

Alabama Rivers Alliance • American Rivers • American Whitewater • Amigos Bravos • Appalachian Mountain Club • Arizona Wilderness Coalition • Arkansas Canoe Club • Avid4 Adventure • Birmingham Canoe Club • California Sportfishing Protection Alliance • California Trout • Chota Canoe Club • Colorado Trout Unlimited • Coosa River Paddling Club • Delaware Valley Chapter, Appalachian Mountain Club • Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Coordinating Committee • Foothills Paddling Club • Friends of Arizona Rivers • Friends of the Clearwater • Friends of Living Oregon Waters • Friends of the Kalmiopsis • Friends of the River • Georgia Canoeing Association • Gold Country Paddlers • Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association • Hells Canyon Preservation Council • Idaho Conservation League • Idaho Rivers • Iowa Whitewater Coalition • Keel-Haulers Canoe Club • Kentucky Waterways Alliance • Lower Columbia Canoe Club • Maine Rivers • Missouri River Outfitters • Montana River Action • Musconetcong Watershed Association • National Committee for the New River • Native Fish Society • Natural Resources Council of Maine • Northwest Rafters Association • OARS: For the Assabet, Sudbury, and Concord Rivers • Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club • Oregon Wild • PaddleTrails Canoe Club • Prairie Rivers Network • Protect American River Canyons • RESTORE: The North Woods • River Alliance of Wisconsin • Sabine Whitewater Club • San Miguel Whitewater Association • Sierra Nevada Alliance • Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club • Skagit Watershed Council • Smith River Alliance • South Dakota Chapter of the Sierra Club • Spokane Canoe and Kayak Club • Tennessee Clean Water Network • Texas Rivers Protection Association • The Ozark Society • Upper Merced River Watershed Council • WaterWatch of Oregon • West Virginia Rivers Coalition • Western Lands Project • Westfield River Watershed Association • Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club • Yellow Dog Watershed

October 04, 2011

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Markey:

We are local, state, and national river organizations from across the country who represent communities that have benefitted from the values provided by a federal Wild and Scenic River. We write to express our concern with pending legislation that we believe would weaken the Wild and Scenic Rivers System and set a precedent that could one day affect the rivers in our communities.

Congress enacted the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Act) in 1968 to protect our nation's best free-flowing rivers, for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Act protects the outstanding values and special character of these rivers while allowing appropriate use and development. When a Wild and Scenic River is designated, it is a promise to future generations that we will permanently safeguard the river and its values.

Several Wild and Scenic Rivers are currently threatened by bills that would rollback their protections. These rollbacks will also set a dangerous precedent for all Wild and Scenic Rivers, signaling that any bridge or dam project on a Wild and Scenic River can be built because Congress will simply make an exemption for it. We are worried about the impact this could one day have on our local rivers. For this reason, we ask you to oppose the following bills:

St. Croix River, MN and WI- H.R. 850/S. 1134 would exempt the construction of a \$700 million freeway-style bridge from the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The proposed bridge over the St. Croix Scenic Riverway has been rejected by the National Park Service because it would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which the river was protected.

Merced River, CA- H.R. 869 and H.R. 2578 take two approaches to allow an irrigation district to pursue a dam alteration project that would inundate the Wild and Scenic Merced River. Allowing a reservoir to encroach on a Wild and Scenic River is in direct violation with the Act.

Crooked River, OR- H.R. 2060 would adjust a boundary to remove Bowman Dam from the Wild and Scenic corridor - a provision we support. However, we must oppose this bill in its current form because Congress is missing a vital opportunity to improve the management of this Wild and Scenic River for the benefit of people and fish and wildlife. We urge Congress to improve the bill to ensure adequate water is allocated to protect the fish, wildlife, and downstream recreation.

We urge the House of Representatives to oppose these bills and any legislation that would weaken the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Such efforts could have detrimental effects on the rivers our communities depend on for clean water, recreation, and a robust local economy.

Sincerely,

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