

base in the country owned by the Federal government. Now they are asking us to appropriate \$900 million or more annually to buy more of it.

We are not good managers in the Federal government of the land we already have. There is a \$12 billion backlog in maintenance already. I ask Members to visit their National Parks and check out the condition of some of the facilities. Whenever we raise this with the Park Service bureaucrats, the answer we get back is, oh, gee, we do not have enough money. Now we are going to give even more money to buy more land.

This bill does put some money in for maintenance, that is true, but it puts nearly three times as much money into new land acquisition. Once that land is acquired, it has to be maintained. We are doing a terrible job of that as a Federal government.

One illustration, the General Accounting Office said that there are 39 million acres of Forest Service land that are at extreme risk of catastrophic forest fire. That is because that land is not being managed properly. Now we are going to add to the general burden all of this new land that we are bringing into it.

We used to talk about the idea that we ought to have no net gain in acquisition of land. If we are going to acquire some sensitive land, then we ought to divest ourselves of other lands of equal value. Instead, we are setting up a system that is biased in favor of more land acquisition, and instead of being one-third of the land mass, we are going to see this amount steadily creep up.

I think we are going in the wrong direction. For that reason, I am going to have to oppose this bill, and urge my colleagues to do likewise.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in yielding time to me.

Unlike my friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE), the public sets a very high priority on the protection and public maintenance of our green infrastructure.

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The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) had it right. We are losing the battle and we do not have to wait until the turn the century and the doubling of our population. Between 1992 and 1997, we lost 16 million acres, an area approximately the size of West Virginia, to development. The public is starting to move at the State and local level. They passed 379 initiatives for over \$8 billion in the last 2 years. It is time for the Federal Government to do its part being a better partner in that process.

The funding of CARA is a good start with historic preservation of urban parks, Native American land and allo-

cating \$150 million to conservation easement and species recovery. These long-term investments will add valuable to our communities. They are, in fact, financed on just the interest on the \$13 billion in the trust fund right now.

Mr. Chairman, it is time for the Federal Government to be a better partner for liveability. The passage of this bill is a good start.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. BALDACCI) who has been waiting so patiently.

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Chairman, I thank the ranking member for yielding me the 1 minute.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG), chairman of the committee, for crafting such a fine piece of legislation and for working with the ranking member and the other people here in the Congress, because this certainly is landmark legislation.

I am very pleased to support this. I am very pleased to cosponsor this. This is going to make a tremendous impact in Maine. We have been looking at this legislation and, given Maine's heritage of outdoor recreation, its efforts of resource conservation and its belief in property rights, I have carefully reviewed this legislation to ensure that it meets the needs of the State and its people.

Mr. Chairman, as a good friend of mine, George Smith, who heads up the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine said and observed that, "This could fund conservation easements that keep our lands intact, undeveloped and available for hunting, fishing and other recreational uses while still productive, in private hands, and on the tax rolls. That's a win-win situation for everyone."

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) for his hard work and working with the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), our ranking member, and others to craft this landmark legislation.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida (Ms. BROWN).

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise as a proud cosponsor of H.R. 701. This bill will improve funding for conservation programs by purchasing and protecting environmentally sensitive lands as well as other conservation and recreational programs.

This bill will provide \$141 million annually to the State of Florida and many of the funding initiatives in this bill, such as the park acquisition and maintenance and urban recreation, will have a great impact on Florida and my district. This is extremely important to Florida's environment and is critical to preserving places like the Timucuan Preserve in Jacksonville, which is a legend of the work by my predecessor, Charlie Bennett.

Mr. Chairman, I know there are critics out there, but this bill is necessary for places like Florida that have precious ecosystems that need to be preserved in a period of extreme urban growth. Our local and State governments in Florida have made a great effort toward preserving our sensitive land, and this bill will be an enormous benefit for all of us. These monies will also allow us to promote assets such as urban fishing to serve ethnic and minority populations that would not have the resources to reach out in the past.

Mr. Chairman, this is an important bill and I urge my colleagues to vote for it.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON).

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 701. I have the privilege in the House of serving as the cochair of the Congressional Sportsman Caucus, and one of the things that we do is we watch out for conservation and hunting and fishing legislation in this Congress.

This is a bill that is a good bill, and I commend the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) and all of the others for the hard work in putting this together.

In Minnesota, before I was in the Congress, I had the opportunity of serving on a similar committee in Minnesota. We have a permanent source of funding in Minnesota similar to what we are doing here today. It works, and we are known in the country as one of the places where we have great conservation and hunting and fishing. This is going to do the same thing all over the country.

This is the right thing to do. It is not perfect. All of us would like to see other things in it, but it is a great piece of legislation and our kids are going to thank us for it. I ask everyone to support H.R. 701, and I commend everyone for working on the legislation.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOEFFEL).

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act. I compliment the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from California, the ranking member, for their leadership.

Mr. Chairman, it has been said that if we restore a river, we restore the community. I believe it is also true if we save open space, we save the soul of a community. We save the quality of life of that community.

It is happening around this country. It is happening in a bipartisan fashion.