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**New Bill Would Protect Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers
in the Eastern Sierra and San Gabriel Mountains**

*Local Residents Applaud Boxer and McKeon Efforts to
Preserve Wildlands and Pristine Rivers in Premier Outdoor Recreation Area*

(San Francisco, CA)— More than 470,000 acres of wilderness and 52 miles of wild and scenic rivers would gain permanent protection from legislation introduced yesterday by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Representative Howard “Buck” McKeon (R-Santa Clarita). The Eastern Sierra and Northern San Gabriel Wild Heritage Act preserves the spectacular mountains, rivers and open spaces of California’s Eastern Sierra and San Gabriel Mountains near Santa Clarita.

“We applaud the leadership of Rep. McKeon and Sen. Boxer who worked tirelessly to balance the goals of conservationists, off-road enthusiasts and others and have succeeded in crafting a compromise that will leave a legacy of nationally significant wild lands and rivers for future generations,” said Sally Miller, California Senior Field Representative with The Wilderness Society and resident of Lee Vining. “This bill will enhance the region’s recreation and tourism-based economy.”

Leading conservation groups joined business owners, sportsmen and community leaders in their support of Boxer and McKeon’s legislation. The legislation was introduced just in time for Memorial Day and the unofficial start of summer, a time when recreation enthusiasts flock to this area.

From the 14,000-foot peaks in Mono County’s White Mountains to the Amargosa River in Death Valley, the proposal includes some of the region’s most treasured natural wonders, including the new White Mountains Wilderness and the specially-designated

Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, which contains the world's oldest living trees. The proposed Hoover Wilderness Additions represent a classic High Sierra landscape of deeply carved glacial valleys dotted with tranquil alpine lakes and forests of lodgepole pine.

Residents of the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys expressed their delight that the bill also includes wild lands in northern Los Angeles County: some 40,000 acres in the Magic Mountain and Pleasant View Ridge areas and seven miles of Piru Creek. The Pleasant View Ridge area features 8,200-foot Mt. Williamson and other dramatic peaks, the headwaters of Little Rock Creek, and some of the most magnificent and remote ridge and canyon country in southern California.

“As an Antelope Valley resident who enjoys the quiet solitude and stunning vistas of the Eastern Sierra, I am deeply grateful that Congressman McKeon has introduced a bill to protect areas of such outstanding beauty,” said Chris Spicher, the owner of Antelope Valley Florist in Lancaster. “I am especially grateful for his effort to preserve the White Mountains and ancient bristlecone pines.”

“Having spent over 20 years to preserve the green belt surrounding the Santa Clarita Valley, I am pleased and encouraged that our legislators understand the importance of setting aside open space for future generations,” said Marsha McLean, a Santa Clarita city council member.

Elected officials and business leaders in Mono County expressed similar excitement over the inclusion of the Owens River Headwaters near Mammoth Lakes and the proposed expansion of the Hoover Wilderness adjacent to Yosemite National Park. In addition to preserving wilderness areas and wild rivers, the bill will enhance other recreational opportunities and serve as a boost to the region's tourism-based economy through the creation of a winter recreation area near Bridgeport.

“The Owens River contains an important and beloved fishery,” said businessman Tim Alpers, a third-generation resident of Mono County and former elected official. “Protecting the river's headwaters is the right thing to do.”

The proposal is noteworthy for its broad scope. Wilderness designation for these lands will mean that recreational activities such as hunting, hiking, camping, backpacking and fishing will still be allowed; development such as road building will not.

“This bill represents the hard work and compromise of local citizens and legislators in Washington,” said Byng Hunt, a Mono County Supervisor from Mammoth Lakes. “I am incredibly grateful to Congressman McKeon, Senator Boxer and their staff for crafting such a well balanced and fair proposal that represents the diverse views of the people of Mono County.”

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Since 2000, The California Wild Heritage Campaign, a coalition of over 500 businesses and organizations has worked to ensure the permanent protection of California's remaining wild public lands and rivers.