

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2405

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to carry out activities to provide for white oak restoration, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 27, 2025

Mr. BARR (for himself, Mr. COMER, Mr. DESJARLAIS, Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky, Mr. GUTHRIE, Mr. MCGARVEY, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. BERA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to carry out activities to provide for white oak restoration, and for other purposes.

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. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “The White Oak Resil-
5 ience Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1 (1) GOVERNOR.—The term “Governor” means
2 the Governor or any appropriate executive official of
3 an affected State or Indian Tribe or the Common-
4 wealth of Puerto Rico.

5 (2) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”
6 has the meaning given that term in section 4 of the
7 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance
8 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

9 (3) STATE.—The term “State” means each of
10 the several States, the District of Columbia, and
11 each territory of the United States.

12 **SEC. 3. WHITE OAK RESTORATION INITIATIVE COALITION.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—The White Oak Restoration Ini-
14 tiative Coalition shall be established—

15 (1) as a voluntary collaborative group of Fed-
16 eral, State, Tribal, and local governments and pri-
17 vate and non-governmental organizations to carry
18 out the duties described in subsection (b); and

19 (2) in accordance with the charter titled “White
20 Oak Initiative Coalition Charter” adopted by the
21 White Oak Initiative Board of Directors on March
22 21, 2023 (or a successor charter).

23 (b) DUTIES.—In addition to the duties specified in
24 the charter described in subsection (a)(2), the duties of
25 the White Oak Restoration Initiative Coalition are—

1 (1) to coordinate Federal, State, Tribal, local,
2 private, and non-governmental restoration of white
3 oak in the United States; and

4 (2) to make program and policy recommenda-
5 tions, consistent with applicable forest management
6 plans, with respect to—

7 (A) changes necessary to address Federal
8 and State policies that impede activities to im-
9 prove the health, resiliency, and natural regen-
10 eration of white oak;

11 (B) adopting or modifying Federal and
12 State policies to increase the pace and scale of
13 white oak regeneration and resiliency of white
14 oak;

15 (C) options to enhance communication, co-
16 ordination, and collaboration between forest
17 land owners, particularly for cross-boundary
18 projects, to improve the health, resiliency, and
19 natural regeneration of white oak;

20 (D) research gaps that should be ad-
21 dressed to improve the best available science on
22 white oak;

23 (E) outreach to forest landowners with
24 white oak or white oak regeneration potential;
25 and

1 (F) options and policies necessary to im-
2 prove the quality and quantity of white oak in
3 tree nurseries.

4 (c) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, TECHNICAL SERV-
5 ICES, AND STAFF SUPPORT.—The Secretary of the Inte-
6 rior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall make such per-
7 sonnel available to the White Oak Restoration Initiative
8 Coalition for administrative support, technical services,
9 and development and dissemination of educational mate-
10 rials as the Secretaries determine necessary to carry out
11 this section.

12 (d) PRIVATE FUNDING OF WHITE OAK RESTORA-
13 TION PROJECTS.—Subject to the availability of appropria-
14 tions made in advance for such purpose, the Secretary of
15 Agriculture may make funds available to the White Oak
16 Restoration Initiative Coalition to carry out this section
17 from the account established pursuant to section 1241(f)
18 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3841(f)).

19 **SEC. 4. FOREST SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture, act-
21 ing through the Chief of the Forest Service, shall establish
22 and carry out 5 pilot projects in national forests to restore
23 white oak in such forests through white oak restoration
24 and natural regeneration practices that are consistent with
25 applicable forest management plans.

1 (b) NATIONAL FORESTS RESERVED OR WITHDRAWN
2 FROM THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.—At least 3 pilot projects re-
3 quired under subsection (a) shall be carried out on na-
4 tional forests reserved or withdrawn from the public do-
5 main.

6 (c) AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO COOPERATIVE
7 AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary of Agriculture may enter
8 into cooperative agreements to carry out the pilot projects
9 required under subsection (a).

10 (d) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall
11 terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of
12 enactment of this Act.

13 **SEC. 5. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR WHITE OAK RE-**
14 **VIEW AND RESTORATION.**

15 (a) ASSESSMENT.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Inte-
17 rior shall carry out an assessment of land under the
18 administrative jurisdiction of the Department of the
19 Interior, including fish and wildlife refuges and
20 abandoned mine land, to evaluate—

21 (A) whether white oak is present on such
22 land; and

23 (B) the potential to restore white oak for-
24 ests on such land.

1 (2) USE OF INFORMATION.—In carrying out the
2 assessment under paragraph (1), the Secretary may
3 use information from sources other than the Depart-
4 ment of the Interior, including from the White Oak
5 Initiative and the Forest Service.

6 (3) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the
7 date of enactment of this section, the Secretary shall
8 submit to Congress, and make publicly available on
9 the website of the Department of the Interior, a re-
10 port regarding the results of the assessment carried
11 out under this subsection.

12 (b) PILOT PROJECTS.—After the date on which the
13 report required under subsection (a)(3) is submitted, the
14 Secretary shall establish and carry out 5 pilot projects in
15 different areas of land described in subsection (a)(1) to
16 restore and naturally regenerate white oak.

17 (c) AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO COOPERATIVE
18 AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary may enter into cooperative
19 agreements to carry out the pilot projects required under
20 subsection (b).

21 (d) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall
22 terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of
23 enactment of this Act.

1 **SEC. 6. WHITE OAK REGENERATION AND UPLAND OAK**
2 **HABITAT.**

3 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after
4 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agri-
5 culture shall establish a non-regulatory program to be
6 known as the “White Oak and Upland Oak Habitat Re-
7 generation Program” (in this section referred to as the
8 “Program”).

9 (b) DUTIES.—In carrying out the Program, the Sec-
10 retary shall—

11 (1) draw upon the best available science and
12 management plans for species of white oak to iden-
13 tify, prioritize, and implement restoration and con-
14 servation activities that will improve the growth of
15 white oak within the United States;

16 (2) collaborate and coordinate with the White
17 Oak Restoration Initiative Coalition to prioritize
18 white oak restoration initiatives;

19 (3) adopt a white oak restoration strategy
20 that—

21 (A) supports the implementation of a
22 shared set of science-based restoration and con-
23 servation activities developed in accordance with
24 paragraph (1);

25 (B) targets cost effective projects with
26 measurable results; and

1 (C) maximizes restoration outcomes with
2 no net gain of Federal full-time equivalent em-
3 ployees; and

4 (4) establish the voluntary grant and technical
5 assistance programs in accordance with subsection
6 (e).

7 (c) COORDINATION.—In establishing the Program,
8 the Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Forest Serv-
9 ice, shall consult with—

10 (1) the heads of Federal agencies, including—

11 (A) the Director of the United States Fish
12 and Wildlife Service; and

13 (B) the Chief of the Natural Resources
14 Conservation Service; and

15 (2) the Governor of each State in which res-
16 toration efforts will be carried out pursuant to the
17 Program.

18 (d) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Program in-
19 clude—

20 (1) coordinating restoration and conservation
21 activities among Federal, State, local, and Tribal en-
22 tities and conservation partners to address white oak
23 restoration priorities;

1 (2) improving and regenerating white oak and
2 upland oak forests and the wildlife habitat such for-
3 ests provide;

4 (3) carrying out coordinated restoration and
5 conservation activities that lead to the increased
6 growth of species of white oak in native white oak
7 regions on Federal, State, Tribal, and private land;

8 (4) facilitating strategic planning to maximize
9 the resilience of white oak systems and habitats
10 under changing climate conditions;

11 (5) engaging the public through outreach, edu-
12 cation, and citizen involvement to increase capacity
13 and support for coordinated restoration and con-
14 servation activities for species of white oak; and

15 (6) increasing scientific capacity to support the
16 planning, monitoring, and research activities nec-
17 essary to carry out such coordinated restoration and
18 conservation activities.

19 (e) GRANTS AND ASSISTANCE.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—To the extent that funds are
21 available to carry out this section, the Secretary
22 shall establish a voluntary grant and technical as-
23 sistance program (in this section referred to as the
24 “grant program”) to achieve the purposes of the
25 Program described in subsection (d).

1 (2) ADMINISTRATION.—

2 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall
3 enter into a cooperative agreement with the Na-
4 tional Fish and Wildlife Foundation (in this
5 subsection referred to as the “Foundation”) to
6 manage and administer the grant program.

7 (B) FUNDING.—Subject to the availability
8 of appropriations made in advance for such
9 purpose, after the Secretary enters into a coop-
10 erative agreement with the Foundation under
11 subparagraph (A), the Foundation shall for
12 each fiscal year, receive amounts to carry out
13 this subsection in an advance payment of the
14 entire amount on October 1, or as soon as prac-
15 ticable thereafter, of that fiscal year.

16 (3) APPLICATION OF NATIONAL FISH AND
17 WILDLIFE FOUNDATION ESTABLISHMENT ACT.—

18 Amounts received by the Foundation to carry out
19 the grant program shall be subject to the National
20 Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act (16
21 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.), excluding section 10(a) of that
22 Act (16 U.S.C. 3709(a)).

23 (f) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall
24 terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of
25 enactment of this Act.

1 **SEC. 7. TREE NURSERY SHORTAGES.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
3 date of enactment of this section, the Secretary of Agri-
4 culture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service,
5 shall—

6 (1) develop and implement a national strategy
7 to increase the capacity of Federal, State, Tribal,
8 and private tree nurseries to address the nationwide
9 shortage of tree seedlings; and

10 (2) coordinate such strategy with—

11 (A) the national reforestation strategy of
12 the Forest Service; and

13 (B) each regional implementation plan for
14 National Forests.

15 (b) ELEMENTS.—The strategy required under sub-
16 section (a) shall—

17 (1) be based on the best available science and
18 data; and

19 (2) identify and address—

20 (A) regional seedling shortages of bareroot
21 and container tree seedlings;

22 (B) regional reforestation opportunities
23 and the seedling supply necessary to fulfill such
24 opportunities;

25 (C) opportunities to enhance seedling di-
26 versity and close gaps in seed inventories; and

1 (D) barriers to expanding, enhancing, or
2 creating new infrastructure to increase nursery
3 capacity.

4 **SEC. 8. WHITE OAK RESEARCH.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture may
6 enter into a memorandum of understanding with an In-
7 dian Tribe or institution, including a covered land grant
8 college, to collaboratively conduct research on—

9 (1) white oak genes with resistance or tolerance
10 to stress;

11 (2) white oak trees that exhibit vigor for the
12 purpose of increasing survival and growth;

13 (3) establishing a genetically diverse white oak
14 seeds bank capable of responding to stressors;

15 (4) providing a sustainable supply of white oak
16 seedlings and genetic resources;

17 (5) improved methods for aligning seed sources
18 with the future climate at planting sites;

19 (6) reforestation of white oak through natural
20 and artificial regeneration;

21 (7) improved methods for retaining and increas-
22 ing white oak trees in forests;

23 (8) improved methods for reforesting aban-
24 doned mine land sites; and

1 (9) economic and social aspects of white oak
2 forest management across land ownerships.

3 (b) CONSULT.—In carrying out the research under
4 subsection (a), the Indian Tribe or institution, including
5 a covered land grant college, that enters into the memo-
6 randum of understanding under such subsection may con-
7 sult with such States, nonprofit organizations, institutions
8 of higher education, and other scientific bodies, as the en-
9 tity subject to such memorandum determines appropriate.

10 (c) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall
11 terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of
12 enactment of this Act.

13 (d) COVERED LAND GRANT COLLEGE DEFINED.—
14 In this section, the term “covered land grant college”
15 means an 1862 Institution, an 1890 Institution, or a 1994
16 Institution (as such terms are defined, respectively, in sec-
17 tion 2 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Edu-
18 cation Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7601)).

19 **SEC. 9. USDA FORMAL INITIATIVE.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture, act-
21 ing through the Chief of the Natural Resources Conserva-
22 tion Service and in coordination with the Chief of the For-
23 est Service, shall establish a formal initiative on white oak
24 to—

1 (1) re-establish white oak forests where appro-
2 priate;

3 (2) improve management of existing white oak
4 forests to foster natural regeneration of white oak;

5 (3) provide technical assistance to private land-
6 owners to re-establish, improve management of, and
7 naturally regenerate white oak;

8 (4) improve and expand white oak nursery
9 stock; and

10 (5) adapt and improve white oak seedlings.

11 (b) SUNSET.—The authority under this section shall
12 terminate on the date that is 7 years after the date of
13 enactment of this Act.

14 **SEC. 10. AUTHORITIES.**

15 To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary of
16 the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall use the
17 authorities provided under this title in combination with
18 other authorities to carry out projects, including—

19 (1) good neighbor agreements entered into
20 under section 8206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014
21 (16 U.S.C. 2113a); and

22 (2) stewardship contracting projects entered
23 into under section 604 of the Healthy Forests Res-
24 toration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591c).

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