



March 27, 2018

The Honorable Al Muratsuchi
 Acting Chair, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
 1024 N Street, Room 164
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: **AB 2975 (Friedman) – SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Muratsuchi and Committee Members:

We support passage of AB 2975 (Friedman). This important bill provides for the inclusion of a federal wild and scenic river in California into the state wild and scenic rivers system if the federal government acts to eliminate federal protection for all or some of the federally protected river.

More than 2,100 miles of rivers and streams in California are protected in the federal and state wild and scenic rivers systems. Some of these rivers are federally protected, some state protected, and others enjoy both federal and state protection. The two systems provide similar protection – they prohibit new dams and major diversions on protected river segments, classify segments as wild, scenic, or recreational (based on the level of development at the time of designation), and federal and state agencies are required to protect the free-flowing character and river values of designated rivers and streams.

There are more than 747 miles of wild and scenic rivers in California that enjoy only federal protection.¹ These rivers and streams are preserved in their free-flowing condition for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. AB 2975 applies to these federally protected rivers if the Trump Administration or Congress were to act to eliminate federal protection from all or a portion of a federal river, or if the federal government acts to exempt a federally protected river from the provision in the federal act (16 USC Sec. 1278) that prohibits new dams and major diversions on designated river segments.

The threat to federal wild and scenic rivers in California is very real. Since 2011, the House of Representatives has considered at least three bills to remove federal protection for part of the Merced Wild River to allow for expansion of McClure Reservoir. The proposed expansion would drown nearly a mile of this wild river popular with hikers, anglers, and whitewater boaters. The reservoir expansion would also wipe out most of the known population of the state-protected Merced Canyon limestone salamander. Modifying New Exchequer Dam to expand McClure Reservoir also raises serious safety concerns.

If Congress passes legislation or the President signs an executive order to eliminate or reduce federal protection of a wild and scenic river, AB 2975 directs the California Natural Resources Agency Secretary to hold a public hearing on the federal action, add the river or river segment threatened by the federal action to the state wild and scenic rivers system, and classify as wild, scenic, and recreational the appropriate river segments.

We urge your vote “aye” on AB 2975 to ensure that federally protected rivers in California join the state’s resistance against the roll-back of federal environmental protections by the Trump Administration and the current Republican-led Congress.

Thank you.

Sincerely



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¹ AB 2975 would apply only to federally protected rivers in California, including segments of the Black Butte River, Middle Fork Feather River, Tuolumne River, Merced River, Kings River, North and South Forks Kern River, Owens River Headwaters, Cottonwood Creek, Amargosa River, North Fork San Jacinto River, Fuller Mill Creek, Bautista Creek, Palm Canyon Creek, Piru Creek, Sespe Creek, Sisquoc River, and the Big Sur River.

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