H. R. 3961

To amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate segments of the Kissimmee River and its tributaries in the State of Florida for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 4, 2017

Mr. SOTO introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate segments of the Kissimmee River and its tributaries in the State of Florida for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, 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. SHORT TITLE.

4 This Act may be cited as the “Kissimmee River Wild
5 and Scenic River Study Act of 2017”.

6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

7 Congress finds the following:
(1) The Kissimmee River has undergone, over the course of two decades, the largest river restoration effort in the world.

(2) Extending approximately 105 miles from Orlando to Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee River forms the headwaters of Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades and serves as a vital component of ecosystem restoration in South Florida as a whole.

(3) The Kissimmee River Restoration Project has significantly improved approximately 63,000 acres of wetlands within the Kissimmee River watershed and reestablished an environment suitable for fish, wildlife, and the wetland plants that existed prior to the Kissimmee River’s channelization in the 1960s.

(4) The Kissimmee River Restoration Project is expected to be completed in 2020, at which point it is expected to reestablish historic hydrologic conditions, recreate historic river and floodplain connectivity, recreate the historic mosaic of wetland plant communities, and restore historic biological diversity and functionality.

(5) After decades of restoration efforts and the expenditure of nearly a billion dollars, upon completion of the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, a
study should be conducted to determine the eligibility of including the fully restored Kissimmee River into the National Wild and Scenic River program to preserve the fully restored free-flowing condition and immediate environment of the river for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

(6) Inclusion of the Kissimmee River into the National Wild and Scenic River program would be a fitting tribute to the hard work of the Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District’s restoration work.

SEC. 3. DESIGNATION FOR STUDY.

(a) Designation for Potential Addition.—Section 5(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“____) Kissimmee River, Florida.—The segment from the southern shore of Lake Kissimmee to its confluence with Lake Okeechobee.”.

(b) Study.—Section 5(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“____) Kissimmee River, Florida.—

“(A) In General.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available to carry out this paragraph, the Secretary
of the Interior shall complete a study of the Kissimmee River, as described in subsection (a)(____), and submit a report describing the results of such study to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate.

“(B) REPORT REQUIREMENTS.—The report required under subparagraph (A) shall—

“(i) include a discussion of the effect of the designation of the segment to be studied under subsection (a)(____) on—

“(I) existing commercial and recreational activities, such as cattle ranching, dairy production, hunting, fishing, trapping, recreational shooting, motor boat use, or bridge construction;

“(II) the authorization, construction, operation, maintenance, or improvement of energy production and transmission infrastructure; and

“(III) the authority of State and local governments to manage the ac-
tivities described in subclauses (I) and (II); and

“(ii) identify—

“(I) all authorities that will authorize or require the Secretary of the Interior to influence local land use decisions (such as zoning) or place restrictions on non-Federal land if the area studied under subsection (a)(____) is designated under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act;

“(II) all authorities that the Secretary of the Interior may use to condemn property if the area studied under subsection (a)(____) is designated under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act; and

“(III) all private property located in the area to be studied under subsection (a)(____).

“(C) NONINTERFERENCE.—This study shall not interfere with the Kissimmee River Restoration Project authorized under section