

Congressman Kurt Schrader Testimony
H.R. 2781: The Recreational Molalla River Act
House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public
Lands
October 1st, 2009
2360 Rayburn

Thank you Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, and members of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands for the opportunity to speak about H.R. 2781. This bill would designate more than 21 miles of the Molalla River as protected under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. I also want to thank the President of the Molalla River Alliance, Michael Moody making the trip from Oregon and representing the Alliance and the 45 civic and local Oregon-based groups who recognize the social, cultural, and economic benefits of this bill. I appreciate and commend their dedication to the Molalla River and hard work over the past few years protecting the river and educating their communities on proper river stewardship.

The Molalla River is nothing short of a historic and natural treasure in my state. Historically, it served as both a trail for indigenous Molalla Indians and as a vital trade route between pioneers in the Willamette Valley and residents of Eastern Oregon. Its Table Rock Trail, which is also known as "Huckleberry Trail," was used by members of the Warm Springs tribe in search of huckleberry and salmonberry picking areas. Early settlers used its fertile lands and drinking water for homesteading and its Ogle Mountain mine attracted migrants during the gold rush.

Today, the Molalla River is known by residents in Clackamas and Marion Counties and across Oregon for its many recreational purposes which include hiking, diving, fishing, kayaking, whitewater rafting, picnicking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. It still serves as a water source for many citizens of Molalla and my home town of Canby. It provides spawning beds for threatened Steelhead Trout and Chinook Salmon and is also an essential wildlife area for the pileated woodpecker, red tree vole, red-legged frog, northern spotted owl, pacific giant salamander, and both golden and bald eagles.

Designating the Molalla River as recreational under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System would have tremendous economic, cultural, and environmental benefits for the region. Economically, it would attract more tourism while creating many new jobs--- something the state of Oregon desperately needs. Environmentally, it would protect the character of the river thereby preserving it so future generations can recognize its rich cultural, historical, and social benefits.

Protecting our environment and protecting local economies are not mutually exclusive. We can preserve the scenic beauty of the Molalla River while also maintaining the federal land base available for timber management in Oregon. Under my bill there is approximately 420 acres of timber management acres or "matrix" lands that would be impacted. While this represents a relatively small amount of impacted timber lands, I am sensitive to the reduction. Therefore, as the committee moves forward, I would ask the

Chairman and Ranking Member to work with me and my staff to ensure there will be no net-loss of the acres available for timber management as a result of this legislation.

Once again, I thank my colleagues for providing me the opportunity to speak on this important legislation and I urge the committee to pass H.R. 2781 and designate this section of the Molalla River as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.