

Samoan National Park Bill Passes in House

On August 5th, four representatives of Bat Conservation International testified before the House Subcommittee on National Parks on House Resolution 4818, a bill to establish a U.S. National Park in American Samoa. "In all my travels on five continents, I have yet to see a more beautiful, unique rain forest," Merlin Tuttle, Founder of BCI, told the Congressmen. BCI Trustee Verne Read testified, "I have partaken of the beautiful Samoan hospitality in their villages and at their kava ceremonies. In my travels from Africa to Nepal, I have never found a lovelier place or kinder people." Botanist Paul Cox also testified in support of the park, as did BCI member and artist, Michael Rothman. Samoan Governor A.P. Lutali and two Samoan chiefs added persuasive testimony, expressing Samoan enthusiasm for the park.

The hearing was a crucial test for the proposal to protect the only paleotropical rain forest on U.S. soil. This rain forest is also home to the unique, diurnal Samoan flying fox (*Pteropus samoensis*).

The House hearing was considered very successful by Congressional staffers, several of whom remarked that it was a "love-in." As a result of strong bipartisan support, the bill moved rapidly out of committee and onto the floor of the House where an easy win is projected. However, Samoa lacks representation in the Senate where the bill faces an uphill struggle. The companion bill, S.B. 2650, was introduced into the Senate by Bennett Johnston (D-Louisiana), James McClure (R-Idaho), Spark M. Matsunaga (D-Hawaii) and Bob Kasten (R-Wisconsin).

Passage of this bill is still very dependent on your support. Please write your Senator today. Your letter may be crucial!



American Samoa Governor A.P. Lutali (second from right) gives testimony before a U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee in support of a national park that would protect flying foxes. Paul Cox (far left) acted as interpreter for the Samoan chiefs who also testified. PHOTO BY MERLIN D. TUTTLE

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