

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# 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.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 4, 2017

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

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## 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           (1) The Kissimmee River has undergone, over  
2 the course of two decades, the largest river restora-  
3 tion effort in the world.

4           (2) Extending approximately 105 miles from  
5 Orlando to Lake Okeechobee, the Kissimmee River  
6 forms the headwaters of Lake Okeechobee and the  
7 Everglades and serves as a vital component of eco-  
8 system restoration in South Florida as a whole.

9           (3) The Kissimmee River Restoration Project  
10 has significantly improved approximately 63,000  
11 acres of wetlands within the Kissimmee River water-  
12 shed and reestablished an environment suitable for  
13 fish, wildlife, and the wetland plants that existed  
14 prior to the Kissimmee River's channelization in the  
15 1960s.

16           (4) The Kissimmee River Restoration Project is  
17 expected to be completed in 2020, at which point it  
18 is expected to reestablish historic hydrologic condi-  
19 tions, recreate historic river and floodplain connecti-  
20 vity, recreate the historic mosaic of wetland plant  
21 communities, and restore historic biological diversity  
22 and functionality.

23           (5) After decades of restoration efforts and the  
24 expenditure of nearly a billion dollars, upon comple-  
25 tion of the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, a

1 study should be conducted to determine the eligi-  
 2 bility of including the fully restored Kissimmee River  
 3 into the National Wild and Scenic River program to  
 4 preserve the fully restored free-flowing condition and  
 5 immediate environment of the river for the benefit  
 6 and enjoyment of present and future generations.

7 (6) Inclusion of the Kissimmee River into the  
 8 National Wild and Scenic River program would be a  
 9 fitting tribute to the hard work of the Army Corps  
 10 of Engineers and the South Florida Water Manage-  
 11 ment District's restoration work.

12 **SEC. 3. DESIGNATION FOR STUDY.**

13 (a) DESIGNATION FOR POTENTIAL ADDITION.—Sec-  
 14 tion 5(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C.  
 15 1276(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

16 “(\_\_\_\_) KISSIMMEE RIVER, FLORIDA.—The  
 17 segment from the southern shore of Lake Kissimmee  
 18 to its confluence with Lake Okeechobee.”

19 (b) STUDY.—Section 5(b) of the Wild and Scenic Riv-  
 20 ers Act (16 U.S.C. 1276(b)) is amended by adding at the  
 21 end the following:

22 “(\_\_\_\_) KISSIMMEE RIVER, FLORIDA.—

23 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years  
 24 after the date on which funds are made avail-  
 25 able to carry out this paragraph, the Secretary

1 of the Interior shall complete a study of the  
2 Kissimmee River, as described in subsection  
3 (a)(\_\_\_\_), and submit a report describing the  
4 results of such study to the Committee on Nat-  
5 ural Resources of the House of Representatives  
6 and the Committee on Energy and Natural Re-  
7 sources of the Senate.

8 “(B) REPORT REQUIREMENTS.—The re-  
9 port required under subparagraph (A) shall—

10 “(i) include a discussion of the effect  
11 of the designation of the segment to be  
12 studied under subsection (a)(\_\_\_\_) on—

13 “(I) existing commercial and rec-  
14 reational activities, such as cattle  
15 ranching, dairy production, hunting,  
16 fishing, trapping, recreational shoot-  
17 ing, motor boat use, or bridge con-  
18 struction;

19 “(II) the authorization, construc-  
20 tion, operation, maintenance, or im-  
21 provement of energy production and  
22 transmission infrastructure; and

23 “(III) the authority of State and  
24 local governments to manage the ac-

1 activities described in subclauses (I) and  
2 (II); and

3 “(ii) identify—

4 “(I) all authorities that will au-  
5 thorize or require the Secretary of the  
6 Interior to influence local land use de-  
7 cisions (such as zoning) or place re-  
8 strictions on non-Federal land if the  
9 area studied under subsection  
10 (a)(\_\_\_\_) is designated under the  
11 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act;

12 “(II) all authorities that the Sec-  
13 retary of the Interior may use to con-  
14 demn property if the area studied  
15 under subsection (a)(\_\_\_\_) is des-  
16 ignated under the Wild and Scenic  
17 Rivers Act; and

18 “(III) all private property located  
19 in the area to be studied under sub-  
20 section (a)(\_\_\_\_).

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

1           101(8) of the Water Resources Development  
2           Act of 1992 (Public Law 102–580).”.

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