



Agenda Date: 3/1/2005
Agenda Placement: 10A

NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Britt Ferguson for Nancy Watt - County Executive Officer
County Executive Office
REPORT BY: Andrew Carey, Management Analyst, 253-4477
SUBJECT: HR 233/S 128 - The Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act

RECOMMENDATION

Approval of and authorization for the Chair to sign a letter of support for HR 233/S 128 - the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On January 4, 2005, Representative Mike Thompson and Senators Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein introduced HR 233/S 128, the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act, to protect many pristine and remote stretches of federally owned land in Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, and Yolo counties. The bill designates 300,000 acres of public land as wilderness areas and identifies certain segments of the Black Butte River as a wild and scenic river. In addition to being cosponsored by Congressman Thompson and Senators Feinstein and Boxer, HR 233/S 128 is supported by Governor Schwarzenegger.

On August 31, 2004, the Board unanimously expressed its support for HR 1501/S 738, which was the 2003 version of the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act. In December 2004, HR 1501/S 738 was unanimously approved by the Senate but stalled in the House of Representatives. HR 233/S 128 is the successor bill to HR 1501/S 738 and, with very minor revisions, designates the same proposed wilderness areas as HR 1501/S 738.

The Board of Supervisors' legislative subcommittee recommends approval of and authorization for the Chair to sign a letter of support for HR 233/S 128, the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: General Rule. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility the proposed action may have a significant effect on the environment and therefore CEQA is not applicable [See Guidelines For the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, 14 CCR 15061(b)(3)].

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

On January 4, 2005, Representative Mike Thompson and Senators Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein introduced HR 233/S 128, the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act, to protect many pristine and remote stretches of federally owned land in Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, and Yolo counties. The bill designates 300,000 acres of public land as wilderness and identifies certain segments of the Black Butte River as a wild and scenic river.

On August 31, 2004, the Board took action to support HR 1501/S 738, the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act of 2003, which was sponsored by Congressman Mike Thompson and Senator Barbara Boxer during the 108th session of Congress. S 738 passed the Senate by unanimous consent in December 2004, but Congress recessed before HR 1501 was considered by the House of Representatives.

HR 233/S 128, which was introduced at the beginning of the 109th session of Congress, is a successor bill to HR 1501/S 738, and contains essentially the same provisions and, with one exception, the same wilderness area designations as the previous bill. However, the Blue Ridge Trail located on 650 acres in Napa County, which was identified in HR 1501/S 738 as a proposed wilderness area, has been removed from HR 233/S 128 at the request of the Bureau of Land Management as being too small a parcel to administer as a wilderness area. Otherwise, HR 233/S 128, which has the support of the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forestry Service, and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, is materially the same as HR 1501/S 738.

Of special note for Napa County is Cedar Roughs, a 6,350 acre parcel that HR 233/S 128 designates as a wilderness area. Cedar Roughs shelters the largest grove in the world of the rare Sargent Cypress and is home to the last wild black bear population in Napa County.

On February 7, 2005, the Board of Supervisor's legislative subcommittee took action to recommend HR 233/S 128 to the Board of Supervisors for approval of and authorization for the Chair to sign a letter of support for the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A . Letter of support

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Britt Ferguson