

Controversial Moke Wild & Scenic River bill passes Senate

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The state Senate approved SB 1199, the Mokelumne Wild and Scenic River bill, last Thursday on a 22-12 vote. The bill has now moved to the state Assembly, where it will be heard in committee before moving to an Assembly vote.

SB 1199 would designate about 37 miles of the North Fork and main Mokelumne River from Salt Springs Dam to the eastern edge of Pardee Reservoir as a state Wild and Scenic River. The designation bars dams and major diversions in the designated area, but will not affect existing hydropower and water facilities.

Amendments made to the bill will ensure that the designation will not affect Amador and Calaveras County's current and future rights as long as water projects do not dam or harm the 37 designated miles of river. They also clarify that the end point of the designated river does not reduce the existing size of Pardee Reservoir. The legislation will prevent the expansion of that reservoir and permanently protect the Mokelumne's Electra Run and Middle Bar reach.

Just last week, the Calaveras County Water District Board of Directors asked the county Board of Supervisors to reconsider its position on state Wild and Scenic designation for the Moke. CCWD directors say the legislation should be halted to allow for a "collaborative process" to take place among stakeholders.
