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Wyden, DeFazio Introduce Legislation to Protect Copper Salmon as Wilderness

**Legislation includes protection for over
13,700 acres and 9.3 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers**

Washington, D.C. – Working for the permanent preservation of the 13,700 acres that encompass the headwaters of the Elk River in Southern Oregon, today U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) and U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR) introduced the Copper Salmon Wilderness Act. Today's introduction is the culmination of more than a decade of cooperative efforts by local government, grassroots activists, community leaders, hunters and fishers, who have all advocated for the protection of Copper Salmon by giving it Wilderness designation.

“It is very difficult in this day and age to find large tracts of undisturbed, old growth forest like you find in Copper Salmon, so it is little wonder that the business community and the environmental community, Republicans and Democrats alike, have fought for years to earn a Wilderness designation for this area,” said Wyden. **“Thanks to the hard work and advocacy of so many Oregonians, we are now one step closer to making this ideal a reality.”**

“The rugged Elk Creek (*sic*) Watershed is a rare stronghold for salmon and contains one of the largest intact ancient coastal forests in Oregon,” Congressman Peter DeFazio remarked. **“Copper Salmon is a jewel that is deserving of protection for future generations.”**

Renowned among fishermen, Copper Salmon is one of the last intact watersheds on the southwest Oregon Coast and is widely regarded as Oregon's last, best coastal salmon and steelhead stream. Oregon State University researchers have concluded that the Elk River is one of the healthiest habitats in the lower 48 states for anadromous fish. The stream is home to chinook salmon, winter steelhead, coho salmon, cutthroat trout, and rainbow trout, and the surrounding wilderness is home to healthy populations of blacktail deer, elk, black bear, and mountain lion.

The proposed Copper Salmon Wilderness is adjacent to the existing Grassy Knob Wilderness Area within the lush rainforests of the Siskiyou-Rogue River National Forest.

A Wilderness designation for Copper Salmon will permanently protect it from development, and provides opportunities for diverse recreational opportunities. The designation will also support the local economy, which depends on a strong recreational fishery for millions of tourist dollars.

With the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964, the United States became the world's first nation to define and designate wilderness areas through law. The Wilderness Act initially protected 9.1 million acres of U.S. national forest, while today Wilderness Areas amount to more than 105 million acres of the nation's most pristine places.