp, containing almost one million acres of vibrant bottomland hardwoods, swamps, bayous, and backwater lakes.³⁹ The area features a diverse range of physical resources, such as ancient live oaks, towering cypress, sugarcane, and cotton.⁴⁰ The region is also home to a diverse population of people of European, African,

Caribbean, and Native American descent that collectively contribute to the area’s widely recognized “Cajun Culture.”⁴¹ By promoting heritage development and ecotourism, the ANHA offers amenities for residents and visitors that highlight the region’s varied culture and physical resources while contributing to the local economy.⁴² Through the ANHA, projects have been funded to build kayak launches and install new signage along the Mississippi River that

³⁶ “History of Fort McHenry”, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.nps.gov/fomc/learn/historyculture/history-of-fort-mchenry.htm>.

³⁷ “Senator Cardin Attends groundbreaking for New Fort McHenry Visitors Center”, The Office of Ben Cardin, April 27, 2009, <https://www.cardin.senate.gov/press-releases/senator-cardin-attends-groundbreaking-for-new-fort-mchenry-visitors-center/>.

³⁸ Public Law 109-338, <https://www.congress.gov/109/plaws/publ338/PLAW-109publ338.pdf>.

³⁹ Explore Louisiana, “Atchafalaya National Heritage Area”, <https://www.explorelouisiana.com/areas/atchafalaya-national-heritage-area>.

⁴⁰ Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, “The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, America’s Foreign Country”, <https://www.atchafalaya.org/welcome>.

⁴¹ “Atchafalaya National Heritage Area,” National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.nps.gov/places/atchafalaya-national-heritage-area.htm>.

⁴² Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, “The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, America’s Foreign Country”, <https://www.atchafalaya.org/welcome>.

promotes the area’s heritage.⁴³ H.R. 6843 would expand the boundaries of the ANHA to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana. By expanding ANHA to include Lafourche Parish, H.R. 6843 aims to enhance the interpretation of Louisiana’s diverse heritage while creating jobs and celebrating the region’s rich natural and cultural resources.

H.R. 8206 (Franklin), To ensure that Big Cypress National Preserve may not be designated as wilderness or as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and for other purposes.

In 1974, Congress created the 729,000-acre Big Cypress National Preserve (Big Cypress) in southern Florida as the nation’s first national preserve.⁴⁴ At the time, Big Cypress was “a new land management concept” designed to facilitate compromise in land uses after significant controversy erupted over the proposed construction of an airport.⁴⁵ To avoid the stifling land-use restrictions and lack of access characterized by other land designations, such as wilderness areas, Congress created Big Cypress with explicit protections for certain specified activities.⁴⁶ Foremost among these are the traditional and customary uses of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and Seminole Tribe of Florida.⁴⁷ Protected tribal activities include using timber to build traditional shelters, called “chickees,” harvesting plants, and sustainably hunting wildlife.⁴⁸ Other specified uses of Big Cypress include the exercise of existing private property rights, operating off-road vehicles, conducting limited oil and gas exploration, grazing cattle, and hunting.⁴⁹

Despite these popular and enduring comprises, the unique nature of Big Cypress is now under threat from the Biden administration. In August 2022, NPS released a planning document entitled “Big Cypress National Preserve Supplemental Draft Backcountry Access Plan/ Wilderness Study/Environmental Impact Statement,” which contemplates creating a new wilderness designation within Big Cypress.⁵⁰ While NPS’s “preferred option” for planning would designate about 25 percent of the preserve as wilderness, the 2022 document concludes that roughly 43 percent of Big Cypress is eligible for a wilderness designation.⁵¹ While the exact percentages vary, each of the NPS’s three plans for Big Cypress would create a new wilderness area within the preserve.⁵²

⁴³ Colin Campo, “Louisiana’s congressional delegation seeks to promote Lafourche Parish’s cultural heritage,” December 15, 2023, <https://www.houmatoday.com/story/news/local/2023/12/15/louisiana-congressional-delegation-seeks-to-promote-lafourche-parishs-cultural-heritage/71931238007/>.

⁴⁴ “A National Preserve - One Land, Many Uses,” National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, September 20, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/bicy/learn/the-first-national-preserve.htm>. “Florida: Big Cypress National Preserve,” National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, August 7, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/bigcypress.htm>.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ “A National Preserve - One Land, Many Uses,” National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, September 20, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/bicy/learn/the-first-national-preserve.htm>.

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ Big Cypress National Preserve Supplemental Draft Backcountry Access Plan/ Wilderness Study/ Environmental Impact Statement, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, August 2022, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=122584>.

⁵¹ *Id.* Alex Harris, “New protections for Big Cypress? Miccosukee, hunters worry about being locked out,” The Miami Herald, March 21, 2024, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article286935830.html>.

⁵² Big Cypress National Preserve Supplemental Draft Backcountry Access Plan/ Wilderness Study/ Environmental Impact Statement, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, August 2022, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=122584>.

NPS's plans to designate portions of Big Cypress as wilderness have drawn stiff opposition due to concerns the designation would limit access for the public and outdoor recreationalists, disrupt invasive species eradication work, and impinge upon traditional Tribal practices.⁵³ In particular, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida expressed significant concerns the wilderness designation would limit the ability of Tribal members to access Big Cypress and visit fifteen historic cultural sites and numerous active ceremonial grounds. In a letter to NPS, Chairman Cypress wrote: "Rather than imposing arbitrary lines on a map to keep our people out, the [National Park Service] would be well-served exporting to its other parks Big Cypress's capacity for multiple uses, freedom of access, and respect for Indigenous rights."⁵⁴ Bipartisan Members of Florida's Congressional delegation also wrote a letter to Secretary Haaland expressing concerns on behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Florida Department of Environmental Protection that a wilderness designation would harm the ability to address more than 900 non-native plant and animal species in the preserve, including pythons.⁵⁵ In response, Representative Scott Franklin (R-FL) introduced H.R. 8206, bipartisan legislation that would prevent any part of Big Cypress from being designated as a wilderness area.⁵⁶ This legislation would ensure Big Cypress continues to provide important benefits to outdoor recreation communities, achieve diverse conservation goals, and remain undisturbed as a sacred site to the Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes.

[H.R. 8219 \(Rep. Tokuda\), "Lahaina National Heritage Area Act"](#)

The town of Lahaina, located in Maui County, Hawaii, has a rich and storied history. The former capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom under King Kamehameha I and his successors from 1820 to 1845, Lahaina was historically an economic and tourism hub with incalculable cultural and historic significance for the people of Hawaii.⁵⁷ The downtown Lahaina Historic District held numerous cultural sites, including the Lahaina Jodo Mission (a Buddhist temple), Pioneer Inn (the oldest hotel in Lahaina), Waiola Church, and Old Courthouse.⁵⁸ Lahaina is also famous for its 150-year-old Banyan Tree, considered the largest in the country, which remains at the center of town.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, on August 8, 2023, a wildland fire catastrophically damaged Lahaina and became the deadliest wildfire in over a century.⁶⁰ The scenic waterfront, including much of the city center that served as a symbol of the town's illustrious history, was left unrecognizable. Ultimately, the fire destroyed more than 2,200 structures and caused approximately \$5.5 billion in damages.⁶¹ Many of the damaged and destroyed structures lost dated back centuries and held immeasurable value to Lahaina's people and culture.

⁵³ Alex Harris, "New protections for Big Cypress? Miccosukee, hunters worry about being locked out," The Miami Herald, March 21, 2024, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article286935830.html>.

⁵⁴ Note: Chairman Cypress will testify in support of the legislation at the hearing. Letter can be accessed here: <https://www.rickscott.senate.gov/services/files/BF117624-1BA7-45F6-BACA-C0310DFF5298>.

⁵⁵ Letter can be accessed here: https://donalds.house.gov/uploadedfiles/big_cypress_letter_graphics.pdf.

⁵⁶ H.R. 8206, 118th Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/8206>.

⁵⁷ Lahaina Town, "Lahaina Timeline", <https://lahainatown.com/lahaina-history.php>.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ Timmy Broderick, "Why a Banyan Tree Damaged in the Maui Wildfire Was So Beloved," Scientific American, August 15, 2023, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-a-banyan-tree-damaged-in-the-maui-wildfire-was-so-beloved/>.

⁶⁰ "Lahaina fire becomes deadliest in the U.S. in over 100 years as death toll rises to 93," PBS, August 13, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/lahaina-fire-becomes-deadliest-in-the-u-s-in-over-100-years-as-death-toll-rises-to-93>.

⁶¹ "Preliminary After-Action Report: 2023 Maui Wildfire," U.S. Fire Administration, February 8, 2024, <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/blog/preliminary-after-action-report-2023-maui-wildfire/#:~:text=The%20disaster&text=8%2C%202023%2C%20wind%2Ddriven,than%20100%20lives%20were%20lost>.

As the town continues to recover from the trauma of a devastating natural disaster, local leaders have been exploring options that would allow the community to honor its past while promoting its natural and cultural resources post-fire. H.R. 8219 would require the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with state and local partners, to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the town of Lahaina as an NHA. A feasibility study is generally the first step of an NHA designation and ensures that the designated area meets the appropriate criteria. Under the NHA Act, studies must assess whether an area’s resources reflect aspects of American heritage, whether an area would benefit from public-private management, and which entities would be capable of working together to support the proposed heritage area.⁶²

IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & SECTION-BY-SECTION

[H.R. 390 \(Rep. Stefanik\), “Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Enhancement Act”](#)

Section 2. Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.

- Amends Section 904(b) of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Act of 1996⁶³ to expand the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area’s boundaries to include all of Saratoga and Washington Counties.

[H.R. 3971 \(Rep. Hill\), “Flatside Wilderness Additions Act”](#)

Section 2. Additions to Flatside Wilderness.

- Amends Section 3(d) of the Arkansas Wilderness Act of 1984⁶⁴ to designate approximately 2,215 acres of the Ouachita National Forest as wilderness.

Section 3. Fire, Insects, and Diseases.

- Specifies that nothing in the bill affects the underlying provision in the Wilderness Act to address fire, insects, and disease in wilderness areas, subject to conditions the Secretary of Agriculture deems desirable.

Section 4. Designation of Wilderness Addition.

- Names the wilderness established in Section 2 as the “Flatside-Bethune Wilderness.”

[H.R. 6826 \(Rep. Mfume\), To designate the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine as the Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center.](#)

Section 1. Designation.

- Names the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine as the Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor Center and Education Center.

⁶² Pub. Law No. 117-339, <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ339/PLAW-117publ339.pdf>.

⁶³ Pub. Law 104–333 <https://www.congress.gov/104/plaws/publ333/PLAW-104publ333.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Pub. Law No. 98-508, <https://www.congress.gov/98/statute/STATUTE-98/STATUTE-98-Pg2349.pdf>.

H.R. 6843 (Rep. Scalise), To expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.

Section 1. Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Expansion.

- Amends Section 213 of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Act⁶⁵ to include Lafourche Parish.
- Adds Lafourche Parish to the Atchafalaya Trace Commission, the local coordinating entity for the NHA.

H.R. 8206 (Rep. Franklin), To ensure that Big Cypress National Preserve may not be designated as wilderness or as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and for other purposes.

Section 1. Prohibition on Big Cypress National Preserve Designation as Wilderness.

- Prevents Big Cypress National Preserve from being designated as wilderness or as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

H.R. 8219 (Rep. Tokuda), “Lahaina National Heritage Area Act”

Section 3. Lahaina National Heritage Area Study.

- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating Lahaina, Hawaii as a Natural Heritage Area in accordance with the National Heritage Area Act.

V. COST

None of the bills received a formal cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office.

VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION

The administration testified on the Senate companion to the “Atchafalaya National Heritage Act” and recommended NPS complete a study to decide whether the proposed expansion is appropriate.⁶⁶ Additionally, NPS testified in support of the Senate companion to the “Lahaina National Heritage Act,” with amendments.⁶⁷ The administration’s position on the remaining bills is unknown at this time.

VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)

H.R. 390

H.R. 3971

H.R. 6843

⁶⁵ Pub. Law 109-338, <https://uscode.house.gov/statutes/pl/109/338.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Statement of Michael A. Caldwell before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on S.3542, May 15, 2024, <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/hr-3542>.

⁶⁷ Statement of Michael A. Caldwell before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on S.4529, May 15, 2024, <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/s-4259>.