



Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act Summary July 15, 2020

The Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act was first introduced in the 115th Congress by Rep. Jared Huffman in 2018 as H.R. 6596 and was reintroduced in the 116th Congress in 2019 as H.R. 2250. The Northwest California bill was then combined with other western public lands bills and ultimately approved by the House with a bi-partisan vote on Feb. 12, 2020. That same day, Senator Kamala Harris combined the Northwest California legislation with two other California public lands bills that were in the House omnibus bill and introduced it as S. 3288, the Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act. As yet, no hearings have been scheduled in the Senate for S. 3288.

In summary, Title I of S. 3288:

- Protects 312,569 acres of federal public lands as Wilderness, Wilderness additions, and Potential Wilderness in Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte, and Trinity Counties.
- Protects 480 miles of National Wild and Scenic Rivers flowing through federal public lands that provide critical habitat or refuge for at risk salmon and steelhead populations.
- Promotes forest restoration on more than 729,000 acres of federal public land in the South Fork Trinity and Mad River watersheds and encourages restoration of redwood ecosystems in National and State Parks.
- Encourages multi-agency cooperation to remediate thousands of illegal marijuana cultivation sites on public lands.
- Encourages agencies to develop comprehensive fire managements plans for wilderness areas.
- Authorizes a study for the proposed 360-mile long Bigfoot National Recreation Trail from Redwood National Park to the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness, and the construction of more than 295 miles of new trails open to equestrians, hikers, and mountain bikers, as well as studies for two visitor centers in Trinity and Del Norte Counties.

Northwest California Mountains and Rivers, a coalition of national, regional, statewide, and local organizations and activists, first started working on potential public lands legislation in the region in 2012. Numerous stakeholders and interested parties were consulted. This consultation included a briefing with then Shasta-Trinity National Forests Supervisor Dave Myer. Numerous changes were made to the draft legislation and subsequent iterations of the introduced bills in response to stakeholder input.

Provisions of S. 3288 Title I Pertinent to the Shasta-Trinity National Forests:

WILDERNESS & POTENTIAL WILDERNESS:

Chanchelulla Wilderness Addition – 6,212 acres

Chinquapin Wilderness – 27,258 acres

Chinquapin Potential Wilderness – 3,797 acres

Pattison Wilderness – 28,595 acres

Trinity Alps Wilderness Additions – 60,826 acres

Trinity Alps Potential Wilderness – 1,256 acres

South Fork Trinity Wilderness – 26,446 acres

South Fork Trinity Potential Wilderness – 405 acres

Underwood Wilderness – 15,069 acres*

Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness Additions – 10,729*

**Includes acreage on adjacent National Forest/BLM lands*

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS:

South Fork Trinity River (upstream of Hwy 36) – 36.7 miles^

South Fork Trinity River (re-designated segments downstream of Hwy 36) – 31.8 miles*^

East Fork South Fork Trinity River – 11.8 miles

Rattlesnake Creek – 5.9 miles

Butter Creek – 7 miles

Hayfork Creek – 13.2 miles^

Rusch Creek – 3.2 miles

Olsen Creek – 2.8 miles

Eltapom Creek – 3.4 miles

Canyon Creek – 17.8 miles*^

North Fork Trinity River – 27.7 miles*^

East Fork North Fork Trinity River – 17.4 miles

Virgin Creek-New River – 15 miles^

**Includes segments on adjacent National Forest/BLM lands*

^ Includes segments recommended by the Forest Service

Other Provisions Pertinent To The Shasta-Trinity National Forests:

- Trinity Lake Visitor Center – Authorizes establishment of a visitor center at Trinity Lake.
- Trinity Lake Trail – Feasibility study for a non-motorized trail around Trinity Lake.
- South Fork Trinity-Mad River Restoration Area – Establishes a 729,000 acre restoration area with an emphasis on collaborative projects that retain large trees, restores plantations, and establishes shaded fuel breaks.
- California Public Lands Remediation Partnership – Establishes an interagency partnership that coordinates the activities of agencies to remediate illegal marijuana grows on public lands.
- Management Plans – Updates fire management plans for wilderness areas.
- Bigfoot National Recreation Trail – Study of the proposed Bigfoot National Recreation Trail.
- Trails Study – Study improved motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities throughout the region.

Hyampom Fire Resilient Community Project

The Hyampom Fire Safe Council has worked with the Shasta-Trinity National Forest to develop a set of treatments across the landscape to both protect the community and limit the spread of fire. The project is current in pre-scoping. Northwest California Mountains and Rivers members have reviewed the information available concerning this project (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46044>). While there are many aspects of this project our coalition members can support, there is some potentially conflicting overlap between some of the proposed project activities and some of the wilderness and wild and scenic rivers proposed in S. 3288. These potential conflicts could be reduced or eliminated by altering some of the Hyampom Project activity boundaries, altering some S. 3288 boundaries, and by agreeing that some but not all project activities within S. 3288 boundaries are permitted under the law.

Potential Conflicts Between the Hyampom Project and S. 3288

Proposed Pattison Wilderness (28,595 acres) – A total of 3,152 acres of the wilderness proposal could be impacted to varying degrees. Our GIS analysis of the Hyampom Project found that 2,850 acres of this wilderness proposal would be subject to fuel modification and prescribed fire, 245 acres of plantation treatments, and 57 acres of roadside buffers. Generally, we are supportive of prescribed fire in wilderness or proposed wilderness. For example, several of our statewide and national groups supported the Caples Ecological Restoration Project on the Eldorado National Forest.¹ We would be concerned about the establishment of large permanent fuelbreaks and the extensive use of motorized equipment (particularly if needed for maintenance treatment). Existing treatment descriptions for the Hyampom Project do not explain what kind of activities are needed for plantation treatments, but use of herbicides in an existing or proposed wilderness would be of concern to us.

South Fork Trinity Wilderness (26,446 acres) – A total of 820 acres of this proposed wilderness could be impacted by the Hyampom Project, with 668 acres subject to fuel modification and prescribed fire and 152 acres of plantation treatment.

Hayfork Creek Wild and Scenic River – The 1994 Shasta-Trinity Forest Plan found 14 miles of Hayfork Creek from the Nine Mile Bridge to its confluence with the South Fork Trinity to be eligible as a Scenic River due to its outstandingly remarkable anadromous and native fish populations and scenery. The 1995 plan Record of Decision recommended Wild and Scenic River designation of 11.5 miles of Hayfork Creek. S. 3288 proposes to designate 13.2 miles of Hayfork Creek as a Recreational and Scenic River. The Hyampom Project proposes fuel modification and prescribed fire within about three miles of the proposed Scenic River corridor. The Forest Service is required to protect the free flowing character and outstandingly remarkable values of eligible, suitable, and designated rivers. To date, the Hyampom Project has not addressed its potential impacts on the outstanding fish populations and scenery of Hayfork Creek.

Olsen Creek Wild and Scenic River – Olsen Creek is a tributary of Hayfork Creek. As far as we know, Olsen Creek was not assessment for its wild and scenic eligibility in the 1994 forest plan. We propose to

¹ <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/eldorado/landmanagement/?cid=fseprd553069>

designate 2.8 miles of Olsen Creek as a Scenic River due to its outstandingly remarkable anadromous fishery potential. State and federal recovery documents have identified Olsen Creek as an important stream for the restoration of threatened coho salmon. About two miles of Olsen Creek could be impacted by the Hyampom Project, including fuel modification, prescribed fire and plantation treatment.

South Fork Trinity Wild and Scenic River – The state designated river was added to the federal system in 1981 to protect its outstandingly remarkable anadromous fisheries. The 1995 Forest Plan Record of Decision recommended that 106.4 miles of the Trinity River system (including the South Fork Trinity) be re-designated by Congress for “clarity of administration and consistency in protection.” S. 3288 implements some of this recommendation for two separate segments of the South Fork Trinity, including a segment downstream of Hyampom that begins at the confluence with Eltapom Creek to the confluence with Coon Creek as a Scenic and Wild River. In addition, the House Natural Resources Committee Report identifies scenery and recreation, as well as anadromous fisheries, as the river’s outstandingly remarkable values. About 1.25 miles of this segment of the South Fork Trinity from Salmon Rock to just upstream of the Monroe Creek confluence would be impacted by the Hyampom Project. The Project proposes a roadside buffer between the Hyampom Road and the South Fork along this segment, which almost certainly would affect the river’s outstanding scenery and recreation values (this segment in the roadside buffer is home to the Little Rock and Salmon Rock Picnic Areas and the Big Slide and Slide Creek Campgrounds).

Hyampom Project Prescriptions

We are summarizing Project Prescriptions in order to underscore the potential conflicts with the proposed legislative designations in S. 3288. The Project involves four prescriptions that were identified as possible treatment options over an approximately 21,013 acre area in the Hyampom vicinity:

Prescription 1: Ridgetop and Property Line Fuelbreaks (approximately 775 acres)

- Modify fire in strategic locations
- Thinning to create openings and leave clumps of trees to resemble historic stand structure.
- Minimum residual canopy cover of 30-40% (canopy bulk density <0.1)
- Some fuel breaks could be as wide as 600 feet

Prescription 2: Roadside Buffers (approximately 1,119 acres)

- Similar to the prescription developed by the Trinity County Collaborative for the Roads and Plantations Pilot Project, with a few exceptions.
- Includes thinning activities along some road segments in the treatment footprints.
- The roadside treatment area would be generally 600 feet total width (not including the width of the system road, shoulder to shoulder). Fuel reduction treatments could occur within the entire buffer.
- This prescription could be used to create safer access and egress along segments of the following roads 3N10, 3N20, 3N21, and County roads 316 and 311.

Prescription 3: Plantation Treatments (approximately 5,052 acres)

- Silvicultural prescription for thinning, as well as fuels management treatments.

Silvicultural Prescription Summary

In general, the treatments are structured to accomplish a variable density thinning³ in plantation stands. To create a density thinning, the spacing is varied to retain not only the healthiest of trees, but a mix of species currently growing on the site. Approximately 55 to 80 percent of the total competing vegetation will be removed. The number of trees per acre remaining post-project varies depending on the Forest Plan management prescription in which the unit is located (e.g. Riparian Reserve, Late-Successional Reserve), the stand species (e.g. mixed conifer, pine forest), site quality and the average tree size. Approximately 45 to 150 trees per acre will be retained after treatment.

Prescription 4: Fuel Modification & Prescribed Fire (approximately 14,068 acres)

Areas not identified for the prescriptions described above would also receive treatment. The following are possible fuel modifications that could occur under this prescription:

- Thinning and piling brush and small-diameter trees (generally up to 8" dbh)
 - Trees would generally be thinned to 20 – 25 foot spacing.
 - Brush fields would be thinned to retain clumps of brush (or individual shrubs) up to 10 feet in diameter spaced 20 - 30 feet apart.
 - Shrub/clump spacing distance will increase with slope.
 - All brush would be removed from under the drip line of leave trees.
- Pruning residual trees to 8'-10'
- Burning hand piles and machine piles
- Chipping and masticating
- Goat grazing
- Jackpot burning
- Broadcast burning

Conclusion

Organizational and individual members of Northwest California Mountains and Rivers will monitor and comment on the Hyampom Project when scoping begins and a draft Environmental Analysis is developed. We are willing to discuss changes in both the Project and in proposed designations in S. 3288 to avoid or mitigate these conflicts.

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Overlap Between S. 3288 Designation and the Hyampom Project

