

SIKES ACT REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2003

—  
MAY 14, 2003.—Ordered to be printed  
—

Mr. POMBO, from the Committee on Resources,  
submitted the following

R E P O R T

together with

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

[To accompany H.R. 1497]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 1497) to reauthorize title I of the Sikes Act, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with amendments and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendments are as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “Sikes Act Reauthorization Act of 2003”.

**SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF TITLE I OF SIKES ACT.**

Section 108 of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670f) is amended by striking “fiscal years 1998 through 2003” each place it appears and inserting “fiscal years 2004 through 2008”.

**SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

(1) The Department of Defense maintains over 25,000,000 acres of valuable fish and wildlife habitat on approximately 400 military installations nationwide.

(2) These lands contain a wealth of plant and animal life, vital wetlands for migratory birds, and nearly 300 federally listed threatened species and endangered species.

(3) Increasingly, land surrounding military bases are being developed with residential and commercial infrastructure that fragments fish and wildlife habitat and decreases its ability to support a diversity of species.

(4) Comprehensive conservation plans, such as integrated natural resource management plans under the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670 et seq.), can ensure that these ecosystem values can be protected and enhanced while allowing these lands to meet the needs of military operations.

(5) Section 107 of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670e–2) requires sufficient numbers of professionally trained natural resources management personnel and natural resources law enforcement personnel to be available and assigned responsibility to perform tasks necessary to carry out title I of the Sikes Act, including the preparation and implementation of integrated natural resource management plans.

(6) Managerial and policymaking functions performed by Department of Defense on-site professionally trained natural resource management personnel on military installations are appropriate governmental functions.

(7) Professionally trained civilian biologists in permanent Federal Government career managerial positions are essential to oversee fish and wildlife and natural resource conservation programs are essential to the conservation of wildlife species on military land.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Defense should take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that section 107 of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670e–2) is fully implemented consistent with the findings made in subsection (a).

**SEC. 4. ADVANCE NOTICE AND CONSULTATION REGARDING INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS.**

Section 101(a)(2) of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a(a)(2)) is amended—

(1) by inserting “(A)” before “The Secretary”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(B)(i) The Secretary of a military department shall advise the Secretary of the Interior and the head of the appropriate State fish and wildlife agency of the intent of the Secretary of the military department to prepare or revise an integrated natural resources management plan under this subsection, by not later than 30 days before publishing public notice of such intent.

“(ii) The Secretary of the military department, the Secretary of the Interior, and the head of such appropriate State fish and wildlife agency, in the period beginning on the date of publication of notice under clause (i) and ending on the date of publication of public notice referred to in clause (i), shall consult to determine the following:

“(I) The intended scope of the integrated natural resources management plan that is the subject of the notice.

“(II) The timetable for preparation or revision of such plan.

“(III) What steps must be taken to comply with section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332) in such preparation or revision.

“(IV) An estimation of the financial and human resources needed to complete such preparation or revision.”

**SEC. 5. RESOURCE AGENCY CERTIFICATIONS REGARDING INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS.**

Section 101 of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a) is further amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2), by adding at the end the following:

“(C) An integrated natural resources management plan prepared or revised under this section shall not be considered to reflect the mutual agreement of the parties for purposes of subparagraph (A) unless the Secretary of the Interior, the head of the appropriate State fish and wildlife agency, and the Secretary of the military department that prepares or revises the plan each certify that the plan adequately addresses conservation, protection, and management of fish and wildlife resources.”;

(2) in subsection (b)(2), by inserting “and recertified under subsection (a)(2)(C)” by each of the Secretary of the Interior, the head of the appropriate State fish and wildlife agency, and the Secretary of the military department that prepared the plan” after “parties thereto”; and

(3) in subsection (f)(2), by adding at the end the following: “The report shall include a statement of the number of integrated natural resources management plans that were certified or recertified by the Secretary of the Interior under subsection (a)(2)(C) in the year covered by the report.”

**SEC. 6. PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENT REGARDING INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS.**

Section 101(a)(2) of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a(a)(2)) is further amended by adding at the end the following:

“(D) The Secretary of a military department shall—

“(i) publish public notice in the Federal Register or, if more appropriate, a readily accessible publication such as a local or regional newspaper, of the intent of the Secretary to prepare or revise an integrated natural resources management plan under this paragraph; and

“(ii) provide an opportunity for the submission by the public of comments regarding such preparation or revision, for a period of at least 30 days.”.

**SEC. 7. INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT FOR MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 101(b)(1) of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a(b)(1)) is amended by redesignating subparagraphs (D) through (J) in order as subparagraphs (E) through (K), and by inserting after subparagraph (C) the following:

“(D) in the case of a plan for a military installation in Guam, management, control, and eradication of invasive species that are not native to the ecosystem of the military installation and the introduction of which cause or may cause harm to military readiness, the environment, the economy, or human health and safety;”.

(b) **APPLICATION.**—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply—

(1) to any integrated natural resources management plan prepared under section 101(a)(1) of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a(a)(1)) on or after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(2) to any integrated natural resources management plan prepared under section 101(a)(1) of the Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a(a)(1)) before the date of the enactment of this Act, effective March 1, 2004.

Amend the title so as to read:

A bill to reauthorize title I of the Sikes Act, and for other purposes.

**PURPOSE OF THE BILL**

The purpose of H.R. 1497, as ordered reported, is to reauthorize title I of the Sikes Act, and for other purposes.

**BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION**

The Department of Defense controls nearly 25 million acres of valuable fish and wildlife habitat at approximately 425 military installations nationwide. These lands contain a wealth of plant and animal life, wetlands for migratory birds and nearly 300 federally listed threatened and endangered species. Enacted in 1960, this law has been extended many times, with the current authorization of appropriations expiring on September 30, 2003.

Prior to the Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997, the Department of Defense was able to enter into voluntary “cooperative plans” with the Secretary of the Interior and the appropriate state fish and wildlife agency to carry out a program to plan, develop, maintain and coordinate fish and wildlife conservation efforts on military lands. In addition, the cooperative plans could allow for the issuance of special hunting and fishing permits with the proceeds used for such things as habitat improvement. These plans were neither uniform nor comprehensive in their requirements and the Department of Defense was not required to implement them.

Under Public Law 105–85, the Department of Defense is required to complete a comprehensive Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) for each of its installations. The only exception involves those bases that do not have any significant fish, wildlife or natural resources. The Department believes 373 military installations meet the criteria for an INRMP, which has been defined as “an integrated plan based, to the maximum extent practicable, on ecosystem management that shows the interrelationships of individual components of natural resources management to mission requirements and other land use activities affecting an installation’s natural resources.” Under the law, these plans should include the following components: fish and wildlife management and wildlife-oriented recreation; fish and wildlife habitat enhancement; wetland protection; the establishment of specific manage-

ment goals; the public use of natural resources; the enforcement of all natural resource laws and how a “no net loss” of military lands would be ensured. These plans must be written in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the affected states and they undergo a formal review process every five years. The law allows for a public comment period for each INRMP and stipulates that a sufficient number of professional trained natural resource management personnel should be available to complete these plans and requires an annual report to Congress.

The fundamental goals of INRMPS are to assist installation commanders in their efforts to conserve and rehabilitate natural resources and to balance the use of air, land and water resources for military training and testing with the need to conserve wildlife resources for future generations.

The National Military Fish and Wildlife Association which represents civilian employees of the Department of the Defense, has raised concerns about the implementation of Section 107 of Public Law 105–85. Specifically, this language says: “To the extent practicable using available resources, the Secretary of each military department shall ensure that sufficient number of professional trained natural resources management personnel and natural resources law enforcement personnel are available and assigned responsibility to perform tasks necessary to carry out this title, including the preparation and implementation of integrated natural resource management plans.” They are concerned that the letter and spirit of this language is not being fully implemented.

In a June 21, 2001, letter to Congressman Don Young, Under Secretary of Defense E.C. Aldridge, Jr. noted that there are approximately 3,500 positions within the Department that involve natural resource related activities. These include: the gathering of information for surveys, wildlife studies, audits, plans and inventories; recommendations pertaining to natural resource projects; clean air projects; hazardous waste management; conservation programs; pollution prevention; and use of toxic substances. In addition, the Under Secretary noted that there were 868 in-house positions that perform natural resource management functions and associated services. At this time, there are approximately 1,000 civilian natural resource management employees at the Department of Defense and at least twice as many outside contractors who perform similar functions.

When making a decision whether to outsource a natural resource management job, the Department is guided by the statutory requirements of Federal Activities Inventory Reform Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–270) and the A–76 regulations which are contained within the Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 7.5 and Office of Federal Procurement Policy Letter 92.1. The determining factor is whether the position is an “inherently governmental function” which has been defined as one that is so intimately related to the public interest as to require performance by Federal Government employees. If the response is affirmative, then that position cannot be outsourced.

#### COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 1497 was introduced on March 27, 2003, by Congressman Richard W. Pombo (R–CA). The bill was referred to the Committee

on Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans. On April 10, 2003, the Subcommittee held a hearing on the bill. On May 1, 2003, the Subcommittee met to mark up the bill. Congressman Wayne T. Gilchrest (R-MD) offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute that established a new Section 3 expressing the “Sense of Congress” that it would be inappropriate to contract out the jobs of those federal civilian natural resource management personnel that prepare the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans. Congressman Frank Pallone (D-NJ) offered an amendment to the substitute dealing with advanced notice and consultation regarding integrated natural resource management plans. The amendment was adopted by voice vote. Mr. Pallone offered and withdrew a second amendment regarding public notice of the Department of Defense’s intent to undertake an integrated natural resource management plan for a military installation. Mr. Pallone offered a third amendment to the substitute that required that any integrated natural resource management plan be certified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the affected state fish and wildlife department as the plans affect the conservation, protection and management of fish and wildlife resources. The amendment was adopted by voice vote. The substitute, as amended, was approved by voice vote. The bill was then ordered forwarded to the Full Committee by voice vote. On May 7, 2003, the Full Resources Committee met to consider the bill. Mr. Gilchrest offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute that modified several provisions in Section 3, added additional findings to the legislation and established a new public notice requirement for integrated natural resource management plans. Under this language, a notice would be printed in the Federal Register or, if more appropriate, local or regional newspapers. The Committee intends that the Department should give preference to printing these notice requirements in the Federal Register. Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU) offered an amendment to the substitute requiring that the Department of Defense consider the impact of invasive species when preparing an integrated natural resource management plan for military installations on the island of Guam. This amendment was adopted by voice vote. The substitute, as amended, was adopted by voice vote and the bill, as amended, was then ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by voice vote.

#### COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Resources’ oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this bill.

#### COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII

1. Cost of Legislation. Clause 3(d)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires an estimate and a compari-

son by the Committee of the costs which would be incurred in carrying out this bill. However, clause 3(d)(3)(B) of that rule provides that this requirement does not apply when the Committee has included in its report a timely submitted cost estimate of the bill prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office under section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

2. Congressional Budget Act. As required by clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, this bill does not contain any new budget authority, spending authority, credit authority, or an increase or decrease in revenues or tax expenditures.

3. General Performance Goals and Objectives. As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this bill, as ordered reported, is to reauthorize title I of the Sikes Act, and for other purposes.

4. Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate. Under clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following cost estimate for this bill from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office.

U.S. CONGRESS,  
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,  
*Washington, DC, May 12, 2003.*

Hon. RICHARD POMBO,  
*Chairman, Committee on Resources,  
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 1497, the Sykes Act Reauthorization Act of 2003.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Megan Carroll.

Sincerely,

BARRY B. ANDERSON  
(For Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Director).

Enclosure.

*H.R. 1497—Sikes Act Reauthorization Act of 2003*

H.R. 1497 would reauthorize the Sikes Act through 2008. That act requires the Department of Defense (DOD) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to develop and implement plans to manage natural resources on certain military lands. For those activities, H.R. 1497 would authorize the appropriation of up to \$4.5 million a year over the 2004–2008 period.

Based on information from DOD and USFWS and assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1497 would cost \$4 million in 2004 and \$22 million over the next five years. Enactment of the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues. H.R. 1497 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Megan Carroll. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

## COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC LAW 104-4

This bill contains no unfunded mandates.

## PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

This bill is not intended to preempt any State, local or tribal law.

## CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE BILL, AS REPORTED

In compliance with clause 3(e) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in italic, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

**SIKES ACT**

\* \* \* \* \*

TITLE I—CONSERVATION PROGRAMS ON MILITARY  
INSTALLATIONS

\* \* \* \* \*

## SEC. 101. (a) AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.—

(1) \* \* \*

(2) COOPERATIVE PREPARATION.—(A) The Secretary of a military department shall prepare each integrated natural resources management plan for which the Secretary is responsible in cooperation with the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the head of each appropriate State fish and wildlife agency for the State in which the military installation concerned is located. Consistent with paragraph (4), the resulting plan for the military installation shall reflect the mutual agreement of the parties concerning conservation, protection, and management of fish and wildlife resources.

*(B)(i) The Secretary of a military department shall advise the Secretary of the Interior and the head of the appropriate State fish and wildlife agency of the intent of the Secretary of the military department to prepare or revise an integrated natural resources management plan under this subsection, by not later than 30 days before publishing public notice of such intent.*

*(ii) The Secretary of the military department, the Secretary of the Interior, and the head of such appropriate State fish and wildlife agency, in the period beginning on the date of publication of public notice referred to in clause (i), shall consult to determine the following:*

*(I) The intended scope of the integrated natural resources management plan that is the subject of the notice.*

*(II) The timetable for preparation or revision of such plan.*

*(III) What steps must be taken to comply with section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332) in such preparation or revision.*

*(IV) An estimation of the financial and human resources needed to complete such preparation or revision.*

*(C) An integrated natural resources management plan prepared or revised under this section shall not be considered to reflect the mutual agreement of the parties for purposes of subparagraph (A) unless the Secretary of the Interior, the head of the appropriate State fish and wildlife agency, and the Secretary of the military department that prepares or revises the plan each certify that the plan adequately addresses conservation, protection, and management of fish and wildlife resources.*

*(D) The Secretary of a military department shall—*

*(i) publish public notice in the Federal Register or, if more appropriate, a readily accessible publication such as a local or regional newspaper, of the intent of the Secretary to prepare or revise an integrated natural resources management plan under this paragraph; and*

*(ii) provide an opportunity for the submission by the public of comments regarding such preparation or revision, for a period of at least 30 days.*

\* \* \* \* \*

(b) REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF PLANS.—Consistent with the use of military installations to ensure the preparedness of the Armed Forces, each integrated natural resources management plan prepared under subsection (a)—

(1) shall, to the extent appropriate and applicable, provide for—

(A) \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

*(D) in the case of a plan for a military installation in Guam, management, control, and eradication of invasive species that are not native to the ecosystem of the military installation and the introduction of which cause or may cause harm to military readiness, the environment, the economy, or human health and safety;*

**[(D)]** *(E) integration of, and consistency among, the various activities conducted under the plan;*

**[(E)]** *(F) establishment of specific natural resource management goals and objectives and time frames for proposed action;*

**[(F)]** *(G) sustainable use by the public of natural resources to the extent that the use is not inconsistent with the needs of fish and wildlife resources;*

**[(G)]** *(H) public access to the military installation that is necessary or appropriate for the use described in subparagraph (F), subject to requirements necessary to ensure safety and military security;*

**[(H)]** *(I) enforcement of applicable natural resource laws (including regulations);*

**[(I)]** *(J) no net loss in the capability of military installation lands to support the military mission of the installation; and*

**[(J)]** *(K) such other activities as the Secretary of the military department determines appropriate;*

(2) must be reviewed as to operation and effect by the parties thereto and recertified under subsection (a)(2)(C) by each of the Secretary of the Interior, the head of the appropriate State fish

and wildlife agency, and the Secretary of the military department that prepared the plan on a regular basis, but not less often than every 5 years; and

\* \* \* \* \*

(f) REVIEWS AND REPORTS.—

(1) \* \* \*

(2) SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.—Not later than March 1 of each year and in consultation with the heads of State fish and wildlife agencies, the Secretary of the Interior shall submit a report to the committees on the amounts expended by the Department of the Interior and the State fish and wildlife agencies in the year covered by the report on conservation activities conducted pursuant to integrated natural resources management plans. *The report shall include a statement of the number of integrated natural resources management plans that were certified or recertified by the Secretary of the Interior under subsection (a)(2)(C) in the year covered by the report.*

\* \* \* \* \*

SEC. 108. (a) \* \* \*

(b) There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Defense not to exceed \$1,500,000 for each of the [fiscal years 1998 through 2003] *fiscal years 2004 through 2008*, to carry out this title, including the enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and the development of public recreation and other facilities, and to carry out such functions and responsibilities as the Secretary may have under cooperative agreements entered into under section 103a. The Secretary of Defense shall, to the greatest extent practicable, enter into agreements to utilize the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities, with or without reimbursement, of the Secretary of the Interior in carrying out the provisions of this section.

(c) There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior not to exceed \$3,000,000 for each of the [fiscal years 1998 through 2003] *fiscal years 2004 through 2008*, to carry out such functions and responsibilities as the Secretary may have under integrated natural resources management plans to which such Secretary is a party under this section, including those for the enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and the development of public recreation and other facilities.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ADDITIONAL VIEWS

Since the implementation of the Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997, over 300 Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs) have been completed. Whether the implementation of these plans has been or will be successful, however, still remains to be seen, as the Department of Defense's (DOD) own Inspector General found that there was a lack of a comprehensive system to monitor INRMP implementation. H.R. 1497, as amended unanimously by voice vote by the committee, contains several provisions that will increase the transparency, public notice and accountability in the implementation of the Sikes Act.

At present the Department of Defense seeks to exempt military lands from critical habitat designation under the Endangered Species Act where an approved INRMP exists. Accordingly there is increased need to ensure that these plans genuinely represent the combined input of Federal and State fish and wildlife agencies (hereafter referred to as resource agencies). Where problems have arisen in the development of INRMPs, it is most often because INRMP is prepared essentially by the installation or its contractor, and then presented to the source agencies for concurrence.

Section 4 of the bill would correct this situation by reinforcing the intent of the Sikes Act that INRMPs be prepared "in cooperation" with the Secretary of the Interior and with the head of each appropriate State fish and wildlife agency. Whereas the resource agencies currently are consulted most often only after a draft INRMP has been prepared, H.R. 1497 would require the military department both to alert the resource agencies of their intent to prepare or revise an INRMP, and to consult with them within a period no later than thirty days prior to publication of such intent.

This new provision is consistent with recently-developed DOD policy and substantively addresses concerns raised by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) urging more involvement in the development and revisions of INRMPs. While this section would require that consultation in the thirty days prior to public notice is a mandatory provision of the Sikes Act, we in Congress realize that the financial resources in Federal and State fish and wildlife agencies are limited. We feel, however, that consultation can take many shapes and forms and therefore ought to occur, while taking into account the financial and personnel resources of the resource agencies.

Considering both the complexity of resource management and the various levels at which cooperation on INRMP preparation must occur, what constitutes "mutual agreement" has become confusing and in certain situations, potentially contestable. The USFWS has said that problems do occasionally arise in acquiring the necessary approvals for all INRMPs. Section 5 of this bill would end that uncertainty by a simple, low-cost, clerical solution: requir-

ing that all resource agencies certify a new or renewed INRMP. Through this action, Congress reaffirms its intent that INRMPs should reflect the mutual agreement and meet the standards of stewardship of fish and wildlife resources of all involved parties.

In the Fisheries Subcommittee's analysis of the public comment process for INRMP development and review, there appeared to be inconsistencies in the manner by which the military departments publicly noticed and allowed for public review and comment. As the trusted stewards of nearly 25 million acres of the country's valuable fish and wildlife habitat, it is only that military departments keep the public informed about the resource management of their lands.

Section 6 of H.R. 1497 reflects a compromise approach to increase the public's awareness of a military department's intent to prepare or revise an INRMP through public notice. We feel strongly that the DOD should give preference to publishing in the Federal Register, but recognize that publication in regional or local and readily accessible periodicals and newspapers may be warranted and desirable in certain circumstances. This good-government amendment requiring public notice provides a helpful measure of transparency to ensure that the public remains a participant in the stewardship process.

In conclusion, we feel confident that with the amendments to the Skies Act contained in H.R. 1497, the American public will be given greater assurance that the natural resources found at military installations are managed with the necessary care and respect. Public resources must be managed to the best of the government's ability. H.R. 1497 would ensure just that, through increasing the accountability of our military departments and the mandatory early participation of resources agencies. Although the simple administrative changes proffered in H.R. 1497 can hardly substitute for the carefully crafted laws protecting the environment on all Federal lands, they are a step in the right direction for military lands. By both increasing the accountability of the military and facilitating smooth cooperation among various agencies, the Sikes Act has the potential to become a valuable tool in protecting America's resources.

NICK J. RAHALL II.  
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EDWARD J. MARKEY.  
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO.