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Mokelumne Wild & Scenic River Study Bill Passes Assembly

River advocates are pleased that the California State Assembly passed legislation on Monday, June 1, calling for a study of Mokelumne River as a state-protected Wild & Scenic River.

AB 142, introduced by Assemblyman Frank Bigelow (R-O'Neals), was approved by the Assembly with a resoundingly bipartisan 71-3 vote. The bill will provide interim protection of the Mokelumne River upstream of Pardee Reservoir while also requiring a study of the river's suitability for permanent protection as a California Wild and Scenic River. After the study, the state Resources Secretary will make a recommendation regarding whether the river should be added to the California Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

"We're excited to see AB 142 moving forward," said Foothill Conservancy Executive Director Cecily Smith. "The Mokelumne deserves permanent protection, and this vote is a positive step in that direction. We're grateful to Assemblyman Bigelow for amending his bill to provide protection for the river while still giving water agencies the study they requested."

Conservation advocates and the East Bay Municipal Utility District originally opposed the bill. But when the bill was amended to conform to Wild and Scenic study bills previously enacted by the Legislature, they changed their position to support. Supporters now include Foothill Conservancy, Friends of the River, Calaveras Action Coalition, Ebbets Pass Forest Watch, My Valley Springs, American Whitewater, Planning and Conservation League, California League of Conservation Voters, and many other groups.

A Wild & Scenic River is protected from new dams and diversions that may harm the waterway's free flowing character and natural condition. There are nearly 1,400 miles of rivers protected in the California Wild and Scenic Rivers System, including the Lower American River through Sacramento, the South Yuba River, Cache Creek, the West Walker River and the East Carson River.

"Bi-partisan approval of this important bill in the Assembly proves that protecting our heritage of free flowing natural rivers is shared by all Californians," said Steve Evans, Wild Rivers Consultant for the statewide group, Friends of the River.

AB 142 now moves to the State Senate, where it will be reviewed in the Natural Resources and Water Committee later this month.

For more information:

Cecily Smith, Foothill Conservancy – (209) 223-3508, cecily@foothillconservancy.org

Steve Evans, Friends of the River – (916) 708-3155, sevans@friendsoftheriver.org