

# THE SAN GABRIEL WATERSHED RESTORATION ACT

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CHU. I rise today to introduce the San Gabriel Watershed Restoration Act of 2013. This bill could revitalize a California urban river by directing the Army Corps of Engineers to prepare a study analyzing the current state of the San Gabriel River Watershed and how it can be transformed into a destination for Los Angeles County.

We have such incredible resources right in our backyard in the San Gabriel Valley, and at the heart is the San Gabriel River. That is why we must do all that we can to revitalize and protect this space.

My communities are desperate for more open space to run, play, and explore. The L.A. area is one of the most park poor in the country. The San Gabriel River, only steps from our homes, used to be a green, lush paradise. The local Gabriolino tribespeople used to canoe down its waters out to the sea, but today, in its current state, it feels more like an abandoned waterway than the majestic river it once was. There are so few places for families to sit and enjoy or to swim in its cool waters on unbearably hot summer days in the urban valley cities.

The San Gabriel River also performs essential flood protection, drinking water recharge, and storm water conservation functions. But it is inaccessible to local residents for recreation and lacks many natural and riparian ecosystems. Additional provisions for flood control and water quality control are also sorely needed.

Increasingly, residents have expressed the desire to rediscover the river and offer more of its benefits to all the communities along its route. That's why I introduced this bill in the 111th Congress to study how we can improve the river and expand its use, and that is why I'm introducing this bill again.

The study created in this bill would look at the best ways to revitalize the watershed, focusing on ecosystem restoration, outdoor recreation enhancements, and ways to conserve rainwater and keep our water clean. This vital project is a first step—that is long overdue—toward creating more outdoor space within the highly urbanized watershed communities so that people can enjoy this beautiful resource in a safe and sustainable way.

A similar study and demonstration project were critical steps in the effort to revitalize the Los Angeles River, and it was so successful that now there are regular kayaking trips on the L.A. River, a place many thought of as only a concrete wasteland. People can actually enjoy this little bit of nature again. This is a powerful testament to the potential and growing success of river revitalization efforts.

My communities have a vision: to create an Emerald Necklace, a 17-mile loop of multi-benefit parks connecting 10 cities along the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel Rivers. This bill is a critical part of realizing this dream, and I call on my colleagues in Congress to support this bill and help make their vision a reality for generations to come.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, as we come to the House floor this morning, many communities across the West suffer from severe wildfires, and they're having a more devastating impact due to extreme drought conditions this year. In my home State of New Mexico, firefighters have bravely worked to battle a number of blazes, and I extend my sincerest thanks for their tireless efforts.

With global climate change contributing to drier and hotter summers and more intense fire seasons, it is critical that we take steps to address the root causes of climate change before it gets too late. And while we should focus on the steps we must take to reduce greenhouse gases and encourage energy conservation, we must also ensure that we're preparing for the drought conditions that will continue to impact our communities in the years to come. The National Integrated Drought Information System is an important tool in this effort. This program collects and consolidates drought-related data and information. It operates regional drought early warning system pilot projects across the country.

Authorization for this program is currently scheduled to end this year. That is why I'm working in a bipartisan effort to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System for another 4 years. This will enable the Federal Government to further develop regional drought early warning systems and identify research, monitoring, and forecasting needs that can help farmers and firefighters alike. Because whether it's growing crops or raising livestock or battling wildfires in the West, drought conditions in the coming years will continue to pose challenges for our communities, and we will need to do all we can to assist those whose lives and livelihoods are impacted by climate change.

Mr. Speaker, today I'm also offering an amendment to be able to provide grant authorization to many small, predominantly Hispanic communities across northern New Mexico that are in these areas where these waterways have been carved through our mountains, through our watersheds to provide opportunity to small farmers, rural communities all across New Mexico called acequias.

For many years, local farmers in New Mexico have been asking for an amendment that would allow acequia and community ditch associations to access EQIP funds. An acequia is a centuries-old irrigation structure that is still in use today, providing opportunities for many private land owners all across New Mexico and southern Colorado.

The board of private land owners, also called an acequia and community ditch association, is in charge of administering maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure which often requires work on sections of the ditch of the acequia on private land. These small community ditch associations do not have the authority to levy taxes. That's why I'm asking for Members to please consider and offer your support on this amendment today.

Members who are watching and tuning in to C-SPAN this morning, as well as offices, please take a look at this amendment. We need your help in New Mexico, and our farmers would certainly appreciate the kind support of Members of Congress.

So thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. We have a lot of work to do. Let's make sure we can get this done on behalf of people who are struggling and working all across America today.

## WEST VIRGINIA'S 150TH BIRTHDAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues from the State of West Virginia in celebrating our State's 150th birthday tomorrow. We invite the rest of the Nation to join in our revelry and reflection.

Ours is a proud history of doing our part, and then some, in service to this great Nation of ours. West Virginia was born of war, and West Virginians understand full well the price of service and sacrifice to defend our shores. In times of war, the Mountain State's sons and daughters have answered their country's call faithfully, honorably, and nobly. And in times of peace, we have continued to serve our Nation from our mountains and our hollows.

Geologists tell us our ancient mountains' sharp peaks, in ages long past, were rounded and smoothed through the forces of nature over the eons of time. The result satisfies the soul.

Thanks to the U.S. Postal Service, the world can get a glimpse of our majestic mountains on a new stamp commemorating our 150 years. Based on a photograph taken in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, that stamp stands as a testament that our bragging about being "Almost Heaven" is every inch legitimate.

Those same mountains, Mr. Speaker, have honed and hewn a people for whom the phrase "Mountaineers are always free" is more than a State motto; it is a way of life.