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HONORABLE RAY NUTTING, CHAIR
EL DORADO COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
330 FAIR LANE
PLACERVILLE, CA 95667

Dear Chairman Nutting:

I write this letter to express my opposition to the proposal to designate the Upper Truckee River Headwaters as "Wild and Scenic" under the "Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

As a local resident and member of the pioneer Celio family, my opposition to this proposal is based on my knowledge of the area, my 50 plus year history of hunting, hiking, fishing and horseback riding the entire area being considered for special status.

The primary purpose for "Wild and Scenic" designation for this area is funding. Access to larger pots of money. There are no "development" threats to this area, especially the building of dams, which is mentioned frequently in much of the documentation supporting this proposal. Try to suggest building a dam in the Tahoe Basin, not happening.

The Lahonton Cutthroat Restoration Project is underway for this area. How's the funding going? Once this project is completed, there will be miles of the Upper Truckee River headwaters and tributaries that will be catch and release, artificial lures only, zero fish limit, just like the Meiss Meadow area is right now. Of course this can't be successful until the thousands of brook trout that inhabit these streams are eradicated, killed. An area my family and friends have fished for over 140 years will be the private playground for fly fishermen. I practice catch and release often, however once this cutthroat project is complete our historical use of this area will be dramatically changed and my grandchildren will no longer have the privilege and opportunity to hike in with me, catch their legal limit and sit around the campfire for their trout dinner.

There must be a way for all recreational users of this area to enjoy what they love to do without taking away someone else's right and experience. The upper headwaters are already locked into the Lahonton Cutthroat Restoration Project, so be it. However, there is no need to include streams like Big Meadow Creek, Grass Lake Creek and others that enter the Upper Truckee River below the natural falls that is presently the barrier between the Cutthroat and other species down river.

In addition, there are too many unanswered questions about the potential for the lower portions of the Upper Truckee River being included in the future, possibly extending all the way to Lake Tahoe. I'm sure there are some who would love that idea, however then we get to the question of private property rights. The proponents say that private property rights are fully protected, however that may be an overstatement. In a document titled "A Compendium of Questions and Answers Relating to Wild & Scenic Rivers", dated May 2011 and written by the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, the question is posed on page 61: "Can the government acquire or take private land within the river corridor?" Answer – Yes, but with many restrictions. Not very comforting when one is looking to the future of changing politics and possible changes in law and policy.

I would suggest that the U.S. Forest Service spend additional effort educating the public and users of this area on low impact camping (small groups of 12 or less), sanitation education (use of wag bags and other products) and "pack it in pack it out" programs. I've seen many large groups camped at area lakes in excess of 30 or 40 people. If this is an example of "eco tourism" then we need more education.

In closing, the "Wild and Scenic" designation will require a complete environmental analysis followed by a Comprehensive Management Plan. It is very questionable that after several years of analysis, public input and agency process that a restrictive, bureaucratic "Management Plan" will emerge at a cost of hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars, if not more.

As a resident, landowner and frequent user of this area, I strongly recommend against "Wild and Scenic" designation for the Upper Truckee River.

Respectfully,

Tom Celio