

HR 5891 IH

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.

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

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.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds as follows:

- (1) The **Big Thicket National Preserve** , located in East Texas, was established by Congress in 1974 as the nation's first **Preserve** .
- (2) The **Big Thicket** , known as the 'biological crossroads of North America,' is home to species native of the Gulf Coastal Plains, Eastern Forests, and the Central Plains, including the bald eagle, the peregrine falcon, and whooping crane, which make their home among rivers, baldcypress swamps, pine savannahs, sandhills, and tall forests.
- (3) In 1993, Congress approved an expansion of the authorized boundary of the **Big Thicket** to incorporate more biological diversity.
- (4) In 2007, major owners of timberland in the region began divesting property, some of which was ultimately purchased by the **National** Park Service for **Big Thicket** .
- (5) Because of these new additions, the **Big Thicket** has reached its Congressionally authorized boundary of 97,000 acres.

SEC. 2. BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT.

The first section of the Act titled 'An Act to authorize the establishment of the **Big Thicket National Preserve** in the State of Texas, and for other purposes' (16 U.S.C. 698), is amended--

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

(2) by inserting after subsection (b) the following:

(c) Additional Lands- The boundary of the **preserve** may also include any lands acquired from willing sellers totaling not more than 100,000 acres of land near the **Preserve** as generally depicted on the map titled '**Big Thicket National Preserve** Proposed Boundary Expansion', numbered 175/80, 017A, and dated April 2008. The map shall be on file and available for inspection in the appropriate offices of the **National** Park Service.';

(3) in subsection (d) (as redesignated by paragraph (1) above)-

(A) by striking 'owner: Provided further' and all that follows through 'exchange:' and inserting a colon; and
(B) by striking 'After notifying' through the end of that sentence and inserting 'The Secretary may, if the Secretary considers such that lands would make a significant contribution to the purposes for which the **preserve** was created, accept title to any lands, or interests in lands, located outside of the boundaries of the **preserve**, as established by subsections (b) and (c), which the State of Texas or its political subdivisions may acquire and offer to donate to the United States or which any private person, organization, or public or private corporation may offer to donate to the United States. The Secretary may administer such lands as a part of the **preserve** after publishing notice to that effect in the Federal Register.'; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

(g) Private Landowner Withdrawal- Any owner of private property included within the boundaries of the **preserve** shall have their property immediately removed from the boundary by submitting a written request for such withdrawal to the Secretary.'.

SEC. 3. CANOPY WALKS, ELEVATED BOARDWALKS, AND ASSOCIATED INTERPRETATION.

The Secretary of the Interior shall construct, operate, and maintain a system of canopy walks, elevated boardwalks, and associated interpretation that connect visitors with the ecological diversity of **Big Thicket National Preserve**. In developing the system, the Secretary may give special consideration to areas in **Big Thicket National Preserve** that are inaccessible to most visitors due to swamp, high vegetation, or fragile ecology.

SEC. 4. BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE INTERPRETIVE CENTER.

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

- (1) easily accessible to a heavily traveled area (such as Beaumont, Texas, near Interstate 10); and
- (2) serves as an educational opportunity for children and young adults to learn more about Big Thicket National Preserve , wildlife, and the environment, and the importance of protecting these resources.

SEC. 5. CANOE AND KAYAKING TRAILS.

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

- (1) are guided by Global Positioning System waypoints; and
- (2) include platforms off the water for kayaks and canoes to be docked safely.

SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act and the amendments made by this Act.