

Statement of Rep. Jared Huffman (CA-02)
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R.7329, *the Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act*
May 11, 2022, at 2:00PM

Panel I: Member Panel

Good afternoon and thank you, Chair Neguse, for holding a hearing on my bill, the Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act, which I introduced along with Representative DeFazio, and in the Senate is championed by Senator Merkley. This bill would extend the Smith River National Recreation Area by 58,000 acres into Oregon, protecting the diverse ecosystems of the rivers, streams, and adjacent lands of the North Fork Smith River Watershed.

The Smith River is a special place, and is the only major system in California to flow freely and naturally without a single dam. In 1990, Congress enacted legislation to establish the Smith River National Recreation Area to protect the watershed, which we enjoy the beauty of in Northern California. However, the established boundary stopped at the Oregon border, leaving the North Fork of the Smith River and its tributaries unprotected.

This 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.

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. The Smith River is part

of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and also provides drinking water to a number of communities. 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've worked closely alongside Oregonians on this bill, and am proud to sponsor it with Representative DeFazio and Senator Merkley. The four Senators from California and Oregon all cosponsor this legislation, and it is supported by Curry and Del Norte Counties, the Smith River Alliance, Trout Unlimited, the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen, and the Crescent City-Del Norte Chamber of Commerce, which represents over 300 businesses.

I look forward to hearing testimony from the administration and on the third panel, from my constituent, Mr. Grant Werschull, who I will introduce. Thank you again, Chair Neguse, I yield back.