



For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Katie Hawkins, Policy Manager, Trout Unlimited

katie.hawkins@tu.org, (530) 414-0388

Joel Weltzien, California Chapter Coordinator, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

weltzien@backcountryhunters.org, (406) 925-3771

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Trout Unlimited, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Announce Support for Legislation that Will Help Protect Habitat and Sporting Opportunity on California Public Lands

Sacramento, CA — Today, Trout Unlimited (TU) and the California Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) announced their support for California Assembly Bill 1624, which will conserve habitat and sporting opportunity by protecting the conservation value of any federal public lands within the state that are sold into private hands.

AB 1624 was introduced on January 20 by Assemblymember Rick Zbur (D-51).

Assemblymembers Jeff Gonzalez (R-36), James Ramos (D-45), Chris Rogers (D-2), and Dawn Addis (D-30) are primary co-authors of this important legislation. TU is a formal co-sponsor of AB 1624.

AB 1624 responds to ongoing federal proposals to transfer or sell public lands, including lands and waters with significant habitat and sporting values. The bill makes sure that any public lands within California sold or transferred out of federal ownership to private parties are automatically subject to the most conservation-oriented zoning in that jurisdiction.

"California public lands are home to some of our country's most famous trout waters, including the Trinity River, Hot Creek, the Kern River, and Eagle Lake," says Matt Clifford, California Director, Trout Unlimited. "It's crucial that we protect the conservation value of these lands to sustain our unique outdoor heritage, and Trout Unlimited is proud to work with ranchers, timber companies, resource management agencies, and landowners to do that. That's why we are pleased to co-sponsor this legislation, which will sustain sporting opportunity and affirm the ability of local governments to designate lands according to local priorities. Public lands are the beating heart of fishing and hunting in the western United States. This bill will help prevent 'No Trespassing' signs from clogging its arteries."

The bill has attracted support from numerous outdoors groups, businesses, and conservation organizations.

"California's hunters and anglers enjoy a huge variety of fish and game species across our incredible state. Those species require intact habitat, and hunters and anglers need access to that habitat," says Joel Weltzien, BHA's California Chapter Coordinator. "In a time of unprecedented threats to sell off our public lands into private or corporate ownership, BHA is committed to protecting the conservation values of California's diverse ecosystems and sporting opportunities. We are proud to support AB 1624, which provides a way to do that which honors local zoning authorities and stakeholder input to land use decisions."

AB 1624 directly supports three values of high importance to Trout Unlimited and the California Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers:

- **Recreation and Public Trust Values:** Anglers, families, and outdoor enthusiasts depend on healthy, accessible public lands for fishing, hunting, hiking, and other activities that connect people to nature. TU and BHA support policies that conserve vital habitats and sporting opportunities on public lands.
- **Protecting Coldwater Habitat:** There is no sporting opportunity without productive habitat. California's fish and wildlife need healthy, conserved waters and landscapes to thrive. Public lands contain headwaters, riparian corridors, migration routes and other habitats essential for both aquatic and terrestrial species. Protecting such resources from development is a high priority for TU, BHA, and other sportsmen's groups.
- **Preserving Local Control:** Federal public lands are vital for fishing and hunting in the Western U.S., and many rural communities depend on the economic benefits of fishing and hunting. Public lands sold or transferred out of federal ownership should be subject to local land use planning and the subsequent treatment of these lands should reflect community needs and, to the greatest extent possible, preserve legal, pre-existing public uses of these lands. To protect and sustain habitat and public access values, private parties and commercial interests should not be entitled to develop lands formerly under federal ownership without prior input from local governance and other stakeholders through a formal planning process.

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Trout Unlimited is the nation's leading conservation organization working to care for and recover rivers and streams and their trout and salmon populations. We bring people together across the country to be champions for their rivers and help make our water cleaner and our communities healthier. Founded by a small band of Michigan anglers in 1959, we have grown into a national organization with more than 350 staff, 400 chapters, and 300,000 members and supporters. We bring science-driven restoration know-how, state and national policy muscle, and local volunteer energy to bear on behalf of clean water, healthy trout and salmon and thriving communities.

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, through education and work on behalf of wild public lands, waters, and wildlife. BHA is a nonpartisan group of sportsmen and -women who stand up for wild lands and waters and for the outdoor opportunities they represent.