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Huffman, DeFazio Push to Expand Smith River National Recreation Area to Include Oregon

Washington, D.C. – Today, Representatives Jared Huffman (CA-02) and Peter DeFazio (OR-04) introduced legislation to expand the Smith River National Recreation Area by 58,000 acres, which would protect the diverse ecosystems of the rivers, streams, and adjacent lands of the North Fork Smith River watershed, and help boost the local fishing and recreation industries that many Pacific Northwest families rely on.

In 1990, Congress enacted legislation to establish the Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) to protect the watershed, but the boundary of the NRA stopped at the Oregon border, leaving the North Fork of the Smith River and its tributaries unprotected.

“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.”

“Currently, parts of Oregon’s North Fork of the Smith River and its tributaries remain unprotected,” **said Rep. DeFazio.** “The Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act would protect this diverse ecosystem of rivers, streams and adjacent lands of the watershed. I’m proud to join Representative Huffman in championing the conservation of the region which provides clean drinking water to communities and boosts the recreation economy.”

“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, their water providers, and the Smith River as a stronghold for Pacific salmon species. We’re deeply grateful to Congressman Huffman for his assistance with this critically important legislation.”

“Our America’s Wild Rivers Coast 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. Congressmen Huffman and DeFazio are to be commended for introducing the Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act. It 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.”

“Oregon’s North Fork Smith watershed is a botanical treasure and should have been included in the Smith River National Recreation Area in 1990,” **said Michael Dotson, Executive Director of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center.** “We thank Congressmen Huffman and DeFazio for introducing this legislation that will also designate many of the North Fork Smith River’s cold-water tributaries as Wild & Scenic. Anyone who has had a chance to explore the remote, primitive backcountry of Oregon’s North Fork Smith headwaters knows that it is one of the most spectacular rivers in the world.”

“Expanding the Smith River National Recreation Area to include the North Fork of the Smith is completely aligned with the stewardship and conservation values embraced by West Coast fishermen,” **said Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations Executive Director, Mike Conroy.** “The Smith is one of our last great undammed rivers, making it a crown jewel of the salmon coast. We appreciate Congressmen Huffman and DeFazio’s leadership in securing this important protection for the Smith River.”

“On behalf of the more than 300 businesses we represent, we thank Congressmen Huffman and DeFazio 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 NRA expansion would permanently withdraw the land from new mining claims, helping to protect this sensitive area from proposed nickel strip mines, and protect 74 miles of scenic rivers, including Baldface Creek, Chrome Creek, and nearby streams. In addition, the legislation would task the U.S. Forest Service with updating the recreation plan to reflect the new additions to the National Recreation Area, and produce a special study of streams, fens, wetlands, and potentially unstable and vulnerable aquatic habitat areas.

Text of the legislation can be found [here](#).

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Congressman Jared Huffman represents California's 2nd Congressional District, which spans the North Coast of the state from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Oregon border, and includes Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt, Trinity, and Del Norte counties. He currently serves on the Committee on Natural Resources, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. In the 117th Congress, he chairs the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife. He is the founder of the Congressional Freethought Caucus.

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