

103D CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2741

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide funds to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission for acquisition of lands in the Sterling Forest area of the New York/New Jersey Highlands Region.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 26, 1993

Mr. TORRICELLI (for himself, Mr. GILMAN, and Mr. HINCHEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide funds to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission for acquisition of lands in the Sterling Forest area of the New York/New Jersey Highlands Region.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 The Congress finds that:

5 (1) By Interstate Compact (Chapter 170 of the
6 Laws of 1937 of the State of New York; Chapter
7 148 of the Laws of 1937 of the State of New Jer-
8 sey) and by Resolution of the 75th Congress (H.J.

1 Resolution 445), the Palisades Interstate Park Com-
2 mission was formed in 1937.

3 (2) The Palisades Interstate Park Commission
4 is the only interstate park management agency in
5 the United States and is responsible for the manage-
6 ment of 23 parks and historic sites in New York and
7 New Jersey, consisting of 82,000 acres. More than
8 8,000,000 national and international visitors per
9 year seek outdoor recreational opportunities in the
10 Palisades Park System. The management of these
11 sites is consistent with standards maintained by the
12 National Park Service.

13 (3) Sterling Forest is a biologically diverse
14 17,500 acre corporate-owned open space property on
15 the New York/New Jersey border. The property is a
16 highly significant watershed area for northern New
17 Jersey, and an important outdoor recreational asset
18 in the Northeastern United States. Clean drinking
19 water flows from the property into a reservoir sys-
20 tem which serves 25 percent of the population of the
21 State of New Jersey. Twenty-seven rare and endan-
22 gered wildlife species have been identified at Sterling
23 Forest by The Nature Conservancy. The land sup-
24 ports a mixed hardwood forest, wetlands, lakes, gla-

1 ciated valleys and ridge lines, and is strategically lo-
2 cated on a north-south wildlife migratory route.

3 (4) The Appalachian Trail, administered by the
4 National Park Service, passes through Sterling For-
5 est. Sterling Forest shares a common boundary with
6 the 51,680 acre Harriman/Bear Mountain State
7 Parks in which the first segment of the Appalachian
8 Trail was constructed in 1923. If protected, Sterling
9 Forest would greatly enhance the Appalachian Trail
10 and would become the largest park created in the
11 Northeastern United States since World War II.

12 (5) Sterling Forest is located in the most dense-
13 ly populated metropolitan region in the United
14 States, and is a very critical open space buffer for
15 a large urban population. A 14 percent growth rate
16 is projected for the region in the next 20 years.

17 (6) Lands held and managed by the Palisades
18 Interstate Park Commission in the State of New
19 York traditionally remain on the tax rolls. Taxes are
20 paid by the State.

21 (7) Stewardship and management costs for
22 lands in the Palisades Park System traditionally are
23 paid by the States of New York and New Jersey.

24 (8) The Palisades Interstate Park Commission
25 is committed to a willing seller—willing buyer trans-

1 action with the corporate owners of Sterling Forest.
2 Use of eminent domain authority is not anticipated,
3 nor would it be acceptable to the Palisades Inter-
4 state Park Commission.

5 (9) In establishing the Federal Agencies Pro-
6 gram for the Land and Water Conservation Fund,
7 the Congress specified the need to address the in-
8 creasing demand for the creation of recreation areas
9 of national significance easily accessible to large cen-
10 ters of the population, and to provide a partial basis
11 for financing the extension of Federal recreational
12 facilities in the East and Midwest.

13 (10) Given the nationally significant watershed,
14 outdoor recreational, and wildlife attributes of Ster-
15 ling Forest, the demand for park open space in the
16 Northeastern United States, the lack of open space
17 in the densely populated New York-New Jersey-Con-
18 necticut Tri-State Region, and the presence of a
19 willing seller and a federally chartered interstate
20 park management agency, there is clear Federal in-
21 terest in acquiring land in Sterling Forest for per-
22 manent protection of watershed, recreational, and
23 wild flora and fauna open space.

1 **SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION.**

2 (a) FUNDING.—In order to enhance protection of wa-
3 tershed, outdoor recreational, wildlife habitat, and Appa-
4 lachian Trail values in the Sterling Forest area of the New
5 York/New Jersey Highlands Region, there is hereby au-
6 thorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior
7 for transfer to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission
8 (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the “Commission”)
9 for fiscal year 1995 not more than \$35,000,000 to be used
10 by the Commission for purposes of acquiring an undevel-
11 oped, open space tract of land presently owned by the
12 Sterling Forest Corporation. Such sums shall remain
13 available for expenditure through fiscal year 1999.

14 (b) PROPERTY TAXES.—Nothing in this Act shall be
15 construed to authorize the United States Government, or
16 relieve the Commission and the State of New York of any
17 obligation otherwise imposed under New York State law,
18 to pay property taxes or provide for the costs of steward-
19 ship and management of any lands located in the State
20 of New York which may be acquired through this author-
21 ization.

22 (c) MANAGEMENT.—The Commission shall hold and
23 manage all property acquired with funds made available
24 under this Act for the purposes referred to in subsection
25 (a).

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