

Huffman, Hoyle introduce bill to expand Smith River National Recreation Area into SW Oregon

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Recently, U.S. Representatives Jared Huffman (CA-02) and Val Hoyle (OR-04) introduced the Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) Expansion Act 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 bill to Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley’s legislation.

“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,” said Rep. Huffman. “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.”

“I’m proud to introduce this legislation that is so widely supported by conservationists, businesses, and local governments in Southwest Oregon and Northern California,” said Rep. Hoyle. “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.”

“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,” said Senator Merkley. “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.

“On behalf of the more than 300 businesses we represent, we thank Congresswoman Val Hoyle and Congressman Jared Huffman for their leadership and assistance,” said Cindy Vosburg, Executive Director of the Crescent City-Del Norte Chamber of Commerce. “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.”

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

“The Wild Rivers Coast and rivers like the Smith are legendary among anglers for their steelhead and salmon fisheries,” said Dean Finnerty, NW Regional Director, Angler’s Conservation Project, Trout Unlimited. “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.”

