

What will HR 2250 do?

The Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act (HR 2250) will restore forests and fisheries, protect wild lands and streams and improve recreation opportunities on existing public lands in Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino and Trinity Counties. Among other provisions, HR 2250 will:

- Promote forest restoration and fuel-reduction work across over 700,000 acres of public land. This will improve the ecological health of forests while reducing fire-danger along roads (where most fires start) and near communities.
- Protect over 313,000 acres of federal public lands in perpetuity from road-building and other development.
- Protect over 379 miles of some of our wildest remaining streams from new dams and water diversions.
- Authorize the construction of more than 295 miles of new trails open to horses, hikers and mountain bikes.
- Help fully restore the thousands of sites on public lands affected by illegal marijuana cultivation.

What follows is a detailed summary of HR 2250 followed by a description of who supports it.

Title I—Restoration and Economic Development

Section 101: South Fork Trinity/Mad River Restoration Area

This element of the bill is intended to promote fuels reduction and forest and woodland restoration on 729,000 acres of public lands in southern Trinity and western Humboldt counties. Within this area, the ecological health of previously logged forests will be improved, and the danger of unnaturally severe fires will be reduced through a careful program of individual tree-cutting, especially along roads, near private land and in “plantations” (areas that were replanted following clear-cut logging or fires). Fuels reduction will be accomplished primarily through the establishment of 300-foot wide “shaded fuel breaks,” areas where the trees have been carefully thinned to reduce the chance of a fire racing from the crown of one tree to another. These shaded fuel breaks will follow the thousands of miles of road that run through the proposed Restoration Area. Proceeds from the sale of these trees will be returned to fund additional restoration work in the Restoration Area, including steps to improve habitat for endangered salmon and steelhead trout.

The approach to management in the proposed Restoration Area reflects the collective vision of many members of the Trinity County Collaborative, a group of conservationists, representatives of the timber industry, local elected officials, local landowners and others who work to find

common ground on the management of Trinity County's public lands. The proposed Restoration Area presents an exciting opportunity to reduce fire-severity in strategic locations while restoring habitat and creating local jobs.

Section 102: Redwood National and State Parks Restoration

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to undertake initiatives to restore degraded redwood forest ecosystems in Redwood National and State Parks in partnership with the State of California, local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. Restoration of these forest ecosystems will hasten the return of healthy old-growth forests, while providing jobs in local communities and enhancing native habitat for numerous plant and animal species.

Section 103: Northwest California Public Lands Remediation Partnership

Illegal Marijuana cultivation on federal public lands is a very serious problem. Hundreds of abandoned grow sites exist on our public lands. These sites are littered with garbage, miles of plastic pipe, toxic waste and the corpses of poisoned animals. Many of these abandoned sites are located in watersheds that are used for domestic drinking water supplies. For example, in 2017 the Trinity County Department of Environmental Public Health Officer issued a public health warning regarding concerns that multiple sites evaluated in Trinity County that had tested positive for California banned pesticides which could contaminate nearby waterways. The warning went on to list 108 potentially affected creeks---in Trinity County alone.

The Northwest California Public Lands Remediation Partnership is established to help clean up these illegal marijuana growing sites on northwest California's federal public lands. The Partnership will coordinate cleanup, prioritize specific areas for restoration, and secure resources from state, federal or other sources for restoration.

Section 104: Trinity Lake Visitor Center

A visitor center is authorized for construction in Weaverville. The purpose of the visitor center is to help the public discover the public lands of the Shasta-Trinity region.

Section 105: Del Norte County Visitor Center

A visitor center is authorized for construction in Crescent City, CA. The purpose of the visitor center is to help the public discover the public lands of the Del Norte County region.

Section 106: Comprehensive management plans

Requires land managers to create comprehensive fire management plans for the wilderness areas and wilderness additions designated by HR 2250. This will require wilderness areas that are managed by multiple agencies to have a single, unified fire management approach. For example, the Trinity Alps Wilderness is currently managed by the Klamath National Forest, Redding BLM, Six Rivers National Forest and Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Under HR 2250,

these four agencies will be required to prepare a single, unified fire management plan for the Trinity Alps.

Section 107: Study, partnerships related to overnight accommodations

The Secretary of the Interior shall conduct a study to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of establishing overnight accommodations on federal land at the southern and northern boundaries or on land within 20 miles of the southern and northern boundaries of Redwood National and State parks in consultation with interested Federal, State, Tribal, and local entities, and private and nonprofit organizations.

The purpose of this provision is to provide for the need for more affordable lodging near Redwood National and State Parks.

Title II--Recreation

Section 201: Horse Mountain Special Management Area

Establishes a 7,399-acre Horse Mountain Special Management Area. The proposed SMA is in Humboldt County in the Six Rivers National Forest roughly 10 miles west of Willow Creek and just south of Highway 299. Horse Mountain is well known in Humboldt County as being one of the few places offering winter snow play. For generations, families have gone to Horse Mountain to take advantage of rare opportunities to sled, ski, build snowmen, etc. Because of its unusual serpentine soils, Horse Mountain is also a haven for rare plants. HR 2250 will protect Horse Mountain for a multitude of uses, including snow play, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, botanizing, birdwatching and scenic driving, among other activities.

Section 202: Bigfoot National Recreation Trail:

HR 2250 gives land managers 3 years to study the feasibility of establishing a “Bigfoot National Recreation Trail.” The proposed trail would run for 360 miles from the Mendocino National Forest in the south to Redwood National Park in the north.

While the name is supposed to be humorous, the purpose of the trail is serious: to provide for a long-distance hiking and horseback riding opportunity that also highlights the amazing ecological and social values of the Klamath and Siskiyou mountains.

Many of the places that would be accessed by the proposed trail, such as southern Trinity County, have an abundance of public lands but few trails. The Bigfoot Trail will help to meet this need for public access.

Section 203: Elk Camp Ridge Recreation Trail

HR 2250 upgrades the status of an existing trail in the Six Rivers National Forest's Smith River National Recreation Area to ensure that it remains open to hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikes and motorcycles. The intent of giving the trail a special designation is to help get more resources for maintenance. By giving the trail a special status, it will attract more visitors to this little-used part of the Smith River National Recreation Area.

Section 204: Trinity Lake Trail

HR 2250 gives land managers 18 months to study the feasibility and gauge public interest in building a trail for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking around Trinity Lake in Trinity County's Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Construction is authorized if it is determined that building the trail is feasible and in the public interest. The trail is intended to be a draw for tourism in Trinity County. This is just one of over 295 miles of trails authorized by HR 2250.

Section 205: Trails Study

Land managers are given 2 years to study options for improving access to trails in non-wilderness areas in northwestern California for hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers and off-highway vehicle enthusiasts. The Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service must work together on the study. Advocates hope that the trail study will help to highlight trail needs and serve as something of a blueprint for further action such as seeking appropriations, recruiting volunteers, etc. This study is in addition to the over 295 miles of new trails authorized by HR 2250.

Section 206: Construction of mountain bicycling routes

HR 2250 gives land managers 18 months to study the feasibility and degree of public interest involved in building a multitude of cycling, horseback riding and hiking trails in 5 clusters within the existing Smith River National Recreation Area. If construction of one or more trails is deemed to be in the public interest, land managers are authorized to build them. If these trails are constructed, they could become a major tourism draw. This has been the case for high-quality, purpose-built mountain bike trails constructed elsewhere in northwestern California. These trails are among the more than 295 miles of trails authorized by HR 2250.

Section 207: Partnerships

HR 2250 ensures that federal land managers can partner with qualified organizations to help maintain trails and campgrounds, staff visitor centers and to conduct public education and outreach. At a time of scarce funding, such partnerships are essential.

Title III—Conservation

Section 301: Designation of wilderness

HR 2250 designates 261,889 acres of land as “wilderness.” Wilderness is the strongest protection available for federal land under federal conservation law. Once an area is designated as wilderness, all development such as logging, road construction, energy extraction, etc. are prohibited while hiking, horseback riding, camping, and other non-motorized activities are allowed. Fire-suppression is also allowed in wilderness, including the use of bulldozers and aircraft if necessary. The proposed wilderness areas included in HR 2250 do not currently have any roads in them, so closing these areas to motorized vehicles is simply a recognition of the current reality, not a denial of public access.

The following is a list of the proposed wilderness areas, along with a summary of the reasons for protecting them.

- **Black Butte River Wilderness (11,117 acres):** In Mendocino County in the Mendocino National Forest. The Black Butte Wild and Scenic River offers important habitat for endangered steelhead trout. This area contains outstanding oak woodlands and native grasslands. The Black Butte River offers outstanding whitewater boating opportunities. The Forest Service notes that the area is of “exceptional” cultural importance to Native Americans.
- **Chanchelulla Wilderness Additions (6,212 acres):** In Trinity County in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Offers outstanding views as far as Mount Shasta, old-growth forests, limestone caves, rare plants and roaring Hayfork Creek. Hayfork Creek offers a very challenging whitewater boating run that has been rated as class III-V by American Whitewater. Hayfork Creek also hosts endangered salmon and steelhead.
- **Chinquapin Wilderness (26,890 acres):** In Trinity County in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Contains the largest, most intact groves of unprotected ancient forest in California. Part of the largest and densest populations of northern spotted owls and goshawks in the Trinity side of the two million-acre Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Coho and Chinook salmon and steelhead trout also live in the South Fork Trinity Proposed Wild and Scenic River which bisects the area. The popular South Fork National Recreation Trail also passes through Chinquapin, following the river and offering excellent fishing, swimming, hiking, and horseback riding opportunities. The trail is excluded from the proposed wilderness to allow for mountain biking use.
- **English Ridge Wilderness (6,204 acres):** In Mendocino County and managed by the Arcata Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management. Rich ancient forests, meadows and oak woodlands. The Wild and Scenic Eel River flows through the area. The Eel and its tributaries Fish Creek and Indian Creek offer important salmon and steelhead habitat.
- **Headwaters Forest Wilderness (4,360 acres):** In Humboldt County and managed by the Arcata Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management. Activists waged a long battle to preserve this once privately-owned grove of stately old-growth coast redwoods. The area hosts 12 threatened and endangered species, and it is particularly important for

the continued viability of marbled murrelet populations in the region. There are very few redwood forests in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

- **Mad River Buttes Wilderness (6,002 acres):** In Humboldt County in the Six Rivers National Forest. The area is the closest proposed wilderness to the Humboldt Bay Area. Outstanding old-growth forest, wildflower-dappled meadows and other varied habitat. Mad River Buttes is the headwaters of Redwood Creek, a major stream that flows through Redwood National Park.
- **Mount Lassic Wilderness Additions (1,292 acres):** In Trinity County in the Six Rivers National Forest. Unusual soils make this area fascinating to botanists, and six rare plant species have been identified in the region.
- **North Fork Eel Wilderness Additions (17,182 acres):** In Trinity County in the Six Rivers National Forest and the Arcata Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management. The proposed additions shelter important low-elevation old-growth forest as well as wildflower-dappled grasslands, oak woodlands and chaparral. The area is known to be used by peregrine falcons, the world's fastest bird. The North Fork Eel provides habitat for coho salmon and steelhead trout in its rugged and beautiful canyon along with challenging whitewater opportunities for experienced kayakers and rafters.
- **Pattison Wilderness (28,595 acres):** In Trinity County in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Hayfork Creek flows through the proposed wilderness and offers a very challenging whitewater boating run that has been rated as class III-V by American Whitewater. Hayfork Creek also hosts endangered salmon and steelhead. The U.S. Forest Service has recommended Hayfork Creek for Wild and Scenic River protection to preserve its outstanding fishery and scenic values. Young wilderness enthusiasts from the Bar 717 Ranch/Camp Trinity hike, ride horses, and camp in the Pattison area and frequent the many swimming holes in Hayfork Creek and Corral Creek.
- **Sanhedrin Wilderness Additions (112 acres):** In Mendocino County in the Mendocino National Forest. Sanhedrin Mountain is noted for its rare plant habitat, old-growth forests and outstanding views in all directions.
- **Siskiyou Wilderness Additions (27,747 acres):** In Del Norte County in the Six Rivers and Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest. Most of the proposed additions are in the Smith River watershed. The Smith is California's only undammed river and it hosts one of the "best salmon and steelhead fisheries on the west coast" according to the Six Rivers National Forest. Ancient forests consist of an amazing fourteen species of conifers, the second greatest conifer diversity in the world. The popular South Kelsey National Recreation Trail passes through the proposed additions.
- **South Fork Eel River Wilderness Addition (313 acres):** In Mendocino County and managed by the Arcata Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management. The area is a haven for rare plants, including 4 species that grow nowhere else on Earth.
- **South Fork Trinity River Wilderness (26,446 acres):** In Trinity County in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The Wild and Scenic South Fork Trinity River is the centerpiece of

the area. The stream hosts endangered populations of salmon and steelhead. The area also includes important old-growth forest habitat and oak woodlands. Plummer Creek, a major tributary of the South Fork, hosts a native steelhead run and provides the Trinity with a valuable source of cool water. The river provides whitewater rafters and kayakers with challenging spring runs and the swimmer refreshing pools for swimming. One of the world's largest ponderosa pines is in the area: the tree is 240 feet tall and 8 feet wide.

- **Trinity Alps Wilderness Additions (62,695 acres):** In Trinity County in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The higher portions of the Trinity Alps are already protected as wilderness, but many of the lower slopes, including much of the region's old-growth and oak woodlands, remain outside of the wilderness. The proposed additions are therefore composed of the rugged, heavily forested low-elevation country that would complement the adjacent highlands of the Trinity Alps Wilderness if protected. The Wild and Scenic New River, Canyon Creek Proposed Wild and Scenic River and other streams that flow out of the proposed additions provide cold, clear water essential for the survival of endangered steelhead trout and coho and Chinook salmon populations in the Trinity River. The proposed additions are an extremely important refuge for unique and endangered species, including nine rare plants. The New River offers challenging whitewater for boaters who are brave enough to negotiate its narrow gorge filled with deep troughs and house-sized boulders.
- **Underwood Wilderness (15,127 acres):** In Humboldt and Trinity counties in the Six Rivers National Forest and the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Located along the canyon of the South Fork Trinity Wild and Scenic River, the proposed wilderness hosts fall-run Chinook salmon, coho salmon and steelhead trout. The South Fork Trail follows the river for some 5 miles through the proposed wilderness. The hike offers great wildflower views in spring and access to swimming holes in the summer. South Fork Mountain, which forms the western boundary of the proposed wilderness, is notable for being the longest ridge in the western hemisphere.
- **Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness Additions (10,729 acres):** In Mendocino and Trinity counties and managed by the Arcata Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management, Mendocino National Forest, Six Rivers National Forest and Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The western portion has extensive grasslands and oak woodlands providing important deer wintering habitat. Abundant old-growth forest exists in the Black Rock Mountain area. Black Rock serves as the headwaters of the South Fork Trinity River. Several popular trails pass through the proposed wilderness additions.
- **Yuki Wilderness Additions (10,866 acres):** In Mendocino County in lands managed by the Arcata Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management and the Mendocino National Forest. The area contains the world's largest grove of the rare Sargent cypress. Seven rare plant species grow in the area, and at least one botanist who has explored the area believes that it may have previously undescribed plant species. Endangered runs of

summer steelhead, winter steelhead, and chinook salmon migrate up the Wild and Scenic Middle Fork Eel River. It is estimated that the Middle Fork Eel hosts over one-third of California's entire remaining summer-run steelhead trout population.

Section 302: Administration of wilderness

This section of HR 2250 ensures that:

- Land managers can suppress fire in wilderness using all the tools available to them outside of wilderness areas.
- Authority to use bulldozers and other heavy equipment can be delegated to local land managers.
- Livestock grazing can continue where it was being allowed at the time the wilderness areas were designated
- Wilderness areas do not have buffer zones—the protections afforded by the Wilderness Act end at the boundary of a designated wilderness.
- Native Americans have the right to use the wilderness areas for cultural purposes, including working with land managers to temporarily close the areas for ceremonies.
- Horses are allowed in wilderness.
- Competitive horseback riding events can still be held in the Chinquapin Wilderness.
- Rock climbing, including the use of fixed anchors, is allowed in wilderness.

Section 303: Designation of potential wilderness

HR 2250 designates two kinds of wilderness areas: conventional wilderness (the areas listed in Section 301) and “potential wilderness.” Both kinds of wilderness are managed the same way for the most part. The difference is that conventional wilderness areas are completely unlogged, unroaded and undeveloped—as close to “undisturbed” as is possible—while “potential wilderness areas” have experienced some limited degree of disturbance and thus require a period of recovery (or even active restoration) before they can become conventional wilderness. It may be helpful to think of potential wilderness as a “two-step wilderness”: Step one is restoration, Step two is graduation to conventional wilderness. The dividing line is old roads: If an area has old roads that are now closed to the public, it is proposed as potential wilderness. If an area has never had a road in it, then it is proposed as conventional wilderness in HR 2250.

Except for Redwood National Park which is a special case (see below), the potential wilderness areas in HR 2250 have only experienced some *small degree* of past logging and road construction. They usually still contain substantial old-growth forest or other highly valuable habitat and features. Typically, only about 20-30% of the potential wilderness acreage has been disturbed by logging and road construction. These disturbances usually occurred decades ago. The areas also do not contain any roads that are legally open to the public. However, they often contain old, abandoned roads that may need to be stabilized. For example, if the old roads have

culverts, it may be wise to remove the culverts in a potential wilderness area before allowing the road to “go back to nature.” The reason for this is that a culvert could become clogged, causing the old road to fail, and then a landslide could occur that may harm important fish habitat. Except for Redwood National Park, land managers are given 10 years from the date of HR 2250 becoming law to conduct restoration activities. It is possible, after an assessment, that no active restoration will be necessary.

The National Park Service is *not* given a time-limit to restore Redwood National Park Potential Wilderness. The NPS can take as long as it needs to “graduate” RNP to a conventional wilderness. The reason for this is that about 80% of RNP was logged and roaded, while in most potential wilderness areas the land is at most 30% disturbed. The National Park Service has a very active program of removing old roads, thinning young trees, burning and other efforts to restore a more “wilderness” condition at RNP. This work will take decades, so no time limit is given to accomplish the work in HR 2250.

Section 304: Designation of wild and scenic rivers

HR 2250 designates over 379 miles of streams as wild and scenic rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is the nation’s primary river conservation tool. Congress passed the Act in 1968 to specifically balance our existing policy of developing rivers for the water, power, and flood control resources by building large dams, with a new policy of protecting some free-flowing rivers with outstanding natural and cultural values for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

The streams that are proposed as additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in HR 2250 represent some of the most important remaining wild waterways in northern California. The Hayfork Creek Proposed Wild and Scenic River flows through the Bar 717 Ranch property. Hayfork Creek is the largest free flowing tributary to the South Fork Trinity River. The Forest Service recommended wild and scenic river protection for the lower segment of Hayfork Creek because its cold water tributaries support populations of steelhead, salmon and native rainbow trout. The creek carves a scenic gorge along the foot of Pattison Mountain and the proposed Pattison Wilderness. Many of the small streams draining into Hayfork Creek provide cold water refuges for salmon and steelhead. Hayfork Creek also offers class IV-V whitewater boating for the brave. Hayfork Creek contains great swimming holes on a hot summer day.

The South Fork Trinity River and its tributaries are one of the largest undammed river systems in California. From its source high in the Yolla Bolly Middle Eel Wilderness, the South Fork Trinity River flows north 82 miles to its confluence with the Trinity River. On that long journey north, the South Fork Trinity serves as a natural corridor for fish and wildlife, thus helping to connect islands of ancient forest and wild places that would otherwise grow increasingly isolated in an expanding network of roads and clear-cuts. The river provides critical habitat for spring-run Chinook salmon and summer and winter-run steelhead trout. It also flows through

one of the most diverse and pristine forests in California – forests that shelter spotted owl, goshawk, bald eagle, fisher, marten and several rare plants. The natural beauty of the Upper South Fork Trinity River is unsurpassed. The South Fork National Recreation Trail parallels much of this section of the river, allowing visitors to follow in the footsteps of Native Americans, early fur trappers, and miners. This long but easy trail offers expansive views of the South Fork's many rapids and pools, with a backdrop of pine, fir, and oaks. Two National Forest campgrounds provide excellent base camps to explore the river and trail.

These are just two of the many streams proposed for wild and scenic river status in HR 2250.

Section 305: Sanhedrin Conservation Management Area

Consists of public lands in the Mendocino National Forest and private lands that are in the process of becoming public. The private lands were heavily logged and roaded while under previous ownership, but the current owner wants assurances that when his lands are transferred to public hands that it will be properly conserved. The legislation would require the Mendocino National Forest to manage the area, once it becomes public, to restore old-growth forests, oak woodlands, meadows and other important habitats and to return the land as much as possible to a natural condition. The bill would also allow the public to use the area for hiking, horseback riding, camping and other activities for the first time since, up to now, it has been private.