

Conservation request seeks to preserve Dry Creek habitat

Conservation proposal ranks high on President Bush's list

Rep. Devin Nunes is supporting President Bush's request of \$2.5 million to protect 7,700 acres of the Dry Creek watershed in Tulare County - known as the Dofflemyer Ranch.

At the foot of the Kaweah River alluvial plain lies an outstanding sycamore alluvial woodland, the largest in the Sierra Nevada and third largest in California, stretching along the lower five miles of Dry Creek. Surrounding the sycamore alluvial woodland is an extensive landscape of blue oak and foothill woodland that abuts one of the largest

protected blue oak woodland stands in the Sierra Nevada.

The Dofflemyer Ranch provides habitat for several sensitive animal species, including the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, western pond turtle, bald eagle, and a great blue heron rookery.

The Dofflemyer Ranch abuts lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers and contributes to the scenic view along Highway 198 leading to Sequoia/King's Canyon National Park.

This conservation easement enjoys local support from the Sequoia Riverlands Trust and from the California Department of Forestry and



Rep. Devin Nunes meets with ranch owner John Dofflemyer and SCE Regional Manager Mike Chrisman.

Fire Protection. The purchase total is \$5 million and the remaining \$2.5 million will be provided by state,

local and private funding.

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competitive alternatives under Medicare to give seniors real choice. In addition, changes to the provider reimbursements will better reflect the cost of delivering efficient and quality care in rural areas.

The reform bill will ensure a prescription drug benefit under Medicare for all seniors who chose to participate. In addition, the bill reemphasizes the need to assist low-income seniors by devoting extra help to those who need it most.

Some of the steps Mr. Nunes took to affect change on the Medicare bill include:

Disproportionate Share Hospitals

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to Speaker Hastert asking for his assistance in preventing pending Disproportionate Share Hospital

funding reductions in California. The State stands to lose \$184 million in federal Medicaid dollars without Congressional intervention. Mr. Nunes joined other members of the California Congressional delegation in asking House leadership to protect California hospitals from these reductions.

Emergency Room Modernization

Congressman Nunes introduced H.R. 2471, the Emergency Room Modernization Act. The bill, a product of the Rural Healthcare Delivery Summit in Visalia, reforms the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act. Specifically, the bill is designed to give emergency rooms more flexibility in managing non-emergency patients who enter the E.R. seeking medical atten-

tion. Under the Nunes bill, emergency rooms could divert non-emergency patients to health clinics or other appropriate medical centers for treatment. National studies have shown that as much as 10% of E.R. visits are non-emergency in nature, and are substantially contributing to the shortage of space in rural hospitals. Diverting non-emergency cases to health clinics, which are federally subsidized to treat the uninsured, will help to address serious over-crowding in local emergency rooms. **The Ways and Means Committee included the provisions of H.R. 2471 in the Medicare Prescription Drug bill, which passed in a full vote of the House.**

Mr. Nunes also supported:

Medicare Incentive Payment Program- H.R. 1 provides a bonus payment for physicians in underserved areas, based on the ratio of Medicare beneficiaries to physicians and specialist in a given area.

Full and Permanent Equalization of the Standardized Payment Amount: The FY03 Omnibus Appropriations bill included a temporary measure (which expires at the end of the fiscal year) that equalizes the Medicare inpatient standardized amount payment. Prior to this provision being enacted, hospitals located in cities serving a population of more than 1 million received payments that were 1.6 percent higher than facilities serving smaller areas. H.R. 1 equalizes this payment permanently.