

TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE TO CONVEY THE PLEASANT VALLEY RANGER DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE SITE TO GILA COUNTY, ARIZONA

MARCH 21, 2024.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

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

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 1829]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Natural Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 1829) to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey the Pleasant Valley Ranger District Administrative Site to Gila County, Arizona, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment and recommends that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

**SECTION 1. CONVEYANCE OF PLEASANT VALLEY RANGER DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE SITE TO GILA COUNTY, ARIZONA.**

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COUNTY.—The term “County” means Gila County, Arizona.

(2) MAP.—The term “map” means the map entitled “Pleasant Valley Admin Site Proposal” and dated September 23, 2021.

(3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service.

(b) CONVEYANCE REQUIRED.—Subject to this section, if the County submits to the Secretary a written request for conveyance of the property described in subsection (c) not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall convey to the County all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the property described in subsection (c).

(c) DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The property referred to in subsection (b) is the parcel of real property, including all land and improvements, generally depicted as “Gila County Area” on the map, consisting of approximately 232.9 acres of National Forest System land located in the Tonto National Forest in Arizona.

(2) MAP.—

(A) MINOR ERRORS.—The Secretary may correct minor errors in the map.

- (B) AVAILABILITY.—A copy of the map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Forest Service.
- (3) SURVEY.—The exact acreage and legal description of the National Forest System land to be conveyed under subsection (b) shall be determined by a survey satisfactory to the Secretary.
- (d) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The conveyance under subsection (b) shall be—
- (1) subject to valid existing rights;
  - (2) made without consideration;
  - (3) made by quitclaim deed; and
  - (4) subject to such other terms and conditions as the Secretary considers to be appropriate to protect the interests of the United States.
- (e) COSTS OF CONVEYANCE.—As a condition of the conveyance under subsection (b), the County shall pay all costs associated with the conveyance, including the cost of—
- (1) a survey, if necessary, under subsection (c)(3);
  - (2) any environmental analysis or resource survey required under Federal law; and
  - (3) any analysis required to comply with division A of subtitle III of title 54, United States Code (commonly referred to as the “National Historic Preservation Act”).
- (f) ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS.—Notwithstanding section 120(h)(3)(A) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9620(h)(3)(A)), the Secretary shall not be required to provide any covenant or warranty for the land and improvements conveyed to the County under subsection (b).
- (g) USE OF LAND.—The land conveyed to the county under subsection (b) shall be used by the County only for the purposes of serving and supporting veterans of the Armed Forces.
- (h) REVERSION.—If any land conveyed under subsection (b) is used in a manner that is inconsistent with the requirements of subsection (g), all right, title, and interest in and to the land shall revert to the United States, at the discretion of the Secretary.

#### PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATION

The purpose of H.R. 1829 is to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey the Pleasant Valley Ranger District Administrative Site to Gila County, Arizona.

#### BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Nearly 60 percent of the land in Gila County, Arizona, is managed by the federal government. Like in many other Western communities, the large percentage of federal land significantly limits the available space to build the infrastructure needed for public purposes, such as roads, schools, and community centers. This large federal footprint also requires thoughtful coordination and collaboration with federal land managers to help address needs in the community. For several years, Gila County has sought to proactively improve care for the more than 5,000 veterans who live in their community by creating a veterans’ retreat center that promotes outdoor recreation and nature-based therapy. However, there is limited space available for such a facility.

Gila County, in coordination with Congressmen Gosar (R–AZ) and Crane (R–AZ), worked with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to identify a suitable property for the proposed veterans’ center. The property the County selected includes roughly 233 acres of Tonto National Forest land and buildings known as the Pleasant Valley Ranger Administrative Site (Administrative Site). USFS originally planned to tear these buildings down until Gila County approached the agency about remodeling the site to create a veterans’ retreat center focused on outdoor recreation and nature-based therapy. In 2021, Gila County signed a 20-year special use permit with USFS

to begin turning the Administrative Site into a veterans' retreat center and start needed maintenance. However, Gila County would like to improve certainty around the future of the site and have greater freedom to make improvements by acquiring the property.

H.R. 1829 requires USFS to convey the Administrative Site and surrounding land to Gila County, Arizona. The site consists of 17 buildings, including a 6,000-square-foot administrative building, two residences, two barracks, a historic ranger house and barn, helipads, and a well and wastewater system. Gila County wants to remodel many of the buildings to create the "ultimate experience for veterans and their families." The administrative building will become a main lodge, and additional renovations are planned to improve the site's family housing and recreation opportunities. H.R. 1829 includes a reversionary clause that will return the site to the USFS if it ceases to be used to serve and support veterans.

#### COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 1829 was introduced on March 28, 2023, by Rep. Elijah Crane (R-AZ). The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Federal Lands. On July 20, 2023, the Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on the bill. On February 6, 2024, the Committee on Natural Resources met to consider the bill. The Subcommittee on Federal Lands was discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1829 by unanimous consent. Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR) offered an Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute designated Westerman ANS. The Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute was agreed to by unanimous consent. The bill, as amended, was ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by unanimous consent.

#### HEARINGS

For the purposes of clause 3(c)(6) of House rule XIII, the following hearing was used to develop or consider this measure: hearing by the Subcommittee on Federal Lands held on July 20, 2023.

#### SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

##### *Section 1. Conveyance of Pleasant Valley Ranger District Administrative Site to Gila County, Arizona.*

- Provides definitions for the bill, including defining the map as the map entitled "Pleasant Valley Admin Site Proposal" and dated September 23, 2021.
- Directs USFS to convey a 232.9-acre property in the Tonto National Forest to Gila County, Arizona, upon the county's submission of a written request for such conveyance. Requires the conveyance to occur within 180 days of such written request.
- Allows for minor technical corrections to be made to the map and acreage.
- Requires the conveyance to be subject to valid existing rights, made without consideration, made by a quitclaim deed, and subject to other applicable terms and conditions.
- Requires Gila County to pay for the costs of the conveyance.

- Specifies that the Forest Service is not required to provide any covenant or warranty for the land and improvements conveyed to the County under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA).
- Stipulates that if any land conveyed under this bill ceases to be used to serve and support Armed Forces veterans, all rights, titles, and interests in and to the land shall revert to the United States.

#### 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) and (3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and sections 308(a) and 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following estimate for the bill from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office:

<b>H.R. 1829, a bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey the Pleasant Valley Ranger District Administrative Site to Gila County, Arizona</b> As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on February 6, 2024			
By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2024	2024-2029	2024-2034
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	0	0	0
Increases <i>net direct spending</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2035?	No	Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	No
		<b>Mandate Effects</b>	
Increases <i>on-budget deficits</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2035?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No

H.R. 1829 would direct the Forest Service to convey 233 acres of federal land in Gila County, Arizona, to the county, without consideration and subject to valid existing rights, if the county requests the land. Under the bill, the county would be required to pay all costs associated with a conveyance and the land would need to be used to provide services to veterans.

According to the Forest Service, the land is currently leased at no cost to a nonprofit organization that uses it to provide housing and other support to veterans and their families. Because the land does not generate any receipts for the federal government and any costs associated with conveying the land under the bill would be paid by the county, CBO estimates that enacting the bill would not affect the federal budget.

On January 16, 2024, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for S. 1015, a bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey the Pleasant Valley Ranger District Administrative Site to Gila County, Arizona, as reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on December 20, 2023. The two bills are similar, and CBO's estimates of their budgetary effects are the same.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Lilia Ledezma. The estimate was reviewed by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.

PHILLIP L. SWAGEL,  
*Director, Congressional Budget Office.*

*2. General Performance Goals and Objectives.* As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this bill is to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey the Pleasant Valley Ranger District Administrative Site to Gila County, Arizona.

#### EARMARK STATEMENT

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

#### UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT STATEMENT

According to the Congressional Budget Office, H.R. 1829 contains no unfunded mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

#### EXISTING PROGRAMS

*Directed Rule Making.* This bill does not contain any directed rule makings.

*Duplication of Existing Programs.* This bill does not establish or reauthorize a program of the federal government known to be duplicative of another program. Such program was not included in any report from the Government Accountability Office to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111-139 or identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance published pursuant to the Federal Program Information Act (Public Law 95-220, as amended by Public Law 98-169) as relating to other programs.

#### 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

As ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources,  
H.R. 1829 would make no changes in existing law.

