

110TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 5891

To adjust the boundary of Big Thicket National Preserve in Texas and provide for three ecotourism projects within the preserve, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 24, 2008

Mr. BRADY of Texas introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

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## A BILL

To adjust the boundary of Big Thicket National Preserve in Texas and provide for three ecotourism projects within the preserve, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds as follows:

5 (1) The Big Thicket National Preserve, located  
6 in East Texas, was established by Congress in 1974  
7 as the nation's first Preserve.

8 (2) The Big Thicket, known as the "biological  
9 crossroads of North America," is home to species

1 native of the Gulf Coastal Plains, Eastern Forests,  
2 and the Central Plains, including the bald eagle, the  
3 peregrine falcon, and whooping crane, which make  
4 their home among rivers, baldcypress swamps, pine  
5 savannahs, sandhills, and tall forests.

6 (3) In 1993, Congress approved an expansion  
7 of the authorized boundary of the Big Thicket to in-  
8 corporate more biological diversity.

9 (4) In 2007, major owners of timberland in the  
10 region began divesting property, some of which was  
11 ultimately purchased by the National Park Service  
12 for Big Thicket.

13 (5) Because of these new additions, the Big  
14 Thicket has reached its Congressionally authorized  
15 boundary of 97,000 acres.

16 **SEC. 2. BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.**

17 The first section of the Act titled “An Act to author-  
18 ize the establishment of the Big Thicket National Preserve  
19 in the State of Texas, and for other purposes” (16 U.S.C.  
20 698), is amended—

21 (1) by redesignating subsections (c), (d), and  
22 (e) as subsections (d), (e), and (f), respectively;

23 (2) by inserting after subsection (b) the fol-  
24 lowing:

1       “(c) ADDITIONAL LANDS.—The boundary of the pre-  
2 serve may also include any lands acquired from willing  
3 sellers totaling not more than 100,000 acres of land near  
4 the Preserve as generally depicted on the map titled ‘Big  
5 Thicket National Preserve Proposed Boundary Expans-  
6 sion’, numbered 175/80, 017A, and dated April 2008. The  
7 map shall be on file and available for inspection in the  
8 appropriate offices of the National Park Service.”;

9               (3) in subsection (d) (as redesignated by para-  
10 graph (1) above)—

11                       (A) by striking “owner: Provided further”  
12 and all that follows through “exchange:” and  
13 inserting a colon; and

14                       (B) by striking “After notifying” through  
15 the end of that sentence and inserting “The  
16 Secretary may, if the Secretary considers such  
17 that lands would make a significant contribu-  
18 tion to the purposes for which the preserve was  
19 created, accept title to any lands, or interests in  
20 lands, located outside of the boundaries of the  
21 preserve, as established by subsections (b) and  
22 (c), which the State of Texas or its political  
23 subdivisions may acquire and offer to donate to  
24 the United States or which any private person,  
25 organization, or public or private corporation

1           may offer to donate to the United States. The  
2           Secretary may administer such lands as a part  
3           of the preserve after publishing notice to that  
4           effect in the Federal Register.”; and

5           (4) by adding at the end the following:

6           “(g) PRIVATE LANDOWNER WITHDRAWAL.—Any  
7           owner of private property included within the boundaries  
8           of the preserve shall have their property immediately re-  
9           moved from the boundary by submitting a written request  
10          for such withdrawal to the Secretary.”.

11 **SEC. 3. CANOPY WALKS, ELEVATED BOARDWALKS, AND AS-**  
12 **SOCIATED INTERPRETATION.**

13          The Secretary of the Interior shall construct, operate,  
14          and maintain a system of canopy walks, elevated board-  
15          walks, and associated interpretation that connect visitors  
16          with the ecological diversity of Big Thicket National Pre-  
17          serve. In developing the system, the Secretary may give  
18          special consideration to areas in Big Thicket National Pre-  
19          serve that are inaccessible to most visitors due to swamp,  
20          high vegetation, or fragile ecology.

21 **SEC. 4. BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE INTERPRETIVE**  
22 **CENTER.**

23          The Secretary of the Interior shall construct, operate,  
24          and maintain a Big Thicket National Preserve interpretive  
25          center that is—

1 (1) easily accessible to a heavily traveled area  
2 (such as Beaumont, Texas, near Interstate 10); and

3 (2) serves as an educational opportunity for  
4 children and young adults to learn more about Big  
5 Thicket National Preserve, wildlife, and the environ-  
6 ment, and the importance of protecting these re-  
7 sources.

8 **SEC. 5. CANOE AND KAYAKING TRAILS.**

9 The Secretary of the Interior shall construct, operate,  
10 and maintain canoe and kayaking trails in Big Thicket  
11 National Preserve that—

12 (1) are guided by Global Positioning System  
13 waypoints; and

14 (2) include platforms off the water for kayaks  
15 and canoes to be docked safely.

16 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

17 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-  
18 retary of the Interior such sums as are necessary to carry  
19 out this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

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