

*Transcript: Floor Remarks on Central Coast Heritage Protection Act*

*As delivered on Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup>*

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Thank you, Chairman Neguse.

I am humbled to represent the Central Coast of California—one of the most beautiful districts in the nation, if not *the* most beautiful.

Places like Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument contain some of the most stunning and diverse ecosystems found anywhere in North America.

Today, I am pleased to support H.R. 803—the Protecting America’s Wilderness and Public Lands Act.

This bill would preserve the natural beauty and recreational activities available to communities in my district and beyond.

This measure includes my legislation, H.R. 973—the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act. I am proud to have worked with Chairman Grijalva, Representative Brownley and Representative Panetta, and local stakeholders to ensure that California’s Central Coast was included in this bill.

In particular, I want to thank the Carrizo Plain Conservancy, Los Padres ForestWatch, Condor Trail Association, CalWild, Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Sierra Club for their support and advocacy on behalf of our public lands.

Title four of this environmental package would designate nearly 250 thousand acres of public land within the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument as wilderness areas--the highest form of federal protection available.

It also creates a 400-mile-long Condor National Recreation trail, stretching from Los Angeles to Monterey County.

This bill is the culmination of years of collaboration with local stakeholders and community members.

It has garnered support from nearly 500 Central Coast landowners, businesses, farmers, and local officials.

A testament that protecting our environment and growing our economy are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they go hand-in-hand.

In California alone, the outdoor recreation economy is worth \$92 billion dollars and employs over 650 thousand people.

Jobs in manufacturing, retail, and tourism rely on access to the great outdoors. Climate change poses a serious threat to this sector of our economy and communities like mine will bear the brunt of the crisis.

Nearly 25 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from oil drilling. That’s one reason I’m glad the Biden administration has set an ambitious goal to protect 30 percent of our public lands by 2030. This bill will help us get there.

Our public lands are an essential asset to our environment and tourism economy. Passing this bill means we can protect both for generations to come.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I yield back.