

Testimony of Representative Vern Buchanan  
in support of H.R. 4358  
The Little Manatee Wild and Scenic River Act  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and  
Public Lands  
November 9, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Neguse and Ranking Member Fulcher for holding this important hearing today. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before your Subcommittee in support of H.R. 4358, bipartisan legislation I introduced with my fellow Floridian Rep. Darren Soto, designating the Little Manatee River as a scenic river.

The Little Manatee Wild and Scenic River Act adds the Little Manatee River to the National Park Service's Wild and Scenic River System. If enacted, my bill would formally designate an approximately 51-mile-long segment of the river, beginning at its source in southeastern Hillsborough County flowing downstream to the point at which the river enters Tampa Bay, as a "scenic" river.

Once formally added to the Wild and Scenic River System, the National Park Service would collaborate with

local government officials in Florida to develop a management plan for the Little Manatee River.

The management plan would include how the existing natural environment will be preserved while also allowing for continued public use. The plan is designed to achieve the “goal of protecting and enhancing the values that caused it to be designated” as has been the primary goal for the Wild and Scenic River System for over 50 years.

Approval and enactment of H.R. 4358 would protect the Little Manatee River for generations to come, without the fear of intrusive commercial development.

Adding this river to the Wild and Scenic River program ensures the river remains available for a full range of recreational activities for Floridians, like canoeing, kayaking, boating and fishing.

Protecting our precious natural resources should always be a top priority. Florida’s Suncoast is blessed with an abundance of natural treasures like Sarasota Bay, Emerson Point Preserve and Myakka River State Park.

H.R. 4358 enjoys strong local support as well. Both the Hillsborough County Commission and the Manatee County Commission have approved resolutions supporting this designation.

Of particular note, Hillsborough County Commission Chairman Stacy White has been a leader in the effort to add the Little Manatee River to the Wild and Scenic River program.

In closing, protecting and enhancing water quality for all of Southwest Florida has always been one of my highest priorities in Congress.

This legislation will help ensure a vibrant, clean and healthy environment in my home state of Florida. It's both an important element in our quality of life and a vital part of our economic well-being because millions of people visit Florida every year.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Little Manatee Wild and Scenic River Act. I would welcome the opportunity to work with both of you on moving this legislation through the Subcommittee, the full Committee and to the House floor in a bipartisan manner.