

# STEVE BENOIT

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March 14, 2010

**William W. Monning**  
**Assemblymember, 27th District**  
**PO Box 942849**  
**Sacramento, CA 94249-0027**

Assembly Member Monning,

I understand there is some controversy and misinformation in regard to the 920 acre Molera Wilderness proposal. The misinformation seems to stem from the belief that in the event of a wildfire in the Molera Wilderness, firefighting efforts will not be allowed or they will be delayed due to the Wilderness designation.

I feel I can help clarify this issue. During my 33 years working for California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) in Monterey County I have fought many fires in the Big Sur area including fires within the Ventana Wilderness and Molera Park.

I have reviewed the wilderness proposal and it has clearly taken wildfire into consideration. With the Wilderness boundary set back 200 foot from the Post Summit jeep road/fire break which is outside the wilderness boundary and the 1,000 foot set back from the State Park Boundary to the west this would allow bulldozers and chainsaws immediate access to the most obvious and critical fire control lines. Considering the steep nature of the terrain within the wilderness these two lines would be firefighters first and safest choice of attack. I can see no reason that a fire response would be delayed in any way if a fire started within or adjacent to the proposed wilderness.

Historically fires in the Molera Park start from Highway One or along the Old Coast Highway and burn toward the proposed wilderness in which case the jeep road to Post Summit is usually cleared as a fuel break to stop the fire along the ridge top.

I have spent many years exploring the Ventana Wilderness. As a child I was introduced to the wilderness in 1958 by my father and I understand the importance of the wilderness designation to preserve the wild character of the Little Sur backcountry. I believe we should take this rare opportunity to give this property the highest level of protection we can.

I encourage you to support the establishment of the wilderness designation of the 920 acres in Molera State Park.

Sincerely,

