
Congressional Legislation: Expanding Smith River National Recreation Area

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U.S. Rep. Val Hoyle (OR-04) and Rep. Jared Huffman (CA-02) have introduced the Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) Expansion Act.

The Act is designed to protect Southwest Oregon's scenic North Fork Smith River watershed and its world-class rivers, salmon strongholds, rare plants, clean drinking water, and recreation opportunities.

The House bill is a companion to Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley's legislation.

"I'm proud to introduce this legislation that is so widely supported by conservationists, businesses, and local governments in Southwest Oregon and Northern California," Hoyle said. "Keeping the renowned North Fork Smith River watershed clean is pivotal for drinking water, tourism and fishing jobs, salmon populations, and outdoor recreation. This is a special place that future generations should be able to enjoy."

“The Smith River is a treasured part of the natural landscape in my district, and its designation as a National Recreation Area has created jobs, preserved vital resources and ecosystems, and ensured folks can experience its scenic beauty for generations to come,” Huffman said. “Expanding this designation into Oregon is a commonsense step to further protect this natural treasure and extend its many economic and cultural benefits to our neighbors in Oregon.”

“When we come together to safeguard our state’s natural wonders, we can create jobs, protect resources, grow our economy, and make sure future generations of Oregonians can enjoy our incredible public lands,” Merkley said. “I thank Representative Hoyle for introducing this critical legislation in the House that I’ve been championing in the Senate. Today, we’re one step closer to expanding the Smith River National Recreation Area—a commonsense win-win for adventurers across the Northwest, folks interested in preserving the state’s beautiful places, and Southern Oregon’s economy.”

The Smith River NRA Expansion Act would:

Add 58,000 acres in Curry County Oregon to the existing Smith River NRA in Northern California that currently stops at the California/Oregon border.

Designate 75 miles of rivers as Wild and Scenic, including Baldface Creek, Chrome Creek and nearby streams.

Permanently prevent new mining projects in the recreation area.

Allow critical wildfire prevention work in the area to continue.

Hoyle said this bill complements her Southwestern Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act, which would permanently protect the North Fork Smith River watershed and other Southwestern Oregon rivers from pollution by preventing new mining projects.

“The Wild Rivers Coast and rivers like the Smith are legendary among anglers for their steelhead and salmon fisheries,” Angler’s Conservation Project, Trout Unlimited NW Regional Director Dean Finnerty said. “This region supports a robust sport fishing economy that is vitally important for many rural communities. Rep. Hoyle’s Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act is a sensible and timely way to honor the sporting heritage of this region and to conserve the cold, clean, fish-filled waters that are the hallmark of this part of America.”

“The expansion of the Smith River National Recreation Area completes a conservation effort initiated over thirty years ago,” Smith River Alliance Co-Executive Director Grant Werschull said. “This action is vitally important to downstream communities and the Smith River as a stronghold for Pacific salmon species.”

“On behalf of the more than 300 businesses we represent, we thank Congresswoman Val Hoyle and Congressman Jared Huffman for their leadership and assistance,” Crescent City-Del Norte Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Cindy Vosburg said. “This legislation provides a permanent ban on new mining claims on Oregon lands within the Smith River watershed which helps ensure our community will

continue to have high quality drinking water and one of the cleanest rivers in the USA. This is very important to our community.”