

Kings River Conservation District Position Paper

California Wild Heritage Act September 2008

Current and future wild and scenic legislation should not include the remaining portion of the upper Kings River, along with Dinkey Creek, for the following reasons:

Local Control:

- Local stewardship is far more effective than federal mandates. As a local management agency, the Kings River Conservation District approaches resource management with an understanding of the partnerships that must be forged with local stakeholders and the concerns and values of this region's residents.

Preserving Future Options:

- Future resource management options need to be preserved. If the Kings River and Dinkey Creek sites are designated as wild and scenic, two identified resource management options for this region would be eliminated.

Cooperative Environmental Solutions:

- Effective resource management includes on-ground, cooperative efforts with other local agencies and the public toward environmental solutions. The ongoing success of the locally run Kings River Fisheries Management Program is evidence of the benefits of this approach.

Originally introduced in 2002, Senator Barbara Boxer's proposed California Wild Heritage Act seeks to extend the Wild and Scenic River designation and use restrictions on numerous California rivers and streams. In Fresno County this would include twelve (12) miles of the Kings River known as Rodgers Crossing, a site already protected under Congressional Special Management designation, and twenty (20) miles of Dinkey Creek.

The Kings River interests worked closely with the Association of California Water Agencies' (ACWA) Federal Affairs Committee in 2003 to draft key principles to be considered in any wild and scenic legislation. These principles are:

- Current and future water district and hydroelectric operations meant to supply existing communities and uses should be specifically protected under the bill.
- Designations in the bill should be incorporated with public agencies' existing watershed protection efforts and written into the bill.
- New designations should be accompanied by formal, federally funded economic analyses taking into account the effect on local and regional economies.

- Previous agreements for planned and future operations should be honored.
- Language for each designation should specify what benefits will be achieved through the designation that are not possible under current law.
- Existing means of protecting forest and habitat (such as special management areas, conservation areas, areas of concern, etc.) should be ruled out before new wilderness and river designations are enacted.
- Existing access means to water and snow pack monitoring areas should be specifically permitted under the bill.

The amount of public lands currently administered by the federal government in California is already substantial. Our state has more Bureau of Land Management wilderness land than any other, at nearly 3.6 million acres. Given on-going local and statewide water and power supply challenges, removing potential options to meet these demands is short sighted. Expanding those lands and rivers currently listed under the Wild and Scenic designation will result in further limitations of the ability of local agencies to find local solutions to meet the resource needs of our community.