

WEIR FARM NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
REDESIGNATION ACT

DECEMBER 14, 2020.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State
of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. GRIJALVA, from the Committee on Natural Resources,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 5852]

The Committee on Natural Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 5852) to redesignate the Weir Farm National Historic Site in the State of Connecticut as the “Weir Farm National Historical Park”, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of H.R. 5852 is to redesignate the Weir Farm National Historic Site in the State of Connecticut as the “Weir Farm National Historical Park.”

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

In 1882, the American artist Julian Alden Weir traded a still life painting he had acquired in Europe for a 153-acre farm in Branchville, Connecticut. At the farm, Weir spent many years developing a new approach to landscape painting, using the rural setting for inspiration, and gained a reputation as a leader of the American Impressionists.¹

In 1990, Congress established the Weir Farm National Historic Site (P.L. 101-485) in Fairfield County, Connecticut, to preserve the house, studio, farm buildings, and rural landscape that inspired Weir’s transition into American Impressionism. Today, the 68-acre National Historic Site comprises 15 historic structures, including the studio of American Master Sculptor Mahonri Young, as well as

¹National Park Service. (n.d.) Weir Farm National Historic Site, Connecticut: Julian Alden Weir. Retrieved from <https://www.nps.gov/wefa/learn/historyculture/jaldenweir.htm>.

historic gardens, orchards, terraces, fields, the Weir Pond, and hundreds of historic painting sites. There are three miles of trails on the site's property and more than seven miles of trails in two bordering open spaces—the 110-acre Weir Preserve, which is owned by the Weir Farm Art Alliance, and the 29-acre Nod Hill Refuge. The National Historic Site also maintains a collection that contains more than 200,000 archives and objects, including original paintings, sculptures, prints, and furnishings associated with the site.

H.R. 5852 redesignates the Weir Farm National Historic Site as the Weir Farm National Historical Park. As national historical parks are typically areas of larger physical extent with a greater diversity of historical resources than national historic sites, the redesignation would bring the site into conformance with the National Park Service's standard pattern of nomenclature and help promote increased visitation and recognition.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 5852 was introduced on February 11, 2020, by Representative Jim Himes (D-CT). The bill was referred solely to the Committee on Natural Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands. On July 13, 2020, the Subcommittee held a hearing on the bill. On September 30, 2020, the Natural Resources Committee met to consider the bill. The Subcommittee was discharged by unanimous consent. No amendments were offered, and the bill was adopted and ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by unanimous consent.

HEARINGS

For the purposes of section 103(i) of H.Res. 6 of the 116th Congress—the following hearing was used to develop or consider H.R. 5852: legislative hearing by the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held on July 13, 2020.

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 Natural Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII AND CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT

1. *Cost of Legislation and the Congressional Budget Act.* With respect to the requirements of 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 and with respect to requirements of clause (3)(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has requested but not received a cost estimate for this bill from the Director of Congressional Budget Office. The Committee adopts as its own cost estimate the forthcoming cost estimate of the Director of the Congressional Budget Office, should

such cost estimate be made available before House passage of the bill.

The Committee has requested but not received from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office a statement as to whether this bill contains any new budget authority, spending authority, credit authority, or an increase or decrease in revenues or tax expenditures.

2. *General Performance Goals and Objectives.* As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goals and objectives of this bill are to redesignate the Weir Farm National Historic Site in the State of Connecticut as the “Weir Farm National Historical Park.”

EARMARK STATEMENT

This bill does not contain any Congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined under clause 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT STATEMENT

An estimate of Federal mandates prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 423 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act was not made available to the Committee in time for the filing of this report. The Chair of the Committee shall cause such estimate to be printed in the Congressional Record upon its receipt by the Committee.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

This bill does not establish or reauthorize a program of the federal government known to be duplicative of another program.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL, OR TRIBAL LAW

Any preemptive effect of this bill over state, local, or tribal law is intended to be consistent with the bill’s purposes and text and the Supremacy Clause of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution.

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 italics, and existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

**WEIR FARM NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE ESTABLISHMENT
ACT OF 1990**

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SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

As used in this Act—

- (1) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.
- (2) The term “[historic site] *historical park*” means the Weir Farm [National Historic Site] *National Historical Park* established in section 4.

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SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF WEIR FARM NATIONAL [HISTORIC SITE] HISTORICAL PARK.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—There is established, as a unit of the National Park System, the Weir Farm National [Historic Site] *Historical Park* in the State of Connecticut.

(b) **DESCRIPTION.**—The [historic site] *historical park* shall consist of—

- (1) the approximately 2-acre core parcel containing the Weir house, studio, and barn;
- (2) the approximately 60 acres and improvements thereon owned by the State of Connecticut;
- (3) the approximately 2-acre parcel of land situated in the town of Wilton, Connecticut, designated as lot 18 on a map entitled “Revised Map of Section I, Thunder Lake at Wilton, Connecticut, Scale 1’=100’, October 27, 1978, Ryan and Faulds Land Surveyors, Wilton, Connecticut”, that is on file in the office of the town clerk of the town of Wilton, and therein numbered 3673; and
- (4) the approximately 0.9-acre western portion of a parcel of land situated in the town of Wilton, Connecticut, designated as Tall Oaks Road on the map referred to in paragraph (3).

(c) **GENERAL DEPICTION.**—The parcels referred to in paragraphs (1) through (4) of subsection (b) are all as generally depicted on a map entitled “Boundary Map, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Fairfield County Connecticut”, dated June 1994. Such map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service.

(d) **ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR VISITOR AND ADMINISTRATIVE FACILITIES; LIMITATIONS.**—

(1) **ACQUISITION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—To preserve and maintain the historic setting and character of the [historic site] *historical park*, the Secretary may acquire not more than 15 additional acres for the development of visitor and administrative facilities for the [historic site] *historical park*.

(B) **PROXIMITY.**—The property acquired under this subsection shall be within Fairfield County.

(C) **MANAGEMENT.**—The acquired property shall be included within the boundary of the [historic site] *historical park* and shall be managed and maintained as part of the [historic site] *historical park*.

(2) **DEVELOPMENT.**—

(A) MAINTAINING NATURAL CHARACTER.—The Secretary shall keep development of the property acquired under paragraph (1) to a minimum so that the character of the acquired property will be similar to the natural and undeveloped landscape of the property described in subsection (b).

(B) TREATMENT OF PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED PROPERTY.—Nothing in subparagraph (A) shall either prevent the Secretary from acquiring property under paragraph (1) that, prior to the Secretary's acquisition, was developed in a manner inconsistent with subparagraph (A), or require the Secretary to remediate such previously developed property to reflect the natural character described in subparagraph (A).

(3) AGREEMENTS.—Prior to and as a prerequisite to any development of visitor and administrative facilities on the property acquired under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall enter into one or more agreements with the local governmental entity that, in accordance with applicable State law, has jurisdiction over any property acquired under paragraph (1)(A) for the purposes of—

(A) developing the parking, visitor, and administrative facilities for the [historic site] *historical park*; and

(B) managing bus traffic to the [historic site] *historical park* and limiting parking for large tour buses to an offsite location.

SEC. 5. ACQUISITION OF REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY AND SERVICES.

(a) REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY.—The Secretary is authorized to acquire by donation, exchange, or purchase with donated or appropriated funds, the lands and improvements within the boundaries of the [historic site] *historical park*, except that any such lands and improvements owned by the State of Connecticut may be acquired only by donation. The Secretary may also acquire by the same methods personal property associated with, and appropriate for, the interpretation of the [historic site] *historical park*: Provided, That the Secretary may acquire works of art associated with the Weir family, J. Alden Weir, and other artists who lived at or visited the site only by donation or purchase with donated funds.

(b) OTHER PROPERTY, FUNDS, AND SERVICES.—The Secretary is authorized to accept and use donated funds, property, and services to carry out this Act.

SEC. 6. ADMINISTRATION OF [HISTORIC SITE] HISTORICAL PARK.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall administer the [historic site] *historical park* in accordance with this Act and the laws generally applicable to units of the National Park System, including the Act entitled “An Act to establish a National Park Service, and for other purposes”, approved August 25, 1916 (16 U.S.C. 1 et seq.), and the Act entitled “An Act to provide for the preservation of historic American sites, buildings, objects, and antiquities of national historic significance, and for other purposes”, approved August 21, 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461 et seq.), except that the Secretary shall take no action with respect to the 60 acres owned by the State of Connecticut within the boundaries of the [historic site] *historical park*

until such time as the State has transferred all right, title, and interests therein to the Secretary.

(b) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—(1) The Secretary may consult and enter into cooperative agreements with the Weir Farm Heritage Trust, the State of Connecticut, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and other organizations and groups in the development, presentation and funding of art exhibits, resident artist programs, and other appropriate activities related to the preservation, development, and use of the [historic site] *historical park*.

(2) The Secretary may consult and enter into cooperative agreements with the Nature Conservancy and the towns of Ridgefield and Wilton for the purpose of coordinating activities on the [historic site] *historical park* with activities on the Nature Conservancy's Weir Preserve and lands adjoining the [historic site] *historical park* owned by the towns.

(c) EXHIBITS.—The Secretary may display, and accept for the purpose of display, works of art associated with J. Alden Weir, the Weir Farm, and the American Impressionist movement, as may be necessary for the interpretation of the [historic site] *historical park*.

(d) GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN.—Within 2 complete fiscal years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the United States House of Representatives and to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate a general management plan for the [historic site] *historical park*. The plan shall be prepared in accordance with section 12(b) of the Act of August 18, 1970 (16 U.S.C. 1a-1 through 1a-7) and other applicable law.

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SUPPLEMENTAL, MINORITY, ADDITIONAL, OR DISSENTING VIEWS

None.

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