



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

January 12, 2017

## DeFazio, Huffman, Wyden, Merkley Secure Critical 20 Year Mining Ban in Southwestern Oregon, Smith River Watershed

**WASHINGTON**—Reps. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Jared Huffman (D-CA) and Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR) today secured a twenty-year ban on new mining projects in an ecologically and economically critical region in Southwest Oregon.

The areas protected include the watershed of the National Wild and Scenic North Fork Smith River in Oregon, the watershed of Rough and Ready Creek (an eligible Wild and Scenic River and tributary to the National Wild and Scenic Illinois and Rogue rivers), as well as 17 miles of the National Wild and Scenic Chetco River.

These rivers are known for their wild salmon and steelhead populations, and provide vital economic, recreational and natural resources to the area.

Also protected from mining would be the headwaters of Hunter Creek and the Pistol River—two prized native salmon and steelhead rivers that flow directly into the Pacific Ocean along the spectacular Wild Rivers Coast of Southern Oregon and Northern California.

"This is an incredible victory for Southwest Oregon," said **Rep. Peter DeFazio**, D-OR. "This mining ban will support the area's recreation economy, safeguard safe drinking water sources for thousands of families in the area, and stop the threats of foreign-owned nickel mining companies who want to strip-mine this beautiful area. I'm proud to have helped to protect this unique land, and I thank my colleagues for their help in accomplishing this important goal."

"The people of Del Norte County, the Elk Valley and Tolowa Dee-ni' tribes, and thousands of other Californians and Oregonians who cherish the Smith River have united in working to secure two decades of protection for this spectacular landscape and its wildlife for future generations," said **Rep. Jared Huffman**, D-CA. "I applaud the Obama Administration for taking this action today and thank my colleagues for their hard work and support."

"I'm very pleased this unique landscape will be safeguarded for 20 years from future mining operations, protecting clean water, diverse ecosystems and recreation opportunities for Oregonians," **Senator Ron Wyden** said. "With Oregonians' overwhelming support for this action, I have been a long-time strong advocate for this approach because it provides Congress time to pass a bill that will permanently protect this special place."

"The pristine waters of these Southwest Oregon rivers are a public treasure that we owe it to future generations to preserve," said **Senator Jeff Merkley**. "Mining would have posed an unacceptable threat to the region's clean water and to the fishing and recreation economy that many rely on. These lands and waters belong to all of us, and today's news is a huge victory in the fight to ensure that our beloved citizen-owned resources are passed down to future generations in the same condition we received them."

CONTACT:

[Beth Schoenbach](#) (DeFazio): (202) 225-6416

[Alexa Shaffer](#) (Huffman): (202) 225-5161

[Hank Stern](#) (Wyden): (503) 326-7539

[Martina McLennan](#) (Merkley): (202) 329-7045