

118th CONGRESS
2nd Session

H. R. XXXX

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

[Date]

Mr./Ms. [Name of the Representative] introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on [Committee Name].

A BILL

To establish a federal program that provides investments to landowners and grants usage rights to federal land for the purposes of rewilding using the traditional ecological knowledge of Native American tribes and permacultural methods, to increase biomass and biodiversity, empower indigenous communities, mitigate wildfire risks by reducing surface-level combustible materials, and utilize the new products of the land for sustainable economic purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE

This Act may be cited as the “**Three Sisters Rewilding and Indigenous Empowerment Act of 2024**”.

SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Act:

(a) Rewilding. The process of restoring land to a state that reflects the harmonious integration of human activity within natural ecosystems, as practiced by Native American tribes prior to widespread industrialization. This approach recognizes humans as a keystone species with the responsibility to actively manage and cultivate the land to support diverse plant and animal life. Rewilding aims to reverse ecological degradation by reintroducing sustainable land management practices that foster the growth of natural, mutually supportive plant families of wild flora and fauna, thereby revitalizing ecosystems that have been diminished due to the abandonment of traditional stewardship.

(b) Native American Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The body of knowledge and practices developed over millennia by Native American tribes, deeply informed by an intimate understanding of local ecosystems. This knowledge enhances biodiversity and land productivity through sustainable practices tailored to the unique environments found across the United States.

(c) Permacultural Methods. A set of ecological principles centered around whole-systems thinking, utilizing natural ecosystems as a model for creating sustainable, natural, wild agricultural systems.

SECTION 3. PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT

(a) Eligibility and Participation.

1. **Private Landowners:** Landowners who are interested in rewilding their lands can apply for financial investments from the federal government.
2. **Federal Lands:** Usage rights will be granted for selected federal lands for rewilding purposes.
3. **Native American Tribal Leadership:** Native American tribes shall be invited to lead rewilding efforts within their traditional territories and in other areas where their ecological knowledge is particularly relevant.

(b) Investment and Grant Provisions.

1. Participants receive financial support in the form of Wild Harvest Income Sharing Agreements (WHISA) for land restoration, including planting native species, implementing water management systems, and sustainable harvesting practices.
2. A portion of the produce and meat harvested from rewilded lands shall be donated to shelters and nonprofits, reinforcing the program's commitment to fostering fundamental, basic human dignity that all Americans deserve.

SECTION 4. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC USE

(a) **Revenue Generation.** Once the lands become productive, participants are required to sustainably harvest and sell some of the resulting products of the land. The WHISA shall be repaid through a percentage of the revenue generated from these sales, with no interest accrued until the full amount is repaid. This approach will also enhance water retention and moisture levels in the soil, and the strategic burial of fallen wood will reduce wildfire risks by minimizing surface-level combustible material while serving as a long term source of nutrients for plant life growing above.

(b) **Ongoing Revenue Sharing.** After repayment, continuous income from land productivity, after the WHISA obligations are fulfilled, will be shared between the landowners, the federal government, and local communities, with the federal share earmarked for national debt reduction. A portion of this revenue will also be reinvested in further rewilding and conservation efforts.

SECTION 5. EXAMPLES OF METHODS USED

1. **Wild Tending:** This involves the selective harvesting, replanting, and nurturing of wild plants to ensure their sustainability. By carefully managing wild edible plants like camas, wild rice, and berries, indigenous people ensured a reliable food source while maintaining the natural balance of the ecosystem.
2. **Forest Gardening:** A traditional Native American method for managing forest ecosystems to cultivate a variety of food-bearing plants, trees, and shrubs, creating biodiverse landscapes that provided fruits, nuts, medicinal plants, and other resources. This method involved selective planting, pruning, and controlled burning to maintain the health of the forest while ensuring a sustainable food supply.
3. **Plant Families:** The concept of Plant Families involves strategically grouping different plant species that naturally support each other in a natural ecological system following permaculture principles. These plants work together to enhance growth, improve soil health, and protect one another from pests and diseases. These plant groupings create a resilient and self-sustaining environment, where each species contributes to the overall health and productivity of the ecosystem.
4. **Three Sisters Planting:** An agricultural technique traditionally used by Native American tribes, where corn, beans, and squash are grown together in a symbiotic relationship. The corn provides a natural trellis for the beans to climb, the beans enrich the soil with nitrogen, and the sprawling squash vines create a living mulch that suppresses weeds and retains soil moisture. This method maximizes space, improves soil fertility, and creates a balanced ecosystem that enhances the growth and yield of all three crops..

5. **Raised Beds:** A technique used by Native Americans and permacultural practitioners alike that can more than double the productive surface area of the land, improving soil fertility, water retention, and plant growth. The technique involves burying wood and organic material to create raised, sloped areas of land that retain moisture, improve soil fertility, and support diverse plant life. Additionally, the strategic burial of wood within the soil, designed to nourish the plants that grow above it, will play a critical role in reducing wildfire risks by lowering the amount of combustible material on the surface.

SECTION 6. EMPOWERMENT OF NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

(a) Tribal Leadership in Rewilding Efforts. Native American tribes shall be empowered to lead rewilding efforts in their local areas, drawing upon their deep ecological knowledge and traditions to restore and manage lands sustainably. Rewilding activities within the traditional territories of Native American tribes shall commence only under the leadership and guidance of the respective tribes.

(b) Support for Tribal Economies. The program shall include provisions to support the economic development of Native American tribes through the sustainable use of rewilded lands, including the sale of sustainably harvested game, fruits, and vegetables.

SECTION 7. MONITORING AND SUPPORT

(a) Ongoing Monitoring. The program will include continuous monitoring of land productivity and ecological health to ensure that rewilding efforts are successful and sustainable.

(b) Technical Support. Participants will have access to experts in Native American traditional ecological knowledge, permaculture, and sustainable land management who can provide guidance throughout the rewilding process.

SECTION 8. ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

(a) Enforcement. The Department of the Interior, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture and relevant Native American tribal authorities, shall enforce the provisions of this Act.

(b) Penalties. Participants found to be in violation of this Act may be subject to civil penalties, including fines and restitution.

SECTION 9. SUBSIDIARITY CLAUSE

Any duties, responsibilities, or tasks necessary for the implementation of this Act shall, whenever feasible, be executed by private individuals or entities. Should these duties, responsibilities, or tasks be beyond the capacity of private individuals or entities, they shall be undertaken by the local government. If the local government is unable to fulfill these duties, responsibilities, or tasks, they shall be undertaken by the state government. Only when these duties, responsibilities, or tasks cannot be fulfilled by private individuals, entities, local government, or state government shall they be executed by the federal government.

SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Act shall take effect 90 days after the date of its enactment.

SECTION 11. SEVERABILITY

If any provision of this Act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of this Act and the application of such provision to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

SECTION 12. SUNSET PROVISION

This Act shall be reviewed by Congress ten years after its enactment to assess its impact and effectiveness. Congress may reauthorize, amend, or repeal the Act based on this review.