



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

**To:** Subcommittee on Federal Lands Republican Members  
**From:** Subcommittee on Federal Lands; Aniela Butler, Brandon Miller, Jason Blore, and Colen Morrow – [Aniela@mail.house.gov](mailto:Aniela@mail.house.gov), [Brandon.Miller@mail.house.gov](mailto:Brandon.Miller@mail.house.gov), [Jason.Blore@mail.house.gov](mailto:Jason.Blore@mail.house.gov), and [Colen.Morrow@mail.house.gov](mailto:Colen.Morrow@mail.house.gov); x6-7736  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 24, 2024  
**Subject:** Legislative Hearing on 6 Bills

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

- H.R. \_\_\_\_ (Rep. Tiffany), “*Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve Act*”;
- H.R. 2405 (Rep. Armstrong), “*North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act of 2023*”;
- H.R. 3293 (Rep. Duncan), “*Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act*”;
- H.R. 6210 (Rep. Wexton), To designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes;
- H.R. 8403 (Rep. Cohen), “*Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2024*”; and
- H.R. 8603 (Rep. Collins), “*Recreation and Outdoor Access Membership (ROAM) Act*”.

The hearing will take place on **Wednesday, July 24, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.** in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building.

Member offices are requested to notify Will Rodriguez ([Will.Rodriguez@mail.house.gov](mailto:Will.Rodriguez@mail.house.gov)) by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 23, 2024, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

## **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- The Republican bills on today’s hearing will establish a new National Park, improve outdoor recreation on public lands, expedite broadband infrastructure efforts in rural areas, and facilitate a land exchange to help ensure smarter land management and American energy dominance.
- Chairman Tiffany’s legislation elevates the Apostle Islands into a National Park and Preserve, a fitting designation for a spectacular area rich in natural, cultural, and historic resources.
- Representative Collins’s legislation would increase visitation at state parks while helping alleviate overcrowding at national parks, a win-win for gateway communities.

- Legislation from Representative Duncan will help streamline broadband deployment and close the digital divide by creating a new strike force to address federal agency permitting bottlenecks.
- Representative Armstrong’s legislation facilitates land exchanges in North Dakota, allowing the state to generate more revenue for education while providing greater land ownership for Tribes.

## II. WITNESSES

### Panel I (Members of Congress):

- *To Be Announced*

### Panel II (Administration Officials and Outside Experts):

- **Mr. Frank Lands**, Deputy Director for Operations, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. [*“Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve Act,” H.R. 2405, H.R. 3293, H.R. 6210, H.R. 8603*]
- **The Honorable Romaine Quinn**, Senator, Wisconsin Senate, Rice Lake, Wisconsin [*“Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve Act”*]
- **Mr. Eric Keber**, Vice President of Government Affairs, Western Telecommunications Alliance, Washington, D.C. [*H.R. 3293*]
- **Mr. Joseph Heringer**, Commissioner of University and School Lands, State of North Dakota, Bismark, North Dakota [*H.R. 2405*]
- **Mr. Ken Cissna**, Former President, Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Morganton, Georgia [*H.R. 8403*] [*Minority Witness*]
- **Mr. Randy Minchew**, Board Member, George C. Marshall International Center, Leesburg, Virginia [*H.R. 6210*] [*Minority Witness*]

## III. BACKGROUND

### [H.R. \(Rep. Tiffany\), “Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve Act”](#)

The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore includes 21 islands and 12 miles of mainland shore on Lake Superior in Northern Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup> Often referred to as “Wisconsin’s Crown Jewel,” this unique archipelago is the largest in the Great Lakes region.<sup>2</sup> The

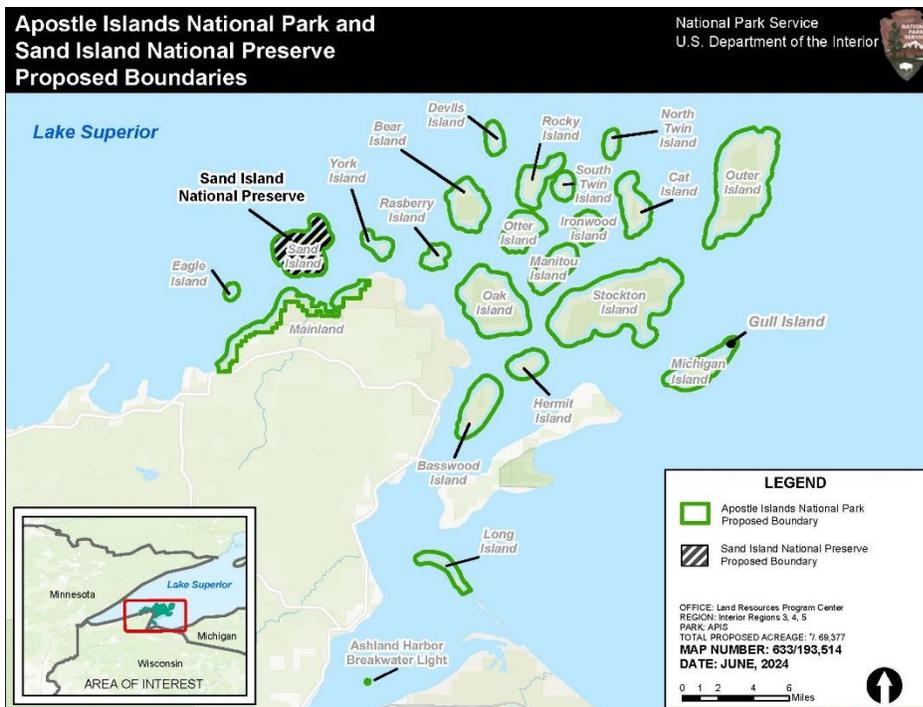


Ice caves of the Apostle Islands. **Source:** Getty Images, no date.

<sup>1</sup> Bayfield County, “Apostle Islands National Lakeshore”, <https://www.bayfieldcounty.wi.gov/317/Apostle-Islands-National-Lakeshore#:~:text=A%20place%20like%20no%20other,12%20miles%20of%20mainland%20shoreline>.

<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, “Apostle Islands”, <https://www.nps.gov/apis/index.htm>. Apostle Islands Cruises, “Why the Apostle Islands are the Crown Jewel of Wisconsin,” May 31, 2023, <https://www.apostleisland.com/2023/05/31/why-the-apostle-islands->

islands are comprised of colorful sandstone and contain numerous scenic cliff formations and arches, sea caves, and sandy beaches.<sup>3</sup> The 12-mile lakeshore boasts areas of both hemlock-white-pine-northern hardwood forests and also pockets of boreal forest.<sup>4</sup> The Apostle Islands offer pristine habitat for a variety of mammals, migratory birds, fish, and amphibians.<sup>5</sup> The area is also rich in historic and cultural resources, having originally been inhabited by the Ojibwe people and now boasting several historic lighthouses and underwater shipwrecks.<sup>6</sup> During the winter season, the Apostle Islands develop stunning ice caves, which visitors often describe as a “bucket list” winter activity.<sup>7</sup> When Lake Superior freezes over, the islands, and the ice caves that form there, are reachable by foot about a mile away from the shore.<sup>8</sup> The Apostle Islands feature a multitude of year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, including hiking, kayaking, boating tours, camping, fishing, sailing, hunting and trapping, and scuba diving.<sup>9</sup> Visitation continues to rise for this relatively isolated National Park Service (NPS) unit, and, in 2021, Apostle Islands saw a record 290,961 visitors.<sup>10</sup>



Proposed map of the Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve. **Source:** NPS, 2024.

In 1970, Congress formally designated the Apostle Islands as a National Lakeshore.<sup>11</sup> This designation came four decades after Congress passed legislation authorizing a study assessing the feasibility of designating the Apostle Islands as a national park.<sup>12</sup> Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-WI) spearheaded the National Lakeshore designation and even flew over the Apostle

[are-the-crown-jewel-of-wisconsin/#:~:text=The%20Apostle%20Islands%20are%20Wisconsin's,the%20Bayfield%20area%20as%20well](https://www.travelwisconsin.com/articles/are-the-crown-jewel-of-wisconsin/#:~:text=The%20Apostle%20Islands%20are%20Wisconsin's,the%20Bayfield%20area%20as%20well).

<sup>3</sup> National Park Service, “Apostle Islands: Nature & Science” <https://www.nps.gov/apis/learn/nature/index.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> National Park Service, “Apostle Islands: Wildlife”, <https://www.nps.gov/apis/learn/nature/wildlife.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> National Park Service, “Apostle Islands: Mainland Ice Caves”, <https://www.nps.gov/apis/mainland-caves-winter.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Travel Wisconsin, “Explore The Ice Caves At Wisconsin’s Apostle Islands”, <https://www.travelwisconsin.com/article/natural-attractions-and-parks/explore-the-ice-caves-at-wisconsin-s-apostle-islands>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Friends of the Apostle Islands, “By the numbers: Lakeshore visitation sets a record in 2021”, February 17, 2022, <https://friendsoftheapostleislands.org/2022/02/17/by-the-numbers-lakeshore-visitation-sets-a-record-in-2021/>.

<sup>11</sup> Wisconsin Public Radio, “Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Marks 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary”, Danielle Kaeding, September 26, 2020, <https://www.wpr.org/culture/apostle-islands-national-lakeshore-marks-50th-anniversary>.

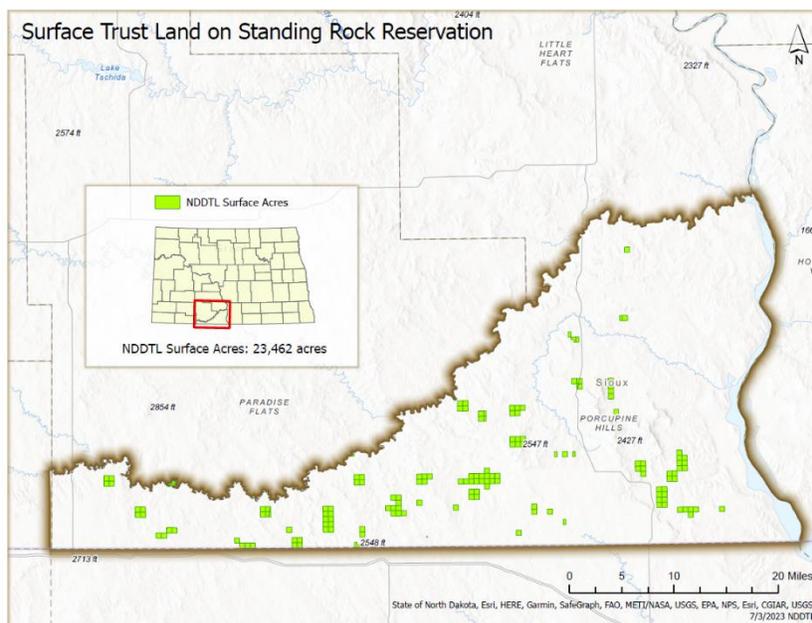
<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

Islands with President John F. Kennedy en route to Ashland, Wisconsin.<sup>13</sup> Once on the ground, President Kennedy described the Islands as a “part of our American heritage” and discussed the need to conserve such special areas.<sup>14</sup> More than 50 years after its initial designation, Chairman Tom Tiffany’s (R-WI-07) legislation would redesignate the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore as the “Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve.” Redesignating the Apostle Islands as a National Park would provide further recognition of this area's unique characteristics and growing popularity. National Park status would also entice greater visitation, which would ensure more Americans can experience this unique area. Importantly, this designation would allow for continued hunting and trapping on Sand Island by creating the Sand Island National Preserve.

**H.R. 2405 (Rep. Armstrong), “North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act of 2023”**

In 1889, Congress passed legislation to “provide for the division of Dakota into two states, and to enable the people of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington to form constitutions and state governments, and to be admitted into the union on an equal footing with the original states, and to make donations of public lands to such states.”<sup>15</sup> This enabling statute granted approximately 2.6 million acres of individual parcels to North Dakota to generate revenue to “support common schools.”<sup>16</sup> Today, North Dakota manages approximately 706,600 acres of surface estate and 2.6 million acres of mineral estate.<sup>17</sup> To generate revenue, the state manages roughly 8,300 oil and gas leases and approximately 4,400 agriculture leases on these lands.<sup>18</sup> The revenue from these leases is deposited into 13 permanent trust funds and invested to provide long-term financing for education and other public benefits the state provides.<sup>19</sup>

As a provision of the enabling statute, if promised land parcels in townships had been sold before North Dakota became a state, the law permitted the state government to receive separate, unreserved federal lands “in lieu” of the



North Dakota Trust Lands located within the Standing Rock Reservation Boundaries. **Source:** State of North Dakota, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> 25 U.S. Statutes at Large, c 180 p 676.

<sup>16</sup> ND.gov, “Mission, Vision & History”, <https://www.land.nd.gov/mission-vision-history#:~:text=In%20North%20Dakota%2C%20this%20grant,capitol%2C%20and%20other%20public%20institutions.>

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Heringer, North Dakota Commissioner of University and School Lands, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, July 12, 2023, <https://www.energy.senate.gov/services/files/406A4831-28DD-4778-951F-F9C4314254F4>.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

unavailable lands.<sup>20</sup> The law did not permit in-lieu-of selections to be located within Indian reservations. However, subsequent establishments of tribal reservations trapped more than 31,000 surface acres and 130,000 acres of mineral estate previously selected by the State of North Dakota within these boundaries.<sup>21</sup> According to the North Dakota Commissioner of University and Lands, Joseph Heringer, the lands within tribal reservations are “unable to be developed pursuant to the [s]tate’s mandate to generate income for schools, universities, and other public purposes.”<sup>22</sup> H.R. 2405 seeks to remedy this limitation by allowing North Dakota to relinquish trapped state lands within Tribal Reservations to the federal government and select “in-lieu” federal lands elsewhere in the state. The bill would require the exchanges to be equal-value transactions. North Dakota could access and develop these lands to generate income for education and other public purposes while providing greater land ownership for Tribes within reservation boundaries.

### **H.R. 3293 (Rep. Duncan), “Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act”**

Deploying broadband technologies and closing the digital divide for rural and Tribal communities means installing a significant portion of communications infrastructure on federal land.<sup>23</sup> The Department of the Interior (DOI), through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), process the majority of applications and communications use authorizations to install communications facilities on federal property.<sup>24</sup> Communications use authorizations are requests for easements, rights-of-way, leases, or other authorizations “to locate or modify a transmitting device, support structure, or other communications facility” on public lands.<sup>25</sup> Although BLM and USFS face a statutory requirement to grant or deny these applications within 270 days, this deadline is often missed.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently reported roughly half of the communications use applications submitted to BLM and USFS from fiscal years 2018 to 2022 either exceeded the 270-day deadline or lacked data sufficient to reveal whether the deadline had been met.<sup>27</sup> As a result, broadband developers report that fiber deployment in rural areas takes an average of five to ten years to complete.<sup>28</sup> These regulatory hurdles raise the costs of broadband development plans and bring delay and uncertainty to them, dissuading many would-be providers from even applying in the first place.<sup>29</sup> Without lowering these obstacles, the “digital divide” and its detrimental consequences will persist.

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<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Minot Daily News, “Legislation would improve access to state-owned minerals”,

<https://www.minotdailynews.com/news/local-news/2021/11/legislation-would-improve-access-to-state-owned-minerals/>.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Heringer, North Dakota Commissioner of University and School Lands, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, July 12, 2023, <https://www.energy.senate.gov/services/files/406A4831-28DD-4778-951F-F9C4314254F4>.

<sup>23</sup> “Special Uses—Communications Uses,” U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service,

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/special-uses/communications-uses>. Streamlining Federal Siting Working Group Final Report, FCC Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee, January 24, 2018, <https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/bdac-federalsiting-01232018.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> “Broadband Deployment: Agencies Should Take Steps to Better Meet Deadline for Processing Permits,” U.S. Government Accountability Office, April 10, 2024, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-106157#>.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> “Broadband Deployment: Agencies Should Take Steps to Better Meet Deadline for Processing Permits,” U.S. Government Accountability Office, April 10, 2024, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-106157#>.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> Linda Hardesty, “Whoa – the fiber permitting process could crush digital divide dreams,” Fierce Network, December 9, 2021, <https://www.fierce-network.com/broadband/whoa-fiber-permitting-process-could-crush-digital-divide-dreams>.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

H.R. 3293 is one of several Republican-led solutions that would expedite broadband deployment on federal lands.<sup>30</sup> The legislation would require the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information (Assistant Secretary), in their capacity as head of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, to create an interagency “strike force” that would assist BLM and USFS in reviewing requests for communications use authorizations. Crucially, the bill would require the two agencies to prioritize—at each organizational unit—their review of such requests. The five-member strike force would consist of the Assistant Secretary, the heads of BLM and USFS, and a designee of each the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior, respectively. Once established, the strike force would periodically convene to ensure BLM and USFS are prioritizing the review of requests for communications use authorizations, establish “objective and reasonable” goals for those reviews, and hold the agencies accountable for meeting such goals. H.R. 3293 is co-led by Representative Angie Craig (D-MN-02).

**[H.R. 6210 \(Rep. Wexton\), To designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes.](#)**

According to Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, the “Greatest American of the Twentieth Century” was the son of a coal merchant and a native of Uniontown, Pennsylvania.<sup>31</sup> Born in 1880, George C. Marshall would become one of World War II’s most important military figures and the architect of the famous Marshall Plan that followed.<sup>32</sup> During some of the most influential periods of his career, General Marshall called the Dodona Manor and its eight-acre grounds in Leesburg, Virginia home.<sup>33</sup> While a resident at Dodona Manor from 1941 to 1959, Marshall held prestigious titles, including Chief of Staff of the Army, Special Envoy to China, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, President of the American Red Cross, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>34</sup> Following General Marshall’s death in 1959, his wife gave the home to her oldest daughter, Molly, who later sold the property to the George C. Marshall Home Preservation Fund.<sup>35</sup> Today, the home serves as a modern-day time capsule, with over 90 percent of the objects found in the home belonging to George and Katherine Marshall.<sup>36</sup>

In 1996, NPS designated the home as a National Historic Landmark. Then, a 10-year, \$7-million restoration of the home culminated in the opening of the Manor to the public as a museum on Veterans Day 2005.<sup>37</sup> More recently, a push to designate the Manor as an affiliated area of the

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<sup>30</sup> “E&C Advances Seven Bills to Close the Digital Divide and Improve American Leadership in Wireless Communications,” U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, May 24, 2023, <https://energycommerce.house.gov/posts/e-and-c-advances-seven-bills-to-close-the-digital-divide-and-improve-american-leadership-in-wireless-communications>.

<sup>31</sup> Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense, “George C. Marshall”, <https://history.defense.gov/Multimedia/Biographies/Article-View/Article/571266/george-c-marshall/#:~:text=The%20son%20of%20a%20coal,United%20States%20Army%20in%201902>.

<sup>32</sup> George C. Marshall International Center, “George C. Marshall’s Dodona Manor”, <https://www.georgemarshall.org/dodona-manor>.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> Visit Loudon, “George C. Marshall’s Dodona Manor”, <https://www.visitloudoun.org/listing/george-c-marshalls-dodona-manor/13/>.

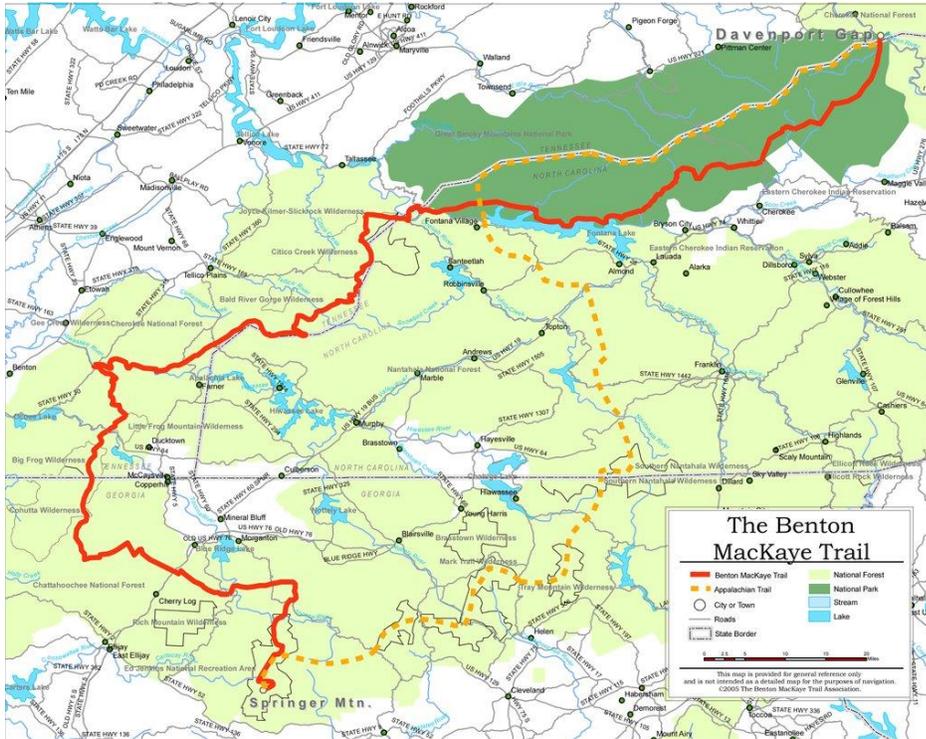
<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

National Park System gained momentum when NPS concluded the Manor met all three requirements for designation.<sup>38</sup> H.R. 6210 would designate the George C. Marshall House as an affiliated area of the National Park System. In doing so, the site would be able to receive technical assistance and limited financial aid from NPS. The home would not be managed or administered by the NPS and would not be added to the federal estate.<sup>39</sup>

**H.R. 8403 (Rep. Cohen), “Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2024”**



The Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), named after the American forester who famously envisioned the Appalachian Trail, is a non-motorized, backcountry trail that extends more than 280 miles across Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina.<sup>40</sup> The BMT connects with both the Pinhoti Trail and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.<sup>41</sup>

Beginning in northern Georgia at Springer Mountain, the BMT crosses several national forests,

Source: Benton MacKaye Trail Association, no date.

connects with and crosses the Appalachian Trail in the Great Smokey Mountains National Park, and terminates at the eastern part of the Park.<sup>42</sup> Approximately 95 percent of the BMT is on land managed by either USFS or NPS.<sup>43</sup> H.R. 8403 would amend the National Trails System Act to authorize a study of the feasibility of designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a National Scenic

<sup>38</sup> National Park Service, “General George C. Marshall House: Reconnaissance Survey”, April 2022, <https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/loudounnow.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/5/76/57690580-daef-11ed-9aa3-eba5493c9199/643996ffa5253.pdf.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> LoudounNow, “Marshall’s Leesburg Home Moves Toward Park Service Affiliation”, [https://www.loudounnow.com/news/leesburg/marshall-s-leesburg-home-moves-toward-park-service-affiliation/article\\_5d379f02-daf5-11ed-86f7-57f5656d18a2.html](https://www.loudounnow.com/news/leesburg/marshall-s-leesburg-home-moves-toward-park-service-affiliation/article_5d379f02-daf5-11ed-86f7-57f5656d18a2.html).

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Forest Service, “Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia”, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/conf/recreation/hiking/recarea/?recid=64869&actid=50>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> Peculiar Work, “Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Bill Filed in Congress”, Larry Anderson, May 27, 2022, <https://peculiarwork.net/blog/benton-mackaye-national-scenic-trail-bill-filed-in-congress/>

<sup>43</sup> Smoky Mountain News, “Bill seeks National Scenic Trail status for Benton MacKaye Trail”, June 7, 2023, <https://smokymountainnews.com/outdoors/item/35768-bill-seeks-national-scenic-trail-status-for-benton-mackaye-trail>

Trail.<sup>44</sup> To date, 11 National Scenic Trails have been designated across the country.<sup>45</sup> These routes generally extend 100 miles or more, are primarily non-motorized, and offer outstanding recreation opportunities.<sup>46</sup>

### **H.R. 8603 (Rep. Collins), “Recreation and Outdoor Access Membership (ROAM) Act”**

The demand for outdoor recreation opportunities and access continues to rise across our national parks and public lands. In 2023, visitation to our national parks surpassed 325 million people, marking the fourth consecutive year of visitation growth since the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>47</sup> National parks serve as an economic lifeline to many gateway communities nationwide, particularly in rural areas with limited economic activity.<sup>48</sup> However, the recent overcrowding of popular national parks threatens to diminish visitor experiences and puts an unsustainable strain on park infrastructure. To address this problem, many local communities have sought to disperse visitation to lesser-known, well-maintained state parks.

H.R. 8603, the Recreation and Outdoor Access Membership (ROAM) Act, creates a pilot program that allows NPS to issue a single annual pass covering entry into federal and state parks in one or more states in the Southeastern region. This pilot aims to increase visitation to state parks, improve customer service, and reduce overcrowding at national parks. H.R. 8603 contains provisions ensuring that neither the federal government nor state parks would lose any revenue due to combining entrance fees into one pass. Similar proposals have been included in the EXPLORE Act, which would authorize federal recreation passes and state recreation passes to be sold in the same transaction.<sup>49</sup>

## **IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & SECTION-BY-SECTION**

### **H.R. \_\_\_\_\_ (Rep. Tiffany), “Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve Act”**

#### **Section 2. Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve.**

- Redesignates the “Apostle Islands National Lakeshore” as the “Apostle Islands National Park” and “Sand Island National Preserve,” based on a map on file with NPS.
- Specifies nothing in the legislation creates a protective perimeter or buffer around the boundary of Ashland Harbor Breakwater Light.
- Standardizes the management of hunting and trapping in accordance with other National Parks within the Apostle Islands National Park. Allows hunting and trapping to continue on Sand Island National Preserve as those activities have been permitted. Clarifies fishing will continue in the Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve. Specifies nothing in the bill prohibits hunting, fishing, or trapping on private land.
- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to include signage at the Bayfield Headquarters Visitor Center and the Little Sand Bay Visitor Center regarding the region's history,

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<sup>44</sup> 16 USC Ch. 27.

<sup>45</sup> National Park Service, “National Scenic Trails”, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/national-scenic-trails.htm>.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> National Park Service, “Visitation Numbers”, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/visitation-numbers.htm>.

<sup>48</sup> National Park Service, “Visitor Spending Effects – Economic Contributions of National Park Visitor Spending”, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> Sec. 321; <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/6492/text>.

including information about the Ojibwe Tribes, early European settlers, fur trade, logging, stone quarries, lighthouses, and commercial fishing.

### **H.R. 2405 (Rep. Armstrong), “North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act of 2023”**

#### **Section 4. Relinquishment and Selection; Conveyance.**

- Allows the State of North Dakota to relinquish state land grant parcels located wholly or partially within the boundaries of a Tribal Reservation in exchange for one or more parcels of unappropriated Federal land of equal value.
- Requires the Secretary of the Interior to approve or reject land selections, in whole or in part, within 90 days of selection. Requires the Secretary to initiate necessary conveyance actions within 60 days of approval of a state selection.
- Mandates the State of North Dakota concurrently convey title, free of any financial claims, liabilities, or other financial encumbrances, to the Secretary.
- Stipulates that each party to which land is conveyed will succeed to the rights and obligations of the conveying party concerning any lease, right-of-way, permit, or other valid existing right to which the land is subject.
- Clarifies state land grant parcels relinquished by the state under this bill are to, upon request from the applicable Indian Tribe, be taken into trust by the Secretary for the benefit of the Indian Tribe.
- Requires consultation with applicable Indian Tribes.
- Specifies conditions for selecting parcels with significant mineral resources and provides for fair treatment of existing mining claims.

#### **Section 5. Valuation.**

- Stipulates all transactions must be of substantially equal value and are subject to appraisals under the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions and the Uniform Standards for Professional Appraisal Practice.
- Allows for cash equalization payments by either the Secretary or the state. Cash equalization payments may not exceed 25 percent of the value of the unappropriated Federal land. Allows for a ledger account to equalize the value of certain parcels.
- Allows for mass appraisals of low-value parcels of land.

#### **Section 6. Miscellaneous.**

- States that any land or minerals conveyed under this bill are subject to applicable Federal, state and Tribal laws.
- Clarifies that nothing in the bill affects any treaty-reserved right or other right of any Indian Tribe. Further clarifies that nothing in the bill affects land or minerals held in trust by the United States, or any individual Tribal allotment.
- Contains provisions related to the conveyance of hazardous materials and certification requirements for the Federal government and states.
- Specifies that Federal and state grazing permits shall be respected and permitted to continue for the remainder of the existing term.

### **Section 7. Savings Clause.**

- Specifies nothing in the legislation applies to or impacts the ownership of any land or mineral resources.

### **[H.R. 3293 \(Rep. Duncan\), “Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act”](#)**

#### **Section 2. Establishment of Interagency Strike Force.**

- Directs the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to establish, not later than 180 days after the bill’s enactment, an interagency strike force to ensure BLM and USFS prioritize reviewing requests for communications use authorizations.
- Specifies the strike force shall consist of the Assistant Secretary, the heads of the BLM and USFS, and separate designees of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior, respectively.
- Tasks the strike force to make periodic calls to ensure BLM and USFS prioritize reviewing requests for communications use authorizations, establishing objective and reasonable goals for those reviews, and holding the agencies accountable for meeting such goals.
- Requires the Assistant Secretary to submit to Congress, not later than 270 days after the bill’s enactment, a report on the effectiveness of the strike force in ensuring BLM and USFS prioritize the review of requests for communications use authorizations.

### **[H.R. 6210 \(Rep. Wexton\), To designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes.](#)**

#### **Section 1. Establishment of the General George C. Marshall House as an Affiliated Area.**

- Establishes the General George C. Marshall House as an affiliated area of the National Park System.
- Clarifies that the George C. Marshall International Center will manage the site. Allows the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical assistance and enter into cooperative agreements with the George C. Marshall International Center.
- Clarifies that nothing in the legislation allows the Secretary to acquire land or assume financial responsibility for the site.
- Requires the Secretary, in consultation with the George C. Marshall International Center, to complete a management plan for the site within three years of the bill’s enactment.

### **[H.R. 8403 \(Rep. Cohen\), “Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2024”](#)**

#### **Section 3. Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study**

- Amends the National Trails System Act to authorize a study of the feasibility of designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a National Scenic Trail within one year of the bill’s enactment.

## [H.R. 8603 \(Rep. Collins\), “Recreation and Outdoor Access Membership \(ROAM\) Act”](#)

### **Section 2. Pilot Program for State and National Passes.**

- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to implement a pilot program to issue a pass that allows entry into parks and other outdoor recreation areas under the jurisdiction of one or more Federal land management agencies and one or more state land management agencies in the National Park Service’s Southeastern region.
- Requires the Federal and state partners to mutually agree on the price of the multi-entity pass, its benefits, and its recipients.
- Clarifies the Secretary or the relevant state cannot enter into an agreement that would reduce net revenue for entry into the same parks and outdoor recreation areas.
- Sunsets the pilot four years after the date on which the first partnership agreement to issue joint passes is signed.
- Requires the Secretary to submit a report to Congress discussing the effectiveness of the program and a recommendation as to whether the program should be expanded permanently nationwide.

### **V. COST**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated H.R. 3293 would not affect direct spending or revenues.<sup>50</sup> None of the other bills on the agenda have received a formal cost estimate from CBO.

### **VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION**

BLM previously testified on the Senate companion to the “North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act” that the agency “supports the Sponsor’s goal of addressing the patchwork of inholdings within existing reservation boundaries.”<sup>51</sup> BLM further stated its desire to “work with the Sponsor to clarify the intent of several of the bill’s provisions and the mechanisms outlined in the bill for effectuating the proposed conveyances.”<sup>52</sup> NPS previously testified in support of the Senate companion to H.R. 6210.<sup>53</sup> The administration's position on the remaining legislation is unknown at this time.

### **VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)**

#### [H.R. 8403](#)

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<sup>50</sup> “H.R. 3293, Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Ac,” Congressional Budget Office, July 31, 2023, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2023-07/hr3293.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> Statement of Thomas Heinlein before Senate Committee on Energy and Mineral Resources on S. 1088, July 12, 2023, <https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2023-07/07.12.23%20SENR%20Hearing%20BLM%20Testimony.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

<sup>53</sup> Statement of Michael A. Caldwell, Associate Direct, Park Planning, Facilities and Lands, National Parks Service, before Senate Committee on Energy and Mineral Resources on S. 3195, May 15, 2024, <https://www.energy.senate.gov/services/files/B231DA8A-B0C6-4E3D-8535-ABBE2207FD75>.