

SUPPORT END OF WAIVER TO ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS FOR PROPOSED TOLL ROAD THROUGH SAN ONOFRE STATE PARK IN CALIFORNIA

Background:

The Orange County Transportation Corridor Authority (TCA) has proposed a toll road in southwestern Orange County and northwestern San Diego County which would run through San Onofre State Park. It would bisect the park and adversely impact a heavily-used campground and the watershed of San Mateo Creek within the park. It terminate adjacent to Trestles Beach, a world-renowned surfing beach.

The land on which the park is located is part of Camp Pendleton, a major Marine Corps training facility, which has been leased to the California Department of Parks and Recreation since 1971. A little-noticed rider to the 1999 National Defense Authorization Act, introduced at the request of TCA, exempted the toll road from federal and state environmental protection laws.

Rep. Susan Davis of San Diego, supported by Rep. Lorette Sanchez of Orange County, has sponsored an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would rescind the exemption, thereby re-establishing federal and state protections against roads and highways in public parks. The Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation, as well as large numbers of environmentalists and beach recreationists, strongly support this amendment.

The amendment was reported favorably out of the House Armed Service Committee and passed the House; it is now under consideration in the Senate.

This issue is of concern not only to outdoor enthusiasts in the geographic area who would be adversely impacted by the special exemption from environmental laws, improperly granted to the Orange County toll road project proponents, but also to outdoor recreationists in other locales who could be impacted by Congressional attempts to make similar exemptions.

Resolution:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs supports an amendment to the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act which would end an unprecedented exemption from state laws for a proposed toll road through San Onofre State Park in San Diego County.