

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop, Chairman
Mark-Up Memorandum

June 20, 2017

To: All Committee on Natural Resources Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Terry Camp
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x 6-7736)

Markup: **H.R. 2370 (Rep. Matt Gaetz)**, To authorize Escambia County, Florida, to convey certain property that was formerly part of Santa Rosa Island National Monument and that was conveyed to Escambia County subject to restrictions on use and reconveyance.
June 22 & 27, 2017; 1324 Longworth HOB.

H.R. 2370 (Rep. Matt Gaetz), “Escambia County Land Conveyance Act”

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 2370, introduced by Congressman Matt Gaetz (R-FL-01), authorizes Escambia County, Florida, to convey to other entities certain property that it received from the federal government. The specified properties were previously part of the Santa Rosa Island National Monument and were transferred to Escambia County in 1947 for public purposes. Under the terms of that conveyance, Escambia County can only reconvey the properties to the federal government or to the state of Florida. H.R. 2370 would remove that condition and add new conditions.

Cosponsors

Rep. Mo Brooks [R-AL-5]

Background

In Public Law 79-564, of July 1946, Congress abolished the Santa Rosa National Monument and directed the Secretary of the Interior to convey the federal land in the monument to Escambia County, Florida. Later, on January 15, 1947, the federal government deeded to the land to the county. Under the terms of the conveyance, Escambia County was given the authority to lease the property on Santa Rosa Island, however, they were not allowed to issue title on the property or otherwise dispose of or reconvey it. After taking custody of the land, Escambia County began offering leases for businesses and homeowners who would pay a lease fee, but not be charged property taxes. This arrangement continues today.

Santa Rosa Island has grown enormously in the intervening years, and the Board of Commissioners of both Escambia County and Santa Rosa County passed resolutions asking for a federal solution to allow current Santa Rosa Island leaseholders the option of attaining fee simple title while protecting public access to the beaches and conservation areas on the island.

An identical version of this bill, introduced in the 114th Congress as H.R. 1452, was ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources on October 8, 2015.

Major Provisions

- Authorizes Escambia County, Florida, at its discretion, to convey or dispose of all of its interest in any part of the property on Santa Rosa Island that was conveyed to it by the federal government to any person or entity, free from any restriction on conveyance or reconveyance, except for the new conditions specified in this legislation.
- Prohibits persons or entities holding a leasehold interest in such property from being required to involuntarily accept a fee interest in lieu of their leasehold interest.
- Requires Escambia County within two years of enactment to convey to Santa Rosa County, Florida, all interest held in any part of the property that falls within Santa Rosa County's jurisdictional boundaries and bars Santa Rosa County from being required to pay any sum for the property other than the actual costs associated with the conveyance.
- Permits Santa Rosa County or any other person to which property is conveyed under this Act to reconvey such property or any part of it.
- Requires Escambia County to preserve in perpetuity those areas on Santa Rosa Island currently dedicated to conservation, preservation, public recreation access, and public parking.

Cost

In the 114th Congress, CBO estimated that implementing H.R. 1452, a bill identical to H.R. 2370, would have no significant effect on the federal budget and would not affect direct spending or revenues.

Administration Position

The Administration position is unknown at this time.

Effect on Current Law

H.R. 2370 does not affect current law.