

To the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors,

Please throw your support behind S. 3288, Jared Huffman and Kamala Harris' California PUBLIC Lands Act. This bill will protect and enlarge 39,500 acres of wilderness land in Mendocino County, a legacy gift to this gorgeous region we are privileged to live in. S.3288 represents a double win - both for the environment, the rivers and forests we are called upon to steward for the health of our planet and ourselves, and for our economic future, building on the magnetic draw of the hundreds of miles of wild and scenic Eel River within our county. I believe Huffman's district in Congress encompasses more wilderness than any other (outside of Alaska). This is indeed something to cherish and celebrate!

While considering support for this visionary Senate bill, I would like to tickle your eyes with a vision of a Salmon Walk along the 12-14 miles of Eel River between Scott Dam and the Van Arsdale Reservoir. There is already a maintenance road along the bottom of the river canyon, with limited vehicle access. Like the popular Lost Coast Trail, this stretch of Eel River would make a great hiking/bicycling/camping trail. The Potter Valley Tribe owns thousands of acres here and they are dedicated to improving outdoor access and recreation. The following is taken from their website:

EEL RIVER – TROUT CREEK and ALDER CREEK LAND ACQUISITION

As the result of a 12-year process, on January 24, 2019 the Potter Valley Tribe received the donation of 879 acres of forested lands in the main stem Eel River, just north of Potter Valley. The tribe applied for and negotiated a land conservation proposal with the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council, beginning in 2007. A conservation easement will be held by the Mendocino Land Trust.

The Stewardship Council was formed as part of a PG&E settlement agreement under the bankruptcy reorganization in 2003. This agreement establishes that 140,000 acres of PG&E's watershed lands will be conserved in perpetuity for the following beneficial public values: protection of outdoor recreation, sustainable forestry, agriculture, natural resource protection, open space preservation, and historic and cultural resources. All lands directly associated with PG&E's hydroelectric systems will be retained by PG&E, with conservation easements also in place.

With this acquisition of a significant part of its aboriginal territory, the Potter Valley Tribe now can begin the awesome task of managing these land resources. Among the long-range future plans are: development of recreational facilities, expanding environmental education programs, assisting with restoration of habitat and fishery resources, wildfire and fuels management, and becoming good neighbors with the stakeholders in the area.

With Gratitude,

Robin Leler, Willits resident and outdoor education advocate