

SIERRA WILDERNESS EXPANSION SOUGHT

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—The U.S. Forest Service proposed Friday the expansion of a presently designated primitive area into a 500,000-acre High Sierra wilderness area stretching 140 miles along the mountain range.

Regional forester Charles A. Connaughton said 100,000 acres would be added to the present High Sierra primitive area in Central California. The name change from primitive to wilderness would conform with legislation now before Congress.

Tight Restrictions

Included would be the rugged Blackcap Basin along the north fork of the Kings River. The tight restrictions on use of the primitive area would be enforced in the wilderness area, with the aim of preserving the area in its natural state.

No roads or logging are permitted in such areas. Trail and campground con-

struction is allowed, as are hunting, fishing and mineral prospecting.

Connaughton said boundaries on the area would be drawn to "make it relatively simple to prevent violation of the area."

Public hearings on the proposal will be held in Bishop Feb. 18 and Fresno Feb. 20.

Large Wilderness Area in California OK'd by House

By ELLEN HUME

Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—A sweeping 3.5 million acres of unspoiled California land, stretching from the Oregon border to the San Bernardino Mountains, would be preserved as wilderness under a bill passed Monday by voice vote in the House.

"It's a remarkable gift to future generations and a signal that a new era has arrived," California Resources Secretary Huey D. Johnson said in Sacramento.

The timber industry, which fought the measure, still hopes to persuade Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) to pare it back before expected Senate passage in the fall. Cranston met with forest products industry spokesmen Friday and Saturday in California and found that "they have substantial objections to the bill," Cranston aide Roy Greenaway said.

Greenaway predicted that the bill, which applies only to federally owned land, would pass the Senate

this year with some changes. "We have to see whether they (the House) went too far," he said.

Cranston is expected to try to reverse in the Senate the House bill's ban on skiing on the 45,000-acre Sheep Mountain Wilderness area in the Mt. Baldy-Mt. San Antonia area near Los Angeles. Skieers have already won a provision in the House bill for a special alpine ski development study at Orleans Mountain in the Six Rivers National Forest.

The House bill, sponsored by Rep. Phillip Burton (D-San Francisco), is believed to apply to more acreage than any wilderness bill ever considered by Congress except for the Alaska lands bill now being acted on in the Senate.

The Burton measure would prohibit timber cutting, new mining, road-building or further development of 3.5% of California's land, including inland forests, mountains

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BIG WILDERNESS AREA APPROVED BY HOUSE

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and lakes. The "Wilderness" designation is the strictest level of protection for federal lands.

The bill grew out of the U.S. Forest Service's Roadless Area Review and Evaluation Survey—known as RARE II—which studied 62 million acres in 38 states. The preservation of wilderness in California is expected to serve as a model for other states.

Included in the California bill are 1.4 million acres comprising nearly 90% of Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon national parks. The reason for upgrading the park lands is to prevent further campgrounds, roads and other facilities from being developed there without express permission from Congress, according to Ron Tipton of the Wilderness Society.

The bill would also add 23,000 acres to those national parks and would create two major new wilderness areas—the 500,000-acre Trinity Alps area in Northern California and the 101,000-acre Siskiyou Wilderness, also in the north near the Klamath River. It would set aside 166,000 acres for further wilderness review.

"Overall, it is the best possible product developed under extremely difficult circumstances," said Rep. Don H. Clausen (R-Crescent City), who praised Burton's tenacity in working for the compromise bill. Clausen had sided with timber interests in a previous environmental battle with Burton over the expansion of Redwood National Park in 1977.

Criticized by Rep. Johnson

But Burton's success was criticized Monday by Rep. Harold T. Johnson (D-Roseville), the dean of California's Democratic congressional delegation and chairman of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee. Johnson had proposed an alternate bill, favored by commercial and recreational interests, which would have designated only 1.2 million acres as wilderness.

"This cannot be described as a fully satisfactory bill for Northern California," Johnston said before the voice vote, estimating that 134 million board-feet of lumber would be taken out of production because of the measure.

"I'm scared to death by this Cali-

fornia bill setting a precedent to further erode the productive base," agreed Rep. Robert Duncan (D-Ore.). "All wealth ultimately comes out of the ground."

The timber industry will feel the bill's impact in Northern California, according to William Dennison, executive vice president of the Western Timber Assn.

"It's going to mean the loss of two or three mills in the northern part of the state, centered in the Trinity, Six Rivers and Klamath areas, with the loss of jobs and the loss of potential lumber for houses," Dennison said in a telephone interview from San Francisco.

Burton helped win support for the bill by including a special legal provision for the forest products industry. In return for giving up about 6% of their current timber activities on national forest lands in California, the industry would be freed from an injunction against cutting in a broader harvest area of about 2.4 million acres.

That injunction was part of a district court decision won by the state of California against the U.S. Forest Service. The court found that the Forest Service's environmental impact statement for California's RARE II lands was inadequate.

The new bill would dissolve that injunction and block future suits based on the state's RARE II environmental impact statement.

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