

Staff Summary for October 13-16, 2026

12. Wild Trout Waters**Today's Item**Information ☐Action ☒

Receive, discuss, and potentially adopt proposed amendments to the Commission-designated Wild Trout Waters Policy.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)**Background**

Pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Section 1727, the Commission considers designating certain state waters for wild trout management and maintains a list of those waters, which it does via the [Commission-Designated Wild Trout Waters Policy](#). The Commission considers updates to the policy as the Department is able to propose updates, typically during the October Commission meeting. Over 60 state water bodies and, in some cases, their tributaries, currently are designated wild trout waters; 16 of those waters are further designated heritage trout waters.

Designated Wild Trout Waters support self-sustaining populations of non-native or native trout outside of their historic range and provide anglers with an opportunity to catch wild trout in a manner that promotes conservation. A Heritage Trout designation requires water to sustain a robust population of native trout within the historic range of the species. Stocking of hatchery-origin trout is restricted within designated waters, and angling regulations are intended to allow trout populations to sustain themselves through natural reproduction.

Fish and Game Code Section 1727, subdivision (b), requires the Department to annually submit to the Commission no fewer than 25 miles of stream or stream segments and at least one lake suitable for Heritage or Wild Trout designation. Subdivision (c) authorizes the Commission to remove or modify designated waters from the program. If waters are removed from the program, an equivalent amount of stream mileage or lake acreage must be added as replacement.

The Department proposes that the Commission take the following actions for 2026:

1. remove the approximately 25-mile Wild Trout Water designation for Sespe Creek (Ventura County);
2. modify the Fall River Complex Wild Trout designation by removing Fall River Pond and Fall River Lake (Shasta County);
3. designate approximately 29 miles of the West Fork San Gabriel River, including Bear Creek, as a Heritage Trout Water (Los Angeles County); and
4. designate approximately 3 miles of Arroyo Seco upstream of Devil's Gate Dam (Los Angeles County) as a Wild Trout Water.

Exhibits 1 through 3 provide more details about the proposed policy amendments.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Staff Summary for October 13-16, 2026

Recommendation

Commission staff: Approve amendments to the Commission-Designated Wild Trout Waters Policy as proposed by the Department.

Department: Approve the proposed policy amendments.

Exhibits

1. [Department memo, received September 8, 2026](#)
2. [Recommended revised policy text](#)
3. [Maps of proposed affected waters, received September 8, 2026](#)

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission adopts the amendments to the Commission-Designated Wild Trout Waters Policy.

Memorandum

Date: September 4, 2026

To: Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission

From: Meghan Hertel, Director

Subject: Agenda Item for the October 13, 2026 Fish and Game Commission Meeting: Recommendations for Designation, Modification, and Removal of Heritage and Wild Trout Waters - 2026

Fish and Game Code section 7260(c) grants the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) the authority to designate Heritage and Wild Trout Waters that exemplify the uniqueness, beauty, and diversity of California's native and wild trout and the habitats in which they occur.

Designated Wild Trout Waters support self-sustaining populations of non-native or native trout outside of their historic range and provide anglers with an opportunity to catch wild trout in a manner that promotes conservation. A Heritage Trout Designation requires water to sustain a robust population of native trout within the historic range of the species. Stocking of hatchery-origin trout is restricted within designated waters, and angling regulations are intended to allow trout populations to sustain themselves through natural reproduction.

Fish and Game Code section 1727(b) requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) to annually submit no fewer than 25 miles of stream or stream segments and at least one lake suitable for Heritage or Wild Trout designation to the Commission. Section 1727(c) authorizes the Commission to remove or modify designated waters from the program. If waters are removed from the program, an equivalent amount of stream mileage or lake acreage must be added as replacement.

The Department recommends the following actions for 2026: (1) remove the Wild Trout designation for Sespe Creek; (2) modify the Fall River Complex Wild Trout designation by removing Fall River Pond and Fall River Lake; (3) designate the West Fork San Gabriel River and Bear Creek as Heritage Trout Waters; and (4) designate Arroyo Seco as a Wild Trout Water.

Proposed Removal – Sespe Creek

Remove the approximately 25-mile Wild Trout Water designation extending from Lion Campground downstream to the Los Padres National Forest boundary in Ventura County. Following the 2024 California Endangered

*Species Act listing of Southern California Steelhead, continued management of this reach as a recreational Wild Trout Water is no longer consistent with long-term recovery objectives because no complete barriers prevent anadromous Southern California Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*) from accessing the watershed during suitable flow conditions. Removal better aligns management with Southern California Steelhead conservation and recovery.*

Proposed Modification – Fall River Complex

The Department proposes modifying the 2021 Fall River Complex Wild Trout designation by removing Fall River Pond and Fall River Lake. These isolated impoundments support predominantly non-native warmwater fisheries that differ from the spring-fed trout waters comprising the remainder of the Complex. The proposed modification will allow hatchery stocking of Rainbow Trout to resume in Fall River Pond and Fall River Lake, expand recreational angling opportunities consistent with local community interests, and align the designation with proposed sport fishing regulation changes. The proposed regulation change was adopted by the Commission on 8/13/2026 and takes effect on 1/1/2027.

Proposed Heritage Trout Designation – West Fork San Gabriel River, including Bear Creek

The Department proposes designating approximately 29 miles of the West Fork San Gabriel River, including Bear Creek, as a Heritage Trout Water. Historically isolated from anadromous access by downstream dams, these waters support one of Southern California's most genetically significant, self-sustaining, populations of native Rainbow Trout. The watershed provides high-quality cold-water habitat, while providing sustainable recreational angling opportunities consistent with the goals of the Heritage and Wild Trout Program.

Proposed Wild Trout Designation – Arroyo Seco

The Department proposes designating three miles of Arroyo Seco extending from roughly 2.5 miles upstream of Devil's Gate Dam to Brown Mountain Dam. The reach supports a self-sustaining wild trout population established through successful conservation translocations and provides one of Southern California's few accessible wild trout fisheries near the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

The proposed Heritage and Wild Trout designations exceed the stream mileage removed from the program and satisfy Fish and Game Code

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission
September 4, 2026
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section 1727(c). The Fall River Complex amendment refines the existing designation by removing two lentic water bodies while retaining the remaining designated complex.

If you have any questions please contact, Farhat Bajjaliya, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor), Inland Trout Program, Fisheries Branch, at (916) 215-5330 or farhat.bajjaliya@wildlife.ca.gov.

Attachments

cc: Chad Dibble, Deputy Director
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Jay Rowan, Branch Chief
Fisheries Branch
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Jason Roberts, Regional Manager
Northern Region (Region 1)

Erinn Wilson-Olgin, Regional Manager
South Coast Region (Region 5)

Shay Mussulman, Environmental Program Manager
Fisheries Branch
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Kyle Evans, Environmental Program Manager
South Coast Region (Region 5)

Sam Plemons, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)
Northern Region (Region 1)

Joseph Stanovich, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)
South Coast Region (Region 5)

California Fish and Game Commission
Proposed Amendments to the
Commission-Designated Wild Trout Waters Policy

September 8, 2026

It is the policy of the Fish and Game Commission to designate certain state waters to be managed exclusively for wild trout. Commission-designated wild trout waters should provide a quality angling experience by providing the angler with an opportunity to fish in aesthetically pleasing and environmentally productive waters with trout populations whose numbers or sizes are largely unaffected by the angling process.

I. Waters designated by the Commission for wild trout management shall meet two criteria:

A. Angler Access:

1. Open for public angling with unrestricted access, when of sufficient dimensions to accommodate anglers without overcrowding; or
2. Open for public angling with controlled access under a plan approved by the Commission setting forth the number of anglers and the method of distribution.

In the event of an interruption to angler access and/or a fishing closure to a designated wild trout water or heritage trout water that is expected to be temporary and is due to restoration activities or public safety considerations, the waters may remain designated while inaccessible for public angling. Coincident with annual wild trout and heritage trout waters designations, the Department shall provide an update to the Commission on any designated waters that are temporarily inaccessible for public angling, with an estimate of when angler access may be restored based on available information. The Department may also make a recommendation to undesignate any waters that are temporarily inaccessible for public angling.

- B. Able to support, with appropriate angling regulations, wild trout populations of sufficient magnitude to provide satisfactory trout catches in terms of number or size of fish.

II. Wild trout waters shall be managed in accordance with the following stipulations:

- A. Domestic strains of catchable-sized trout shall not be planted in designated wild trout waters.
- B. Hatchery-produced trout of suitable wild and semi-wild strains may be planted in designated waters, but only if necessary to supplement natural trout reproduction.
- C. Habitat protection is of utmost importance for maintenance of wild trout populations. All necessary actions, consistent with State law, shall be taken to prevent adverse impact by land or water development projects affecting designated wild trout waters.

III. The Department shall prepare and periodically update a management plan for each water designated as a wild trout water.

IV. Certain designated wild trout waters may be further designated by the Commission as "Heritage Trout Waters", to recognize the beauty, diversity, historical significance, and

special values of California's native trout. Heritage trout waters shall meet the following additional criteria:

- A. Only waters supporting populations that best exemplify indigenous strains of native trout within their historic drainages may qualify for designation.
 - B. Heritage Trout Waters shall be able to provide anglers with the opportunity to catch native trout consistent with the conservation of the native trout present.
- V. Recognizing the importance of native trout to California's natural heritage, the Department shall emphasize education and outreach efforts to inform the public about our native trout, their habitats, and the activities for restoring native trout when implementing the Department Heritage Trout Program.
- A. Implement a Heritage Trout Angler Recognition Certificate through which anglers will have the opportunity to have their catches of California native trout recognized by the Commission. The criteria for receiving the formal recognition shall be maintained by the Department Heritage and Wild Trout Program. To receive a certificate of recognition, anglers shall submit an application with supporting materials to the Department for review.

The following waters are designated by the Commission as "wild trout waters":

1. American River, North Fork, from Palisade Creek downstream to Iowa Hill Bridge (Placer County).
2. Carson River, East Fork, upstream from confluence with Wolf Creek excluding tributaries (Alpine County).
3. Clavey River, upstream from confluence with Tuolumne River excluding tributaries (Tuolumne County).
4. Hat Creek, from Lake Britton upstream to Hat No. 2 powerhouse (Shasta County).
5. Hot Creek, from Hot Springs upstream to west property line of Hot Creek Ranch (Mono County).
6. Kings River, from Pine Flat Lake upstream to confluence with South and Middle forks excluding tributaries (Fresno County).
7. Kings River, South Fork, from confluence with Middle Fork upstream to western boundary of Kings Canyon National Park excluding tributaries (Fresno County).
8. Merced River, South Fork, from confluence with mainstem Merced River upstream to western boundary of Yosemite National Park excluding tributaries (Mariposa County).
9. Owens River, from Five Bridges crossing upstream to Pleasant Valley Dam excluding tributaries (Inyo County).
10. Rubicon River, from confluence with Middle Fork American River upstream to Hell Hole Dam excluding tributaries (Placer County).
11. Yellow Creek, from Big Springs downstream to confluence with the North Fork of the Feather River (Plumas County).
12. Cottonwood Creek, upstream from confluence with Little Cottonwood Creek, including tributaries (Inyo County).

13. Klamath River, from Copco Lake upstream to the California-Oregon border (Siskiyou County).
14. McCloud River, from Lake McCloud Dam downstream to the southern boundary of Section 36, T38N, R3W, M.D.B. & M. (Shasta County).
15. Deep Creek, from confluence with Green Valley Creek downstream to confluence with Willow Creek (San Bernardino County).
16. Middle Fork Stanislaus River, from Beardsley Afterbay Dam to Sand Bar Diversion Dam (Tuolumne County).
17. Truckee River, from confluence with Trout Creek downstream to the Nevada State line (excluding the property owned by the San Francisco Fly Casters Club) (Nevada and Sierra counties).
- ~~18. Sespe Creek, a 25-mile section between the Lion Campground and the boundary of the U.S. Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest (Ventura County).~~
- ~~19~~18. Bear Creek, Bear Valley Dam (impounding Big Bear Lake) downstream to the confluence with the Santa Ana River (San Bernardino County).
- ~~20~~19. Lavezzola Creek (Sierra County).
- ~~21~~20. Laurel Lake #1 and Laurel Lake #2 (Mono County).
- ~~22~~21. Middle Fork San Joaquin River - Northern boundary of the Devils Postpile National Monument downstream to the Lower Falls (3.6 miles); and footbridge just above the confluence with Shadow Creek downstream to the footbridge just above upper Soda Springs Campground (4 miles) (Madera County).
- ~~23~~22. South Fork Kern River watershed from its headwaters downstream to the southern boundary of the South Sierra Wilderness (Tulare County).
- ~~24~~23. Golden Trout Creek drainage, including tributaries, from confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters (Tulare County).
- ~~25~~24. Eagle Lake, north of Susanville (Lassen County).
- ~~26~~25. Upper Kern River, from the Forks of the Kern, upstream to Tyndall Creek in Sequoia National Park (Tulare County).
- ~~27~~26. Heenan Lake, near Markleeville and Monitor Pass (Alpine County).
- ~~28~~27. Upper Truckee River, including tributaries, upstream from the confluence with Showers Creek (El Dorado and Alpine counties).
- ~~29~~28. Sacramento River, including tributaries, from Box Canyon Dam downstream to Scarlett Way in Dunsmuir (Siskiyou County) and from the county bridge at Sweetbriar downstream to Lake Shasta (Shasta County).
- ~~30~~29. Long Lake (Plumas County).
- ~~31~~30. Piru Creek, including tributaries, upstream of Pyramid Lake (Ventura and Los Angeles counties).
- ~~32~~31. Upper Stony Creek including tributaries, upstream from Mine Camp Campground (Colusa, Glenn, and Lake counties).
- ~~33~~32. Lower Honeymoon Lake (Fresno County).

- ~~34~~33. Upper East Fork San Gabriel River, including tributaries, upstream from Heaton Flat (Los Angeles County).
- ~~35~~34. Royce Lake # 2 (Fresno County).
- ~~36~~35. Lower Yuba River, from Englebright Dam to the confluence with the Feather River (Yuba and Nevada counties).
- ~~37~~36. Parker Lake (Mono County).
- ~~38~~37. South Fork San Joaquin River and all tributaries from Florence Lake upstream to the boundary of Kings Canyon National Park including the Piute Creek drainage (Fresno County).
- ~~39~~38. Sallie Keyes Lakes (Fresno County).
- ~~40~~39. Sacramento River from Keswick Dam downstream to the Red Bluff Diversion Dam (Shasta and Tehama counties).
- ~~41~~40. Pauley Creek from the confluence with the Downie River upstream to the headwaters (Sierra County).
- ~~42~~41. Caples Creek from the confluence with the Silver Fork American River upstream to Caples Lake Dam (El Dorado and Alpine counties).
- ~~43~~42. Putah Creek from Lake Solano upstream to Monticello Dam on Lake Berryessa (Solano and Yolo counties).
- ~~44~~43. Lake Solano (Solano and Yolo counties).
- ~~45~~44. Milton Reservoir (Nevada and Sierra counties).
- ~~46~~45. Gerle Creek Divide Reservoir (El Dorado County).
- ~~47~~46. Manzanita Lake (Shasta County).
- ~~48~~47. Maggie Lake (Tulare County).
- ~~49~~48. Little Kern River drainage, including tributaries, from the confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters (Tulare County).
- ~~50~~49. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Blackhawk Creek upstream to the Island Lake Trail crossing, including the following tributaries: Buck Creek, Quartz Creek, Eight Mile Creek, Williams Creek, Harrington Creek and Prescott Fork and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County).
- ~~51~~50. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Goose Creek upstream to Blackhawk Creek, including Goose Creek and Hurdygurdy Creek and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County).
- ~~52~~51. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Craigs Creek upstream to the confluence with Goose Creek, including Craigs Creek, Rock Creek, and Coon Creek and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County).
- ~~53~~52. Tuolumne River, from Wards Ferry Bridge upstream to the boundary of Yosemite National Park, excluding tributaries (Tuolumne County).
- ~~54~~53. Butte Lake (Lassen County).
- ~~55~~54. Wolf Creek, from Forest Service Road 062 crossing to Wolf Creek Lake (Mono County).

5655. Middle Fork Feather River, from the confluence of Frey Creek upstream to Poplar Valley Road bridge, including: main stem Middle Fork Feather River, Bear Creek, Fall River, Little North Fork of Middle Fork Feather River, Long Valley Creek, Nelson Creek, Onion Valley Creek, Poplar Creek, South Branch Middle Fork Feather River, and Willow Creek (Butte and Plumas counties).
5756. Fall River Complex, which consists of Ahjumawi Lava Springs, Bear Creek (downstream of Pondosa Way bridge), Big Lake, Eastman Lake, Fall River (~~from confluence with Pit River upstream~~ from the Pit No. 1 PG&E Diversion Dam upstream to origin at Thousand Springs), ~~Fall River Pond, Fall River Lake, Horr Pond, Ja She Creek, Lava Creek, Spring Creek, Little Tule River, and Tule River~~ (Shasta and Siskiyou counties).
5857. North Fork Mokelumne River from Salt Springs Reservoir to the downstream-most lake of Highland Lakes, including Deer, Blue and Summit City creeks and their perennial tributaries (Alpine, Amador, and Calaveras counties).
5958. Silver Lake at the headwaters of Shotgun Creek (Tulare County).
6059. Hilton Lakes Complex (37.481931, -118.761155) – Including Hilton Lakes 1-10 and all tributaries connecting the lakes including Hilton Creek upstream of Hilton Lake 1 (Davis Lake) (Mono and Inyo counties). The designated complex will be managed as a single unit.
6160. Fish Creek (37.543956, -119.129879) – Upstream from the confluence with the Middle Fork San Joaquin River including Sharktooth Creek, but excluding all other tributaries (Fresno and Madera counties).
6261. Arroyo Seco – extending from approximately 2.5 miles upstream of Devil's Gate Dam to Brown Mountain Dam within the Angeles National Forest (Los Angeles County).

The following "wild trout waters" are further designated by the Commission as "heritage trout waters":

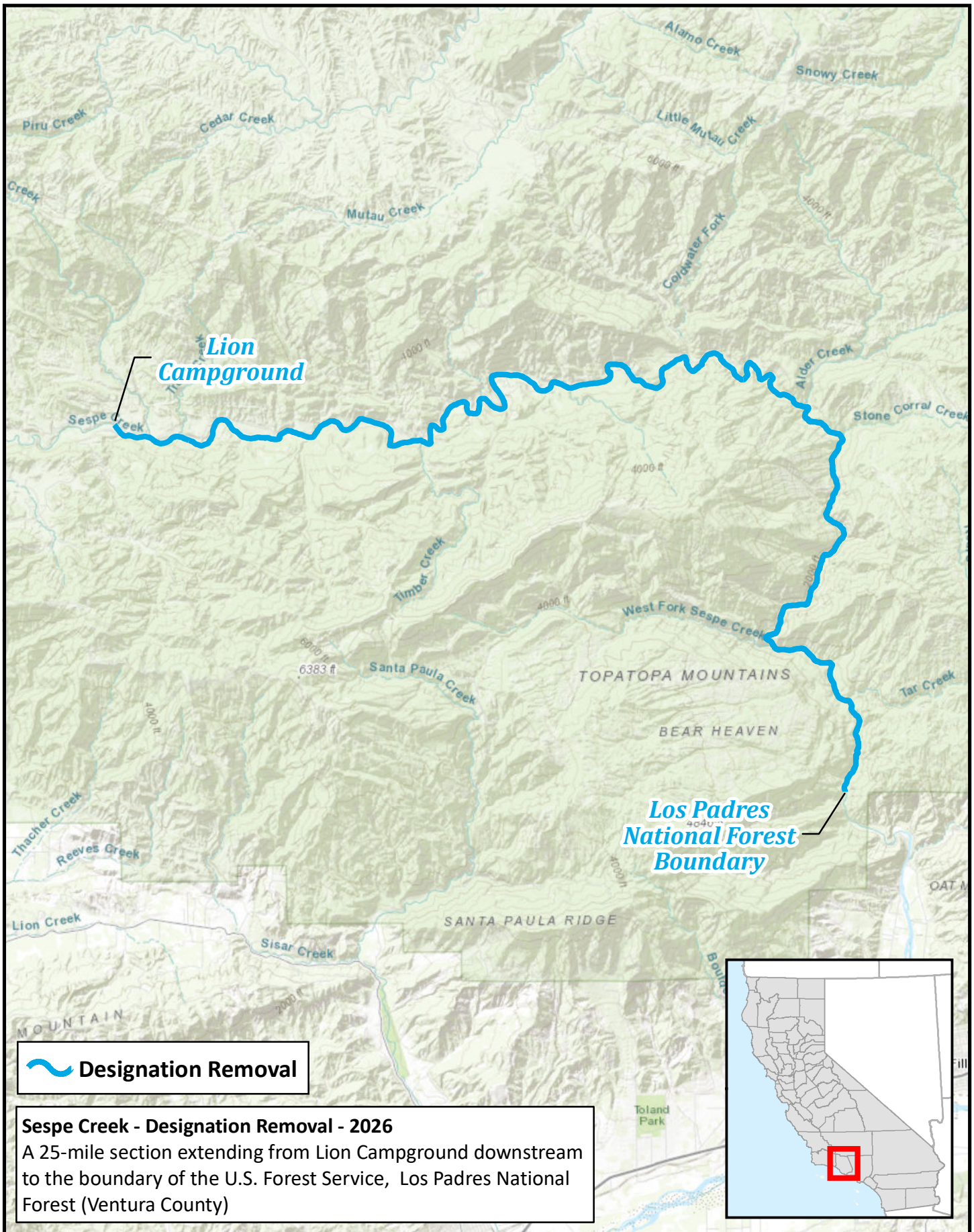
1. Clavey River, upstream from confluence with Tuolumne River, excluding tributaries (Tuolumne County).
2. Golden Trout Creek drainage, including tributaries, from confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters (Tulare County).
3. Eagle Lake, north of Susanville (Lassen County).
4. Upper Kern River, from the Forks of the Kern, upstream to Tyndall Creek in Sequoia National Park (Tulare County).
5. Heenan Lake, near Markleeville and Monitor Pass (Alpine County).
6. Upper Truckee River, including tributaries, upstream from the confluence with Showers Creek (El Dorado and Alpine counties).
7. Piru Creek, including tributaries, upstream of Pyramid Lake (Ventura and Los Angeles counties).
8. Upper Stony Creek including tributaries, upstream from Mine Camp Campground (Colusa, Glenn, and Lake counties).

9. Upper East Fork San Gabriel River, including tributaries, upstream from Heaton Flat (Los Angeles County).
10. Lower Yuba River, from Englebright Dam to the confluence with the Feather River (Yuba and Nevada counties).
11. Little Kern River drainage, including tributaries, from the confluence with the Kern River upstream to the headwaters (Tulare County).
12. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Blackhawk Creek upstream to the Island Lake Trail crossing, including the following tributaries: Buck Creek, Quartz Creek, Eight Mile Creek, Williams Creek, Harrington Creek and Prescott Fork and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County).
13. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Goose Creek upstream to Blackhawk Creek, including Goose Creek and Hurdgurdy Creek and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County).
14. South Fork Smith River, from the confluence with Craigs Creek upstream to the confluence with Goose Creek, including Craigs Creek, Rock Creek, and Coon Creek and excluding all other tributaries (Del Norte County).
15. Wolf Creek, from Forest Service Road 062 crossing to Wolf Creek Lake (Mono County)
16. Silver Lake at the headwaters of Shotgun Creek (Tulare County).
17. West Fork San Gabriel, including Bear Creek - extending from the headwaters of the West Fork San Gabriel River downstream to its confluence with the North Fork San Gabriel River, including Bear Creek, within the Angeles National Forest (Los Angeles County).

(Amended: 01/04/94; 06/22/95; 03/06/97; 11/06/98; 04/02/99; 12/08/00; 04/03/03; 12/12/08; 11/04/09; 10/21/10; 11/17/11; 11/07/12; 11/06/13; 12/03/14; 12/10/15; 10/20/16; 12/06/17; 12/13/18; 02/21/20, 10/14/20, 04/21/22, 10/13/22, 6/14/23, 10/12/23, 10/10/24, 10/13/26)

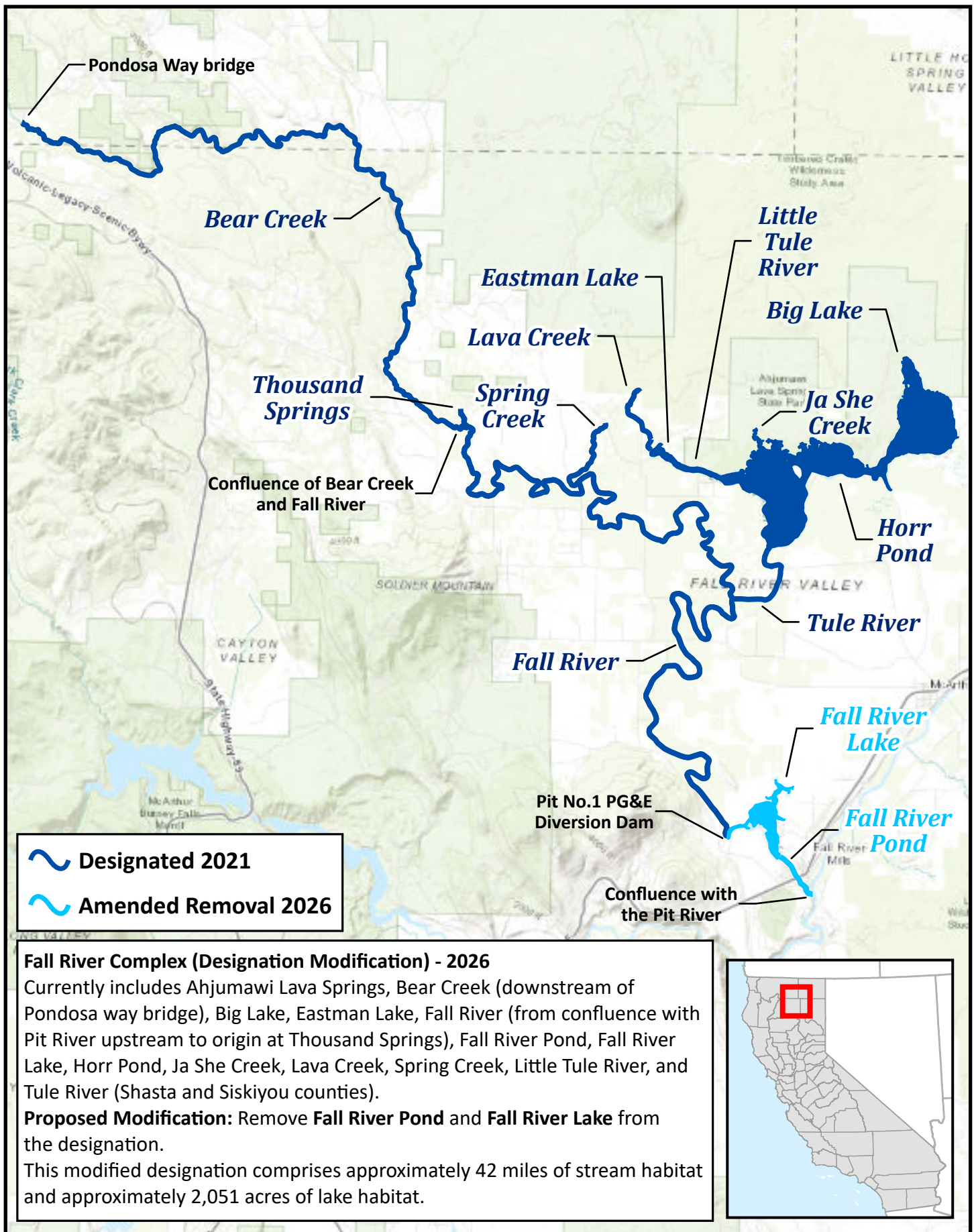
PROPOSED

Sespe Creek Designated Wild Trout Waters, Amendment - 2026



PROPOSED

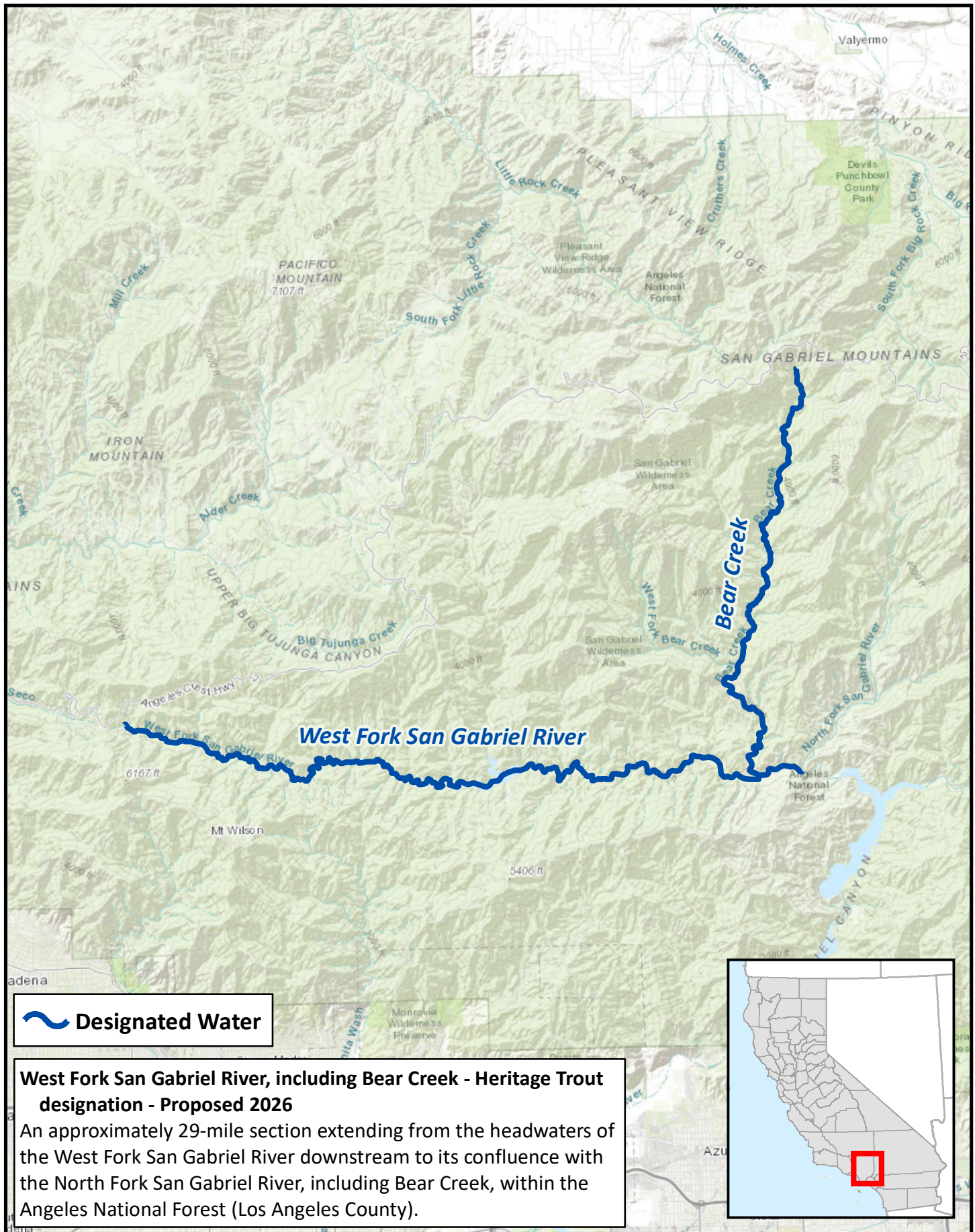
Fall River Complex Designated Wild Trout Waters, Amendment - 2026



0 1 2 4 Miles

PROPOSED

West Fork San Gabriel River, including Bear Creek, Heritage Trout Waters Designation, Proposed - 2026



0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Fisheries Branch GIS, July 2026
Basemap source: Esri



Arroyo Seco Designated Wild Trout Waters, Proposed - 2026

