

STAFF SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 19-20, 2016

29. WILD TROUT WATERS POLICY**Today's Item**Information ☐Action ☒

Approve proposed amendments to FGC's policy on Designated Wild Trout Waters.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)**Background**

Fish and Game Code Section 1727 requires that DFW submit to FGC a list of no less than 25 miles of stream or stream segments and at least one lake deemed suitable for designations as wild trout waters annually. DFW proposes the addition of two new waters:

1. Hilton Lake #1 (aka Davis Lake; Mono County)
2. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Blackhawk Creek upstream to the Inland Lake Trail crossing, including the following tributaries – Buck Creek, Quarz Creek, Eight Mile Creek, Williams Creek, Harrington Creek, and Prescott Fork (Del Norte County)

DFW further proposes that South Fork Smith River also be designated as a Heritage Trout Water, which is a further designation by FGC to recognize the beauty, diversity, historical significance, and special values of California's native trout.

Significant Public Comments

DFW received seven (7) letters supporting the proposed designation of the South Fork Smith River as a Heritage Trout Water. The letters were received from the Smith River Alliance, Trout Unlimited, California Trout, Native Fish Society, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, Wendy Bertrand, and Sunny Bourdon (see exhibits 4-10).

In addition, 175 form letters supporting the designation of the South Fork Smith River were received (see exhibits 11 and 12 for samples).

Recommendation

FGC staff: Approve these amendments as recommended by DFW.

DFW: Approve the recommended amendments.

Exhibits

1. [DFW memo, dated Sep 26, 2016](#)
2. [Commission Designated Wild Trout Waters Policy text with proposed amendments](#)
3. [DFW presentation](#)
4. [Letter to DFW from Smith River Alliance, dated Sep 16, 2016](#)
5. [Letter to DFW from Trout Unlimited, dated Sep 16, 2016](#)
6. [Letter to DFW from California Trout, dated Sep 7, 2016](#)
7. [Letter to DFW from Native Fish Society, dated Aug 2, 2016](#)

STAFF SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 19-20, 2016

8. [Letter to DFW from California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, date Oct 6, 2016](#)
9. [Email to DFW from Wendy Bertrand, dated Aug 23, 2016](#)
10. [Letter to DFW from Sunny Bourdon, undated](#)
11. [Form email #1 \(Sample\), received Oct 6, 2016](#)
12. [Form email #2 \(Sample\), received Oct 6, 2016](#)

Motion/Direction

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission adopts the proposed amendments to the Commission Designated Wild Trout Waters Policy.

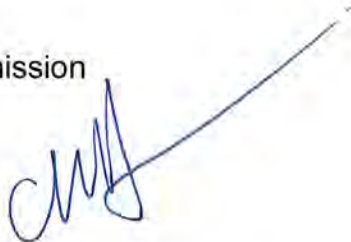
Memorandum

2016 SEP 26 PM 1:27

Date: September ²⁶~~19~~, 2016

To: Valerie Termini
Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission

From: Charlton H. Bonham
Director



Subject: **Agenda Item for the October 20, 2016 Fish and Game Commission Meeting: Recommendations for designation of new Wild Trout Waters by the Department of Fish and Wildlife for 2016, as required by Fish and Game Code, Section 1727(b).**

Fish and Game Code, Section 1727(b), requires the Department to annually prepare a list of no less than 25 miles of stream or stream segment and at least one lake deemed suitable for designation as Wild Trout Waters and to submit this list to the Commission. To comply with these requirements, the Department proposes the following waters:

South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Blackhawk Creek upstream to the Island Lake Trail crossing, including the following tributaries: Buck Creek, Quartz Creek, Eight Mile Creek, Williams Creek, Harrington Creek and Prescott Fork and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County). This proposed designation incorporates approximately 64 miles of perennial stream habitat, all of which are located on public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service, Six Rivers National Forest. The South Fork Smith River contains self-sustaining populations of both coastal cutthroat trout and coastal rainbow trout within their historic range/native drainages and is a fast-action fishery (> 2 fish per hour), located mostly in the remote and scenic Siskiyou Wilderness area. The Smith River watershed is of state and national importance, with National Recreational Area and Wild and Scenic River designations, prized salmonid fisheries and the prestigious status of the longest free-flowing, undammed river system in the United States - making this fishery a unique resource in the state and a quintessential candidate for designation as a Heritage Trout Water. The Department has conducted annual direct observation (snorkel) and intermittent angling surveys of this portion of the Smith River drainage, both of which support designation as a high quality stream fishery with robust populations of both coastal cutthroat and rainbow trout.

Hilton Lake # 1 (aka Davis Lake; Mono County). Hilton Lake #1, or Davis Lake, is located at the latitude/longitude of 37.50187N, 118.75869W, in the Hilton Creek drainage, near Tom's Place. Hilton Lake #1 is part of an interconnected lake complex known as Hilton Creek Lakes and is a fast-action fishery (>2 fish per hour).

There are 10 lakes within this basin, eight of which support self-sustaining trout fisheries with varying species composition. Anglers have the opportunity to achieve a so-called "Sierra Grand Slam" (catching four species within the same day, including brown, brook, rainbow, and golden trout in the Hilton Creek Lakes basin). The basin is located in a remote and scenic wilderness setting. This lake was singled out as the first meriting Wild Trout Water designation, owing to its fast action fishing for both brook and rainbow trout. This designation incorporates approximately 65 surface acres of aquatic habitat. The HWTP has conducted angling assessments and visual reconnaissance of spawning habitat, both of which support designation as a high quality lake fishery. Future proposed designation of other lakes in the drainage is planned, with the long-term intent of having all the lakes supporting self-sustaining trout fisheries within the basin designated as Wild Trout Waters. The Department has verified that no restoration of amphibians or other native aquatic species is planned within the drainage; thus, no conflict exists with managing this area for recreational angling into the future.

The recommended streams and lakes meet existing criteria to satisfy the requirements for designation as Wild and/or Heritage Trout Waters and no changes in angling regulations are necessary at this time.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Kevin Shaffer, Chief, Fisheries Branch (Acting) at (916) 327-8841 or kevin.shaffer@wildlife.ca.gov.

Attachment

cc: Stafford Lehr, Deputy Director
Wildlife and Fisheries Division
Stafford.Lehr@Wildlife.ca.gov

Kevin Shaffer, Chief (Acting)
Fisheries Branch
Kevin.Shaffer@Wildlife.ca.gov

Roger Bloom
Environmental Program Manager
Roger.Bloom@Wildlife.ca.gov

Jeff Weaver
Senior Environmental Scientist
Jeff.Weaver@Wildlife.ca.gov

COMMISSION DESIGNATED WILD TROUT WATERS

It is the policy of the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) to:

- I. Designate certain state waters to be managed exclusively for wild trout. Commission designated wild trout waters should provide a quality experience by providing the angler with an opportunity to fish in aesthetically pleasing and environmentally productive waters with trout populations whose numbers or sizes are largely unaffected by the angling process.

Waters designated by the Commission for wild trout management shall meet the following criteria:

A. Angler Access:

1. Open for public angling with unrestricted access when of sufficient dimensions to accommodate anglers without overcrowding; or
2. Open for public angling with controlled access under a plan approved by the Commission setting forth the number of anglers and the method of distribution.

- B. Able to support, with appropriate angling regulations, wild trout populations of sufficient magnitude to provide satisfactory trout catches in terms of number or size of fish.

II. Wild trout waters shall be managed in accordance with the following stipulations:

- A. Domestic strains of catchable-sized trout shall not be planted in designated wild trout waters.
- B. Hatchery-produced trout of suitable wild and semi-wild strains may be planted in designated waters, but only if necessary to supplement natural trout reproduction.
- C. Habitat protection is of utmost importance for maintenance of wild trout populations. All necessary actions, consistent with State law, shall be taken to prevent adverse impact by land or water development projects affecting designated wild trout waters.

III. The Department shall prepare and periodically update a management plan for each water designated as a wild trout water.

- IV. Certain designated wild trout waters may be further designated by the Commission as "Heritage Trout Waters", to recognize the beauty, diversity, historical significance, and special values of California's native trout. Heritage Trout Waters shall meet the following additional criteria:

- A. Only waters supporting populations that best exemplify indigenous strains of native trout within their historic drainages may qualify for designation.
 - B. Heritage Trout Waters shall be able to provide anglers with the opportunity to catch native trout consistent with the conservation of the native trout present.
- V. Recognizing the importance of native trout to California's natural heritage, the Department shall emphasize education and outreach efforts to inform the public about our native trout, their habitats, and the activities for restoration of native trout when implementing the Heritage Trout Program.
- A. Implement a Heritage Trout Angler Recognition Certificate through which anglers will have the opportunity to have their catches of California native trout recognized by the Commission. The criteria for receiving the formal recognition shall be maintained by the Department's Heritage and Wild Trout Program. To receive a certificate of recognition, anglers shall submit an application with supporting materials to the Department for review.

The following waters are designated by the Commission as "wild trout waters":

1. American River, North Fork, from Palisade Creek downstream to Iowa Hill Bridge (Placer County).
2. Carson River, East Fork, upstream from confluence with Wolf Creek excluding tributaries (Alpine County).
3. Clavey River, upstream from confluence with Tuolumne River excluding tributaries (Tuolumne County).
4. Fall River, from Pit No. 1 powerhouse intake upstream to origin at Thousand Springs including Spring Creek, but excluding all other tributaries (Shasta County).
5. Feather River, Middle Fork, from Oroville Reservoir upstream to Sloat vehicle bridge, excluding tributaries (Butte and Plumas counties).
6. Hat Creek, from Lake Britton upstream to Hat No. 2 powerhouse (Shasta County).
7. Hot Creek, from Hot Springs upstream to west property line of Hot Creek Ranch (Mono County).
8. Kings River, from Pine Flat Lake upstream to confluence with South and Middle forks excluding tributaries (Fresno County).
9. Kings River, South Fork, from confluence with Middle Fork upstream to western boundary of Kings Canyon National Park excluding tributaries (Fresno County).
10. Merced River, South Fork, from confluence with mainstem Merced River upstream to western boundary of Yosemite National Park excluding tributaries (Mariposa County).
11. Nelson Creek, upstream from confluence with Middle Fork Feather River excluding tributaries (Plumas County).
12. Owens River, from Five Bridges crossing upstream to Pleasant Valley Dam excluding tributaries (Inyo County).
13. Rubicon River, from confluence with Middle Fork American River upstream to Hell Hole Dam excluding tributaries (Placer County).

14. Yellow Creek, from Big Springs downstream to confluence with the North Fork of the Feather River (Plumas County).
15. Cottonwood Creek, upstream from confluence with Little Cottonwood Creek, including tributaries (Inyo County).
16. Klamath River, from Copco Lake to the Oregon border (Siskiyou County).
17. McCloud River, from Lake McCloud Dam downstream to the southern boundary of Section 36, T38N, R3W, M.D.B. & M. (Shasta County).
18. Deep Creek, from confluence with Green Valley Creek downstream to confluence with Willow Creek (San Bernardino County).
19. Middle Fork Stanislaus River, from Beardsley Afterbay Dam to Sand Bar Diversion Dam (Tuolumne County).
20. Truckee River, from confluence with Trout Creek downstream to the Nevada State line (excluding the property owned by the San Francisco Fly Casters Club) (Nevada and Sierra counties).
21. Sespe Creek, a 25-mile section between the Lion Campground and the boundary of the U.S. Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest (Ventura County).
22. East Fork Carson River, from Hangman's Bridge near Markleeville downstream to the Nevada state line (Alpine County).
23. Bear Creek, Bear Valley Dam (impounding Big Bear Lake) downstream to the confluence with the Santa Ana River (San Bernardino County).
24. Lavezolla Creek (Sierra County).
25. Laurel Lake #1 and Laurel Lake #2 (Mono County).
26. Middle Fork San Joaquin River - Northern boundary of the Devils Postpile National Monument downstream to the Lower Falls (3.6 miles); and footbridge just above the confluence with Shadow Creek downstream to the footbridge just above upper Soda Springs Campground (4 miles) (Madera County).
27. South Fork Kern River watershed from its headwaters downstream to the southern boundary of the South Sierra Wilderness (Tulare County).
28. Golden Trout Creek drainage, including tributaries, from confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters (Tulare County).
29. Eagle Lake, north of Susanville (Lassen County).
30. Upper Kern River, from the Forks of the Kern, upstream to Tyndall Creek in Sequoia National Park (Tulare County).
31. Heenan Lake, near Markleeville and Monitor Pass (Alpine County).
32. Upper Truckee River, including tributaries, upstream from the confluence with Showers Creek (El Dorado and Alpine counties).
33. Sacramento River, including tributaries, from Box Canyon Dam downstream to Scarlett Way in Dunsmuir (Siskiyou County) and from the county bridge at Sweetbriar downstream to Lake Shasta (Shasta County).
34. Long Lake (Plumas County).
35. Piru Creek, including tributaries, upstream of Pyramid Lake (Ventura and Los Angeles counties).
36. Upper Stony Creek including tributaries, upstream from Mine Camp Campground (Colusa, Glenn, and Lake counties).
37. Lower Honeymoon Lake (Fresno County).
38. Upper East Fork San Gabriel River, including tributaries, upstream from Heaton Flat (Los Angeles County).
39. Royce Lake # 2 (Fresno County).

40. Lower Yuba River, from Englebright Dam to the confluence with the Feather River (Yuba and Nevada counties).
41. Parker Lake (Mono County).
42. South Fork San Joaquin River and all tributaries from Florence Lake upstream to the boundary of Kings Canyon National Park including the Piute Creek drainage (Fresno County).
43. Sallie Keyes Lakes (Fresno County).
44. Sacramento River from Keswick Dam downstream to the Red Bluff Diversion Dam (Shasta and Tehama counties).
45. Pauley Creek from the confluence with the Downie River upstream to the headwaters (Sierra County).
46. Caples Creek from the confluence with the Silver Fork American River upstream to Caples Lake Dam (El Dorado and Alpine counties).
47. Putah Creek from Lake Solano upstream to Monticello Dam on Lake Berryessa (Solano and Yolo counties).
48. Lake Solano (Solano and Yolo counties).
49. Milton Reservoir (Nevada and Sierra counties).
50. Gerle Creek Divide Reservoir (El Dorado County).
51. Manzanita Lake (Shasta County).
52. Maggie Lake (Tulare County).
53. Little Kern River drainage, including tributaries, from the confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters (Tulare County).
54. Hilton Lake #1 (Davis Lake) (Mono County).
55. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Blackhawk Creek upstream to the Island Lake Trail crossing, including the following tributaries: Buck Creek, Quartz Creek, Eight Mile Creek, Williams Creek, Harrington Creek and Prescott Fork and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County).

The following "wild trout waters" are further designated by the Commission as "heritage trout waters".

1. Clavey River, upstream from confluence with Tuolumne River, excluding tributaries (Tuolumne County).
2. Golden Trout Creek drainage, including tributaries, from confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters (Tulare County).
3. Eagle Lake, north of Susanville (Lassen County).
4. Upper Kern River, from the Forks of the Kern, upstream to Tyndall Creek in Sequoia National Park (Tulare County).
5. Heenan Lake, near Markleeville and Monitor Pass (Alpine County).
6. Upper Truckee River, including tributaries, upstream from the confluence with Showers Creek (El Dorado and Alpine counties).
7. Piru Creek, including tributaries, upstream of Pyramid Lake (Ventura and Los Angeles counties).
8. Upper Stony Creek including tributaries, upstream from Mine Camp Campground (Colusa, Glenn, and Lake counties).
9. Upper East Fork San Gabriel River, including tributaries, upstream from Heaton Flat (Los Angeles County).

10. Lower Yuba River, from Englebright Dam to the confluence with the Feather River (Yuba and Nevada counties).
11. Little Kern River drainage; including tributaries, from the confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters (Tulare County).
12. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Blackhawk Creek upstream to the Island Lake Trail crossing, including the following tributaries: Buck Creek, Quartz Creek, Eight Mile Creek, Williams Creek, Harrington Creek and Prescott Fork and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County).

(Amended: 01/04/94; 06/22/95; 03/06/97; 11/06/98; 04/02/99; 12/08/00; 04/03/03; 12/12/08; 11/04/09; 10/21/10; 11/17/11; 11/07/12; 11/06/13; 12/03/14; and 12/10/15)

Designated Heritage & Wild Trout Waters Annual Recommendation



Fish and Game Commission Meeting

October 19-20, 2016

**Jeff Weaver, Senior Environmental Scientist
Fisheries Branch**



Program Background

- F&GC, Section 1727(b), requires no less than 25 miles of stream or stream segment and at least one lake deemed suitable for designation as Wild or Heritage Trout Waters per year
- Commission policy to designate certain state waters to be managed exclusively for wild trout
- Commission policy to further designate certain state waters as “Heritage Trout Waters” to recognize the beauty, diversity, historical significance and special values of California’s native trout

Overview

- Currently 53 designated Wild Trout Waters
- Includes >1500 miles of stream habitat
- Thirteen lakes
- Eleven Heritage Trout Waters
- Increased emphasis on watershed-level designation, native species and habitat protection

2016 Wild & Heritage Trout Water Recommendations

- Upper South Fork Smith River
 - From confluence with Blackhawk Creek upstream to Island Lake Trail crossing, including select tributaries (Del Norte County)
- Hilton Lake # 1 (Davis Lake)
 - Located in the eastern Sierra Nevada, near Tom's Place (Mono County)

South Fork Smith River

- ~ 64 miles of perennial stream habitat
- Coastal cutthroat trout + resident coastal rainbow trout
- Fast-action fishery (>2 fish per hour)
- Located largely in Siskiyou Wilderness
- Proposing Heritage Trout designation

South Fork Smith River Designated Heritage Trout Water



Designated Waters

-  South Fork Smith River
-  Tributaries

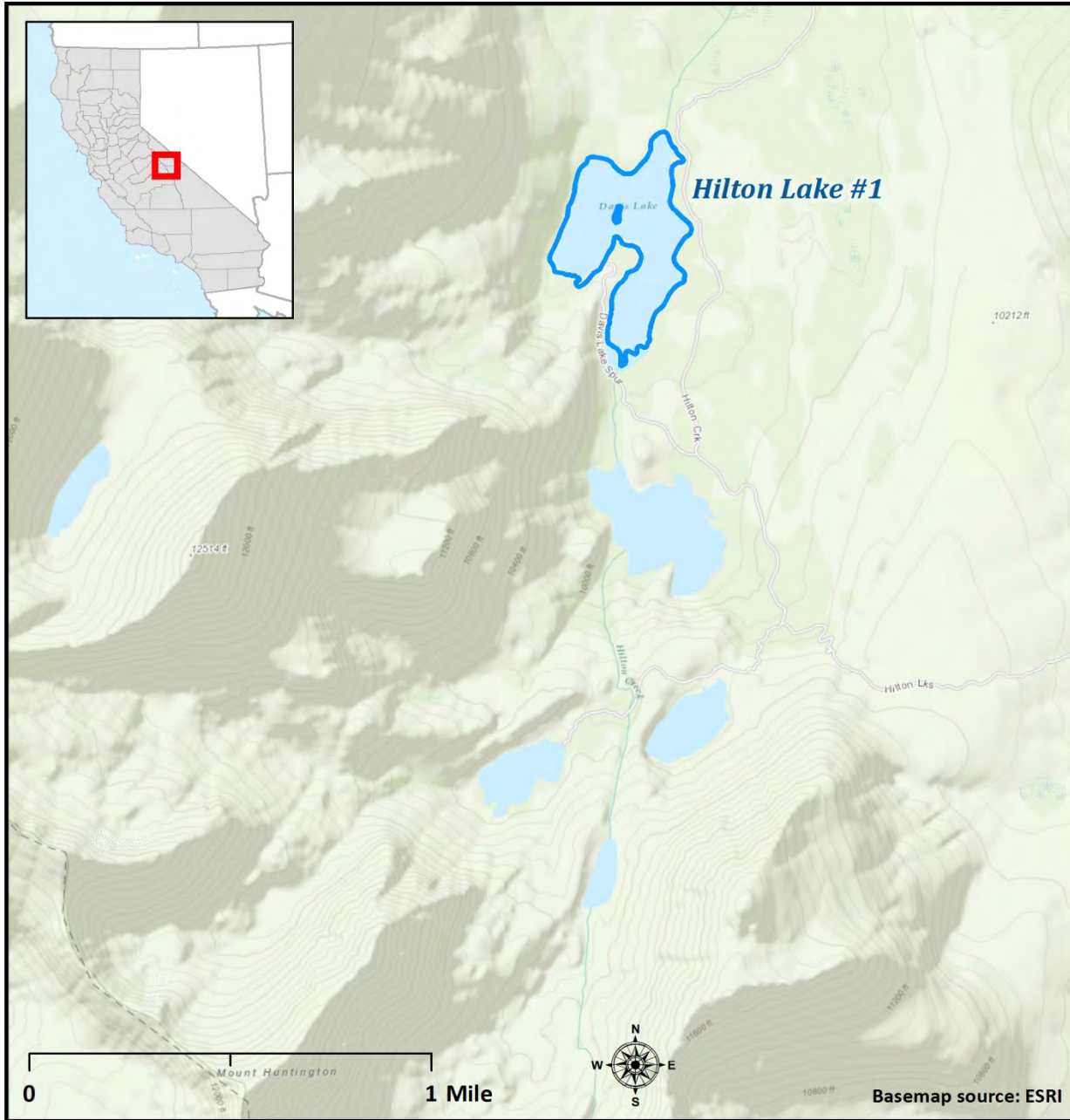
South Fork Smith River Heritage Trout Designation - From the confluence with Blackhawk Creek upstream to the Island Lake Trail crossing, including the following tributaries: Buck Creek, Quartz Creek, Eight Mile Creek, Williams Creek, Harrington Creek, and Prescott Fork and excluding all other tributaries. (Del Norte County). This designation includes approximately 64 miles of stream habitat.



Hilton Lake #1 (Davis Lake)

- Located in the Hilton Creek drainage, west of Rock Creek (between Mammoth Lakes and Bishop)
- Northern-most of the 10 Hilton Lakes
- 9808' elevation
- Approximately 65 surface acres
- Fast-action fishery (>2 fish per hour)
- Proposing Wild Trout designation

Hilton Lake #1 Designated Wild Trout Water



 Designated Water

***Hilton Lake #1
Designated Wild Trout Water -
also known as Davis Lake
(Mono County).
This designation includes
approximately 65 acres of
aquatic habitat.***



Summary

- Propose Wild and Heritage Trout designation of 64 stream miles of upper SF Smith River
- Propose Wild Trout designation of Hilton Lake #1 (Davis Lake)
- Multi-year, incremental approach for future designations (both drainages)

Questions ♦ Thank You



Jeff Weaver
Senior Environmental Scientist
(916) 464-6356
jeff.weaver@wildlife.ca.gov



SMITH RIVER ALLIANCE

P.O. Box 2129, Crescent City, CA 95531
www.smithriveralliance.org

September 16, 2016

Jeff Weaver, Senior Environmental Scientist
Fisheries Branch, Heritage and Wild Trout Program Leader
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
1701 Nimbus Road, Suite C
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

RE: Support for Upper South Fork Smith Heritage Trout Designation

Dear Jeff:

The Smith River Alliance strongly supports the proposed Heritage Trout designation for the Upper South Fork of the Smith above Black Hawk Bar, including tributaries. The nominated reach provides anglers with the unparalleled opportunity to see or catch one of California's most prized trout – the Coastal Cutthroat Trout in a Wilderness setting filled with solitude, tremendous beauty, and extraordinary biodiversity.

Most of the proposed area considered for designation is located inside the Siskiyou Wilderness, created in 1984. The Wilderness Area spans three national forests for a total of 182,802 acres. It includes one of the richest temperate coniferous forests in the world and the annual rainfall record for the lower 48 states (240") was recorded nearby in the watershed. The amazing biodiversity here is due in part to the fact that the region escaped extensive glaciation during the last ice age.

Heritage Trout Waters recognize the beauty, diversity, historical significance and special values of California's native trout across the state. Statewide there are eleven designated streams which include the Clavey River, a tributary of the Tuolumne River, the Golden Trout Creek, including tributaries, from its confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters, and the Upper Kern River, above the Forks of the Kern. All of these rivers are wild and alive with unique native fish, all an important part of our California history.

Without question, the Smith should join this esteemed group of rivers. Heritage Trout designation requires a candidate reach to be home to a native trout within their historic range. For the Smith that fish is the Coastal Cutthroat Trout, *Oncorhynchus clarki clarki*. Coastal cutthroat trout are anadromous (though not always) and are found in northern coastal watersheds. The Smith River has the largest and most diverse population of these trout in California.

Thank you for your leadership in advancing this proposal. The Upper South Fork Smith is absolutely a deserving nomination at this time.

Sincerely,

Grant Werschull and Patty McCleary, Executive Director Team
grant@smithriveralliance.org



Brian J. Johnson
California Director

September 16, 2016

Charlton Bonham
Director, California Department of Fish & Wildlife
Sacramento, CA

Dear Director Bonham:

This letter conveys the support of Trout Unlimited, Wild Steelheaders United, the California Council of Trout Unlimited, and the Shasta-Trinity-Cascades Chapter of Trout Unlimited for the proposed designation of a portion of the South Fork Smith River as a State Wild and Heritage Trout Water. TU believes this designation is appropriate, timely, and will help with wild steelhead and trout recovery goals and improve the unique angling opportunities in the Smith River watershed.

This stream reach is open for angling in the general season (April-November) and provides exceptional fishing for native coastal cutthroat trout, native resident rainbow trout, and even summer steelhead. Although current angling regulations do not permit fishing for winter steelhead in that segment of the SF Smith proposed for designation, this reach is vital for the winter run as spawning and rearing habitat.

The Smith River's reputation as the premier wild steelhead fishery in California is well deserved. However, the continuing decline of wild steelhead populations along much of the California coast requires a strong and sustained response. This response must include measures to protect and restore habitat and streamflows, and to strengthen protections and management for the best remaining wild steelhead runs. The proposed designation for the SF Smith is one such measure. We endorse this designation, and pledge to work with the Department to ensure that the conservation and angling promise of such action is fully delivered.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Johnson
California Director, Trout Unlimited

Erik Young, Chair, California Council of Trout Unlimited
San Francisco, CA

Michael Caranci, President, Shasta-Trinity-Cascades Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Redding, CA

Dwayne Meadows, Coordinator, Wild Steelheaders United
Canyon City, OR

Trout Unlimited: America's Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization

California Office: 4221 Hollis Street, Emeryville CA 94608

(510) 528-4772 • bjohnson@tu.org • www.tu.org



September 7, 2016

Roger Bloom
Jeff Weaver
Michael Dege
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Heritage and Wild Trout Program

RE: South Fork Smith River Heritage Trout Designation

Gentlemen,

California Trout would like to express our enthusiastic support for the Department of Fish and Wildlife's proposal to designate the South Fork Smith River as a Heritage Trout Water under the Department's Heritage and Wild Trout Program. Thank you for taking the initiative to offer this substantial additional protection for the South Fork Smith River.

As you are aware, the Smith River has long been considered one of California's most pristine watersheds. The free-flowing Smith River—without a single dam along its entire length—makes it one of the crown jewels of the National Wild and Scenic River program. The Smith River is a recognized Salmon Stronghold, sustaining high quality habitat and abundant and thriving populations of several native salmon and trout species. The South Fork Smith supports both resident and anadromous cutthroat trout life histories, resident coastal rainbow trout, and world-class steelhead. Perennially cold and clear waters sustain these fish and offer un-matched recreational fishing opportunities.

There truly is no better place in California for this special designation.

This Heritage Trout designation will ensure the Smith River has adequate resources for long-term protection, provide opportunities for research and monitoring, and offer a venue in which to engage the public in meaningful dialogue on the value of resource protection and stewardship.

CalTrout has long sought to protect the Smith River and its incredible beauty and unique resource values. We participated in the effort to extend Wild and Scenic designation to the Smith, we championed land acquisitions that have cumulatively protected over 476 square miles of the Smith River as a National Recreation Area, and we've supported ESA protection of native salmon and steelhead in the Smith.

The Wild Trout Program was established by the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) in 1971 and was later expanded in 1998 to include California heritage trout. With the program goal to "recommend new waters to be designated as wild trout fisheries to the Commission", there is no better time nor place for this special designation.

Again, we thank you for your leadership in protecting this outstanding river and its incomparable fishery resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curtis Knight". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Curtis" and last name "Knight" clearly distinguishable.

Curtis Knight
Executive Director



NATIVE FISH SOCIETY

Advancing the Recovery of Native, Wild Fish in Their Homewaters

August 2, 2016

To: Michael Dege,
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Heritage and Wild Trout Program

From: Jake Crawford, Southern Regional Manager, Native Fish Society
Sunny Bourdon, Smith River Steward, Native Fish Society

Re: Smith River Heritage Trout Designation

Dear Michael Dege,

Thank you for the opportunity to extend our support for the designation of California's Smith River, one of the Pacific Northwest's finest watersheds, as a Heritage Trout Designation. Native Fish Society wholeheartedly recommends that the Smith River receive the Heritage Trout Designation, based on its remarkable wild, native populations of steelhead, resident coastal rainbow trout and coastal cutthroat trout. In addition to its impressive native fish populations, the river is highly regarded for its water quality, whitewater recreation and aesthetic beauty, making it one of the crown jewels of the national Wild and Scenic River program.

We support the department's effort to designate additional protections for this important river, and welcome further opportunities to assist in efforts to prevent adverse impacts to the watershed. Our hope is that through proper management of the fishery, this designation will support diverse and resilient populations of wild, native fish for future generations.

Respectfully,

Jake Crawford
Southern Regional Manager

Mark Sherwood
Communications Director

Sunny Bourdon
Smith River Steward

About Native Fish Society: Founded in 1995, the Native Fish Society utilizes the best-available science and our grassroots network of River Stewards to conserve and restore the Northwest's wild, native fish and safeguard their freshwater habitats. The Native Fish Society has 3,000 members and supports 85 volunteer River Stewards in Oregon, Washington, Western Idaho and Northern California.



California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

October 6, 2016

Mr. Jeff Weaver
Sr. Environmental Scientist
Fisheries Branch, Heritage and Wild Trout Program Leader
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
1701 Nimbus Road, Suite C
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

RE: Upper South Fork Smith Heritage Trout Designation

Dear Mr. Weaver:

Thank you for the opportunity to support the proposed Heritage Trout designation for the Upper South Fork of the Smith. We agree with staff at the Department of Fish and Wildlife and our colleagues at California Trout, Smith River Alliance, and Trout Unlimited that the Smith River should be included in the Heritage Trout Program.

For decades the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance has been an advocate for protection and restoration projects in Smith River watershed. As one of California's Wild and Scenic River gems ---- and also a recognized "salmon stronghold" ---- this is indeed an appropriate watershed for a Heritage and Wild Trout designation.

We look forward to following the designation process during the coming weeks. And you can be assured we will continue to explore, float, and fish the Smith River at every available opportunity. It is a wonderful thought indeed to be fishing for Coastal Cutthroat trout in the backcountry and Wilderness canyons of the South Fork Smith River.

Sincerely yours,

Jim Crenshaw
1248 East Oak Ave. #D
Woodland, CA 95776

FYI.

From: Wendy S Bertrand [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 23, 2016 1:14 PM
To: Weaver, Jeff@Wildlife
Cc: Kunstal, Heidi@Del Norte County; [REDACTED]
Chris Howard; Roger Gitlin; [REDACTED] patty mcclary;
Natalynne DeLapp; Robin Fornoff
Subject: Designation of 25 miles of the Smith River

Jeff Weaver
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
Sacramento, California

Re: **Designation of 25 miles of the Smith River**

Dear Jeff Weaver,

August 23, 2016

In follow up to our conversation of yesterday, I spoke to several parties to try to understand the confusing letter the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors posted on the agenda for the August 23, 2016, Board meeting as item #18, addressed to Director Charlton H. Bonham, California Department of Fish Wildlife (CDFW). I expressed to you my alarm at their reaction to the CDFW August 3, 2016, meeting where you invited comment and dialogue about the selection of 25 miles of the Smith River (mostly in wilderness) for designation of CDFW Heritage and Wild Trout Program.

Most of the residents of Del Norte love the Smith River and know that it has many exceptional attributes, so I think they would be very pleased that the state of California has recognized the heritage quality of our river water and the need to pay attention, respect, and take planning action to assure the river's qualities remain exceptional. Thank you for selecting part of the Smith River to join many other rivers with this prestigious appropriate state designation.

It is clear by the County of Del Norte Community Development Department's draft to CDFW, for the Board of Supervisors, is aware that this program has existed since 1998 and appreciates the intent. The Board has known that CDFW has been looking at the Smith River for the last decade and they have used the same opposing tactic in the past without educating themselves, choosing to work more closely with CDFW, and without making an effort to update the public on your agencies positive efforts to celebrate and help take care of our river for wild trout. Their letter seems to indicate that one can predict the future and know all the variables before a plan is developed, which is unfortunate as we know that plans are living documents and are being developed and coordinated and adjusted continuously by various concerned entities. No one knows the future, so asking you to defer your mandated work because of future unknowns would be unproductive. And I believe that those working on the Fish Management Plan (MFP) and other's will be alerting Mr. Hemmingway and Mr. Howard (Supervisors) or their staff that they consider the *Heritage Trout Water* designation desirable and worthwhile.

Note that this Board of Supervisor's letter, drafted by staff, is aware of your October CDFW meeting and I hope they make sure the local public knows of the meeting and encourages people to attend as they claim public involvement is important. A big article in the Triplicate by you or them would be a good start. The Board of Supervisors have not included public participation in their decision to write a letter to stall your project and so it is rather awkward to hear them criticize your agency. I copy this letter to our Del Norte County Community Development Department Staff, and others who would be capable of working with you. When the designation is confirmed and if our Board of Supervisors decides to show leadership by expressing interest, and dedicating staff time to participate actively in your three year planning process, remember that we who love the river, or come from far away to enjoy it, will want to be aware of how our individual actions may impact the trout heritage.

Respectfully,
Wendy Bertrand, Architect living in Del Norte County

I am writing in support of the designation of the upper South Fork Smith as Heritage and Wild Trout Waters. Through my work with Smith River Alliance and California Fish and Wildlife, I have had the pleasure of exploring and observing first-hand this remote (but accessible), rugged and beautiful stretch of wild river and its aquatic inhabitants. I have gotten to know this river and its tributaries, not only by walking across the land, but by underwater observations. Snorkeling the South Fork is a joy; it's clear, cool, the geology is interesting, and the cutthroat are numerous and gorgeous! The upper South Fork is more than deserving of any designation that provides additional protections and monitoring. The Heritage and Wild Trout designation would be a positive addition to the SF Smith's resume as a Wild and Scenic River, National Recreation Area, and a Wilderness Area. The designation would also be an acknowledgment of the healthy, self-sustaining, wild Coastal Cutthroat trout population, which gets very little recognition as most conservation effort is typically focused on the more well-known and larger anadromous salmonids that co-exist in the Smith. Speaking of other salmonids, the upper South Fork is also spawning and over-summer rearing grounds for the Threatened and Endangered Coho salmon. Additional funding and monitoring this stretch of river would also benefit the data set we have on Coho. Bringing it back to Coastal Cutthroat, these fish are amazing, have interesting and unique life histories, and have been successfully inhabiting the South Fork for eons, and deserve a Heritage and Wild Trout designation.

If designation happens, as I am confident it will, I would encourage additional education. This is an opportunity to educate the public about the fish of the South Fork. I would like to see signage at trailheads, identifying the different species and life stages of fish, fishing regulations, and suggestions on how to be a responsible conservation-minded angler. It is an opportunity teach anglers about the effects of air exposure (if they plan on releasing their catch), encourage catch-and-release tactics, and the principles of Leave No Trace. In the summer, it would be valuable for anglers to know there is a chance they could encounter the elusive "summer steelhead" and that they are out-of-season and need to be left alone. I think the concerns about increased angler pressure and out-of-towners can be mitigated with good, comprehensive educational signage and public outreach.

The South Fork Smith is truly a gem and is an excellent choice for Heritage and Wild Trout Waters designation.

Thank you,

Sunny Bourdon

Smith River Steward
Native Fish Society

[REDACTED]

From: [Ted Shapas](#)
To: [FGC](#)
Subject: I support the South Fork Smith River as Heritage Trout Waters
Date: Thursday, October 06, 2016 11:56:20 AM

Dear President Sklar and members of the California Fish and Game Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today in support of designating 25 miles of the upper South Fork Smith River as the next Heritage Trout Waters.

Already, the Smith River is highly regarded for its water quality, whitewater recreation and aesthetic beauty; it is truly one of the crown jewels of California and the national Wild and Scenic Rivers program. A Heritage Trout Waters designation will add to these accolades and help protect and sustain the 25 miles in the upper South Fork for the Smith River's prized Coastal Cutthroat Trout - one of the most unique native, trout species along the entire Pacific Coast.

Coastal Cutthroat Trout are fascinating native fish species, and the South Fork Smith is worthy of the North Coast's first waters with this designation. It is a great example of the quintessential Heritage Trout Waters with healthy, diverse and resilient wild trout that provide an opportunity for the public to experience these unique native fish in a beautiful wilderness area.

Thank you for the opportunity to show my support for the California of Fish and Wildlife's recommendation of the South Fork Smith River, and please add my name for this river to join the state's list of most prized wild, native fish rivers as Heritage Trout Waters.

Respectfully,

Sincerely,
Ted Shapas
Alamo, CA
94507-2839

From: [Roger Funk](#)
To: [FGC](#)
Subject: Support for Proposed Heritage Trout Designation of Upper South Fork Smith
Date: Thursday, October 06, 2016 9:06:32 AM

Dear President Eric Sklar,

I strongly support the proposed Heritage Trout designation for the Upper South Fork of the Smith above Black Hawk Bar, including tributaries.

The nominated reach provides anglers with the unparalleled opportunity to see or catch one of California's most prized trout – the Coastal Cutthroat Trout in a Wilderness setting filled with solitude, tremendous beauty, and extraordinary biodiversity.

The Smith River has the largest and most diverse population of these trout in California.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal to designate the Smith River as a Heritage Trout Stream.

Sincerely,

--

Roger Funk

