



October 23, 2021

Senator Jack Reed  
Chair, Senate Committee on Armed Services  
728 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator James Inhofe  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Armed Services  
205 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Reed and Ranking Member Inhofe:

On behalf of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Coalition, we write to encourage the Senate to incorporate additional river protection bills into the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Senate has an opportunity to include the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (S. 455), Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act (S. 1459), Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act (S. 1538), River Democracy Act of 2021 (S. 192), and the York River Wild and Scenic Rivers Act 2021 (S. 491). Collectively, these bills protect nearly 5,700 river miles and 2 million acres of public lands in Washington, California, Oregon, and Maine. The wild places proposed for protection not only offer outstanding opportunities for human-powered, outdoor recreation (boating, hiking, backpacking, swimming, mountain biking, equestrian use, wildlife viewing, etc.), they also provide important refuge for at-risk plant, wildlife, and fish species. In addition, these wild places are important sources of clean air and clean water for local communities and are used by veterans seeking solace in nature from the trauma of war.

This important package of public lands conservation bills enjoys widespread public support from local elected officials and businesses, as well as many social justice, recreation, and conservation organizations. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Coalition represents nearly 50 local, state, and national organizations from across the country that support Wild and Scenic River protection and stewardship.

Bills we request you support by including them in the NDAA:

- **Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (S. 455)** - Washington state's Olympic Peninsula includes free-flowing rivers that babble through ancient forests. Such stunning scenery not only provides world-class recreational opportunities for whitewater boaters and hikers, it protects critical salmon and steelhead habitat and safeguards clean drinking water

sources. With a history of more than ten years of grassroots local support, this bill would designate 19 new Wild and Scenic rivers and their major tributaries, and establish more than 125,000 acres of Wilderness.

- **Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act (S. 1459)**, which includes these titles:
  - **Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests** - From fog-shrouded redwood forests to crystalline turquoise pools, Northern California is home to some of the West's most stunning landscapes. This title proposes protection of 312,549 acres of Wilderness and Wilderness additions and 480 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers. The title would also establish a 729,000-acre restoration area in the South Fork Trinity and Mad River watersheds, facilitate two visitor centers in Trinity and Del Norte Counties, and authorize studies for nearly 600 miles of non-motorized trails throughout Northwest California, including the proposed Bigfoot National Recreation Trail.
  - **Central Coast Heritage Protection** - The product of years of discussion and negotiation between business leaders, conservationists, elected officials, ranchers, mountain bikers and other stakeholders, this title would ensure clean water for thriving communities, protect critical wildlife habitat and stimulate a vibrant local economy. This title would protect 246,418 acres of public lands in the Central Coast Region as Wilderness and Wilderness additions and 159 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers. It would also establish 34,882 acres of scenic areas and authorize the study of the 400-mile-long Condor National Scenic Trail.
  - **San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection** - Despite nearby gorgeous rivers, forests, and mountains just to the north, Los Angeles residents are some of the most park-poor in the country. This title would spur outdoor recreation by connecting park-poor areas, especially communities of color, to open space. This title would protect 30,659 acres of public lands as Wilderness and Wilderness additions, 40.5 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers, add 109,167 acres to the existing San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, and establish the 49,387-acre San Gabriel National Recreation Area.
- **Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act (S. 1538)**. This bill would expand the Smith River National Recreation Area by 58,000 acres and extend Wild and Scenic River designation to the upper watershed of the North Fork of the Smith River, including its major tributaries. This would protect the diverse ecosystems of the rivers, streams, and adjacent lands of the North Fork Smith River watershed, and help boost the local fishing and recreation industries that many Oregon families rely on.
- **River Democracy Act of 2021 (S. 192)**. Through a unique public process that builds on legislation Congress passed in 2019, this bill would protect more than 4,700 miles of rivers and streams in Oregon, and would be the largest addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in history. Overall, the bill would protect the health of delicate ecosystems and strengthen access to high-quality drinking water, while increasing wildfire resilience, bolstering the recreation economy, and encouraging collaboration with Indigenous Nations.
- **York River Wild and Scenic Rivers Act 2021 (S. 491)**. The York River watershed sustains a rich tapestry of natural areas, fish and wildlife habitat, drinking water supplies, and numerous archaeological sites. The rivers in the watershed provide quality habitat for one of the largest smelt spawning migrations in southern Maine and support an active commercial fishing industry important to the area's economy, character, and history. This bill would protect 30.8 river miles and is supported by the York River Study Committee, a diverse group of local stakeholders that have been studying the river for designation for over three years.

We urge you to encourage Senate leadership to support inclusion of these bills in the NDAA.

Sincerely,

**On behalf of the following Wild and Scenic River Coalition member organizations:**

David Moryc, Senior Director of Wild and Scenic Rivers and Public Lands Policy, American Rivers, Washington, D.C.

Kevin Colburn, National Stewardship Director, American Whitewater, Sylva, NC

Steven L. Evans, Rivers Director, California Wilderness Coalition, Sacramento, CA

Anthony Irving, Chair, Eightmile Wild and Scenic Coordinating Committee, Haddam, CT

Sheena Pate, Watershed Coordinator, Flathead Rivers Alliance, Whitefish, MT

Fred Akers, River Administrator, Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, Newtonville, NJ

Charles Wolf Drimal, Waters Conservation Coordinator, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Bozeman, MT

Richard Dodds, Chairman, Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River Management Council, Stockton, NJ

Dr. Denielle Perry, Director Free-flowing Rivers Lab, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ

Alison Field-Juma, Executive Director, OARS, Concord, MA

Erik Fernandez, Wilderness Program Manager, Oregon Wild, OR

Grant Werschull + Patty McCleary, Executive Director Team, Smith River Alliance, Crescent City, CA

Anne Slugg, Chair and Sudbury Representative, The Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council, Sudbury, MA

Carl Lindquist, Executive Director, Superior Watershed Partnership, Marquette, MI

Joe Callahan, President, Taunton River Watershed Alliance, Taunton, MA

Shane Morgan, Manager, White Clay Creek Wild and Scenic River Program, DE/PA

Maggie Johnston, Executive Director, Wild Alabama, Moulton, AL

Judy Spiller, Chairperson, York River Study Committee, Kittery, ME

---

cc:

Senator Joe Manchin, Chairman  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John Barrasso, Ranking Member  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510