



FORESTS FOREVER

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Forests Forever applauds Boxer-Solis California wilderness bill

Legislation would preserve vast tracts of wild public lands

The preservation of wild land in California took another step forward last week when Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Rep. Hilda Solis (D-CA) introduced the California Wild Heritage Act of 2007.

Sen. Boxer introduced the bill in the Senate as S. 493.

The measure would protect some 2.4 million acres of federal public lands in California as wilderness, and designate more than 280 miles of wild, scenic and recreational rivers. Under wilderness status, the most protective federal designation, logging, mining, roadbuilding, drilling, development and motorized vehicles are not allowed.

Portions of thirteen national forests and several areas of BLM-managed land across the state are included in the bill's protections.

In addition to designating land to be protected as wilderness, the California Wild Heritage Act would establish Salmon Restoration Areas, a Sacramento River National Recreation Area, and an Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest.

“Boxer’s bill continues her efforts to see that the state’s treasured wild places—forests, rivers, deserts— are preserved for all of us, and for California’s future,” said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever in San Francisco.

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The California Wild Heritage Act was originally introduced in 2002. Parts of that bill have already become law.

The Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Act (H.R. 233/S. 128) was passed last year, giving wilderness protection to 273,000 acres of public land in Northern California.

Another part of Boxer's legislation was passed in 2002, giving wilderness protection to more than 57,000 acres of federal forests in Monterey and San Benito counties, including land added to the Ventana Wilderness near Big Sur.

"Wilderness is a tradition in California," said Hughes. "It is one of the defining features of the state. As our population grows, it becomes more important than ever that we preserve the wild areas that are left. They provide wildlife habitat, clean drinking water, and immeasurable spiritual benefits to everyone who lives here."