



United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

May 12, 2014

**Re: Drought bill discussions: Protect our nation's Wild & Scenic Rivers**

Dear Representative:

The House "drought bill," HR 3964, attempts to commandeer water from other legal users of water and dedicated environmental flows, waives major elements of state and federal law, and de-designates a portion of the Merced wild and scenic river.

A Senate response should not embrace the House action, nor should members of the House support it either. We certainly urge you to avoid any precedent-setting dismembering of our systems of protected lands and waters that have been permanently set aside to remain wild and free. Given the extensive system of water developments in the Central Valley and adjacent mountains, there is little water left that can be diverted (on the Merced alone, thirty-two miles have been dedicated to reservoirs).

Droughts come and go. Preparing for them is well advised. But the answer to droughts does not lie in carving out portions of national parks, wilderness areas, and wild and scenic rivers under the illusion that this does anything but to betray the trust of the American people, whose representatives have set these areas aside for posterity.