Honorable Debbie Ponte  
Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Government Center  
San Andreas, CA  

Re: Support California Wild and Scenic River Designation for the North Fork and Main Mokelumne River  

February 19, 2014  

Dear Chairwoman Ponte and Members of the Board:  

For many years, individuals and businesses have worked to secure permanent protection for the remaining free-flowing portions of the North Fork and Main Stem of the Mokelumne River through Wild and Scenic River designation. We – and they – are pleased that you will review this issue on February 25.  

We strongly believe the board of supervisors should support California Wild and Scenic River designation for the North Fork and main stem of Mokelumne River, for the following reasons:  

• **The designation allows local residents to control our river’s future.** Without the designation, final decisions approving new dams on our river will rest in the hands of federal energy bureaucrats in Washington (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission), not with local or state governments.  

• **Many local residents and small businesses support protecting this segment of the Mokelumne.** About 140 small businesses in Calaveras and Amador counties and more than 2,000 Calaveras County residents have signed on to support protecting the river.  

• **Statewide recognition for our local river could attract more visitors to Calaveras County** and give others a new reason to visit or return. River visitors spend money in local businesses for lodging, food, gasoline, and other goods and services. Local recreation tourism advocates are looking forward to packaging commercial raft trips on the river with other tourism activities for Calaveras visitors. Having a river in Calaveras County’s future is key to its economic diversification and future prosperity.  

• **Wild and Scenic River designation does not have any legal effect on private land.** All local land use controls would remain in your hands.
• The designation protects sections of river local residents use today for camping, fishing, hunting, whitewater boating, rock climbing, gathering of native plants for traditional uses, bird watching, hiking, cultural education, and backpacking. The river is an important local recreational resource and it has no lasting protection as such today.

• The designation would not interfere with the current uses of the Mokelumne River for water supply and hydroelectric power generation and would ward off predatory water projects by urban water users, including the proposed expansion of Pardee Reservoir by the East Bay Municipal Utility District, which you opposed in 2009. As you recall, there was virtually no local support for that expansion and huge opposition, yet EBMUD still included it in their water plan until we stopped them with litigation.

• The affected river section is not needed for local water supply, and the designation would not affect any water supply project proposed to benefit Calaveras County.

• The designation would protect riverside landowners from condemnation by barring new dams. The construction or expansion of on-stream reservoirs is the largest recurring threat to riverside landowners. The Pardee expansion was the fifth proposal to flood the Mokelumne’s Middle Bar reach and part or all of the Electra run over the last 35 years.

• State recognition would ensure that the river’s noteworthy cultural and historical resources are protected. These are an important part of Calaveras County’s history and culture.

• State designation focuses on stopping dams and diversions, but allows future diversions for local water supply in the counties through which the river flows under specified conditions (see table in attached booklet).

The designation would benefit the local economy

Throughout the West, rural communities are finding that special natural places draw visitors who spend money in local businesses. The river is listed in major whitewater boating guides and known as an excellent place to fish, take a picnic, camp and view wildflowers. The designation would make the river even more attractive to visitors who are seeking special places.

Designating our river would likely attract new visitors drawn by the designation and could increase purchases of goods and services from local businesses. It would also give the county another “best of” reputation to use in tourism marketing.

With boating flows now guaranteed, facilities in place, and a pilot program scheduled to begin this year or next, Calaveras will soon begin to benefit from the money that commercial whitewater boating can bring into the county as well as additional summer youth employment.

Protects access to a public resource

As Calaveras County grows, the special natural areas available for recreation in our county take on greater significance. Protecting the river would ensure that it remains a place your grandchildren and great-grandchildren can see wildlife, teach a child to fish, have a family picnic, run a whitewater rapid, learn about the county’s human history, wonder at the sound of rushing water, and take joy in the incredible beauty of our local natural heritage.
Wild and Scenic River designation ensures that the Mokelumne, which is used largely as a public park open to everyone regardless of ability, age or income, continues to be available for local families’ use.

Support from local residents is strong
Nearly 2,100 residents from all walks of life support Wild and Scenic River designation for the Mokelumne. Supporters include business owners, community organizations, people of all political persuasions and occupations, and state and national organizations whose members appreciate and recreate on the river.

The designation would protect unique cultural and historical resources
The Mokelumne is eligible for California Wild and Scenic River designation in part because of the outstanding number, diversity, and quality of its cultural resources and its significant historical resources from the hard-rock mining era and early days of hydropower generation. The designation would acknowledge the importance of those resources while protecting them in perpetuity.

Conclusion
We urge you to leave a lasting legacy by supporting California Wild and Scenic River designation for the Mokelumne River. Like Theodore Roosevelt, cherished now for his contributions to our natural heritage, you, too, can be known as farsighted leaders who took bold steps to benefit future generations while strengthening your local economy. Your great-great-grandchildren will thank you for it.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 223-3508.

Sincerely,

Cecily Smith
Executive Director