

## Huffman reintroduces NW California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act

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Representative Jared Huffman (CA-02) reintroduced his *Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act*, which would increase fire resilience, restore forests and fish habitat, rehabilitate lands impaired by illegal marijuana growing operations, increase recreation opportunities through new trails and visitor centers, and permanently protect many of northwest California's most spectacular wild places and pristine streams.

"California's North Coast is home to some of the world's most iconic public lands and spectacular wild spaces. That's why I'm proud to partner with Senator Padilla on this impressive and expansive legislative package to restore our forests, protect our watersheds, increase fire resilience, and expand recreation opportunities across the state. With this bill, we can support healthy and resilient ecosystems, as well as

ensure future generations can experience the beauty and wonder of California’s incredible public lands,” said Representative Huffman.

The larger *Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act* in the Senate would increase protections for public lands throughout northwest California, the Central Coast, and Los Angeles. It would designate nearly 600,000 acres of new wilderness, more than 583 miles of new wild and scenic rivers, and over 100,000 acres of an expanded national monument.

The legislative package consists of three bills that have also been re-introduced in the House of Representatives including:

The Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act, which is led in the House by Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.-02)

The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, which is led in the House by Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.-25), and

The San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act, which is led in the House by Rep. Judy Chu (D-Calif.-28).

“Our public lands and natural spaces are some of our state’s greatest gifts—from the San Gabriel Mountains to the Carrizo Plain to the Northern California Redwoods. It is incumbent upon us to be thoughtful stewards of these special places so that our communities can enjoy them and benefit from America’s natural resources for generations to come,” said Senator Padilla. “As we protect the environment, we must do so in a way that reverses racial and economic disparities in access to the outdoors, because our public lands belong to all Americans. Some of the protected land in this bill serves densely populated areas of the state that don’t have access to nature, which will help rebalance this historic disparity.”

“Congressman Huffman's Northwest bill is truly visionary legislation crafted collaboratively at the local level. It's a popular bill that will protect and restore invaluable federal lands and waters. It's time to get this critical measure signed into law at long last,” said Ryan Henson, Senior Conservation Director at California Wilderness Coalition.

### Background

To develop this legislation, Rep. Huffman conducted a sweeping public outreach effort in Mendocino, Humboldt, Trinity, and Del Norte counties, consulting with dozens of community leaders, tourism organizations, outdoor recreation groups, restoration specialists, tribes, county supervisors, conservation groups, forestry experts, fisheries scientists, fire ecologists, the timber industry, and other business owners. Rep. Huffman held four public meetings on the legislative proposal in Eureka, Crescent City, Weaverville, and Ukiah, and has continued to meet with constituents both in California and in Washington D.C. about the bill. The legislation incorporated several changes recommended by constituents, business interests,

environmental advocates, landowners, and local elected officials following Rep. Huffman's calls for feedback and based on numerous discussions on the bill throughout the last several years.

The legislation includes several innovative new programs to increase fire resilience; restore forests and fish habitat, as well as lands impaired by illegal marijuana growing operations; stimulate local economies through forest stewardship programs; enhance recreational opportunities including through trails and visitor centers; and permanently protect many of northwest California's spectacular wild places and pristine streams. It would not limit hunting or fishing, close any legally open roads or trails to vehicles, or affect access to or the use of private property. The wilderness designations only apply to federal lands, and wilderness and Wild and Scenic River designations do not impact existing rights and do not limit access. Maps of these proposals, a list of frequently asked questions, a one-page summary of the bill, photographs of the protected areas, and other background information is available [here](#).

Last Congress, the bill passed in the House as part of the *Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act*, a bill that includes eight individual measures that provide lasting protections for key public lands and waters in Arizona, Colorado, California, and Washington.