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NATURAL RESOURCES



ISAAC G BRYAN
CHAIR

AGENDA

Monday, January 12, 2026
2:30 p.m. -- State Capitol, Room 437

BILLS HEARD IN SIGN-IN ORDER

**** = Bills Proposed for Consent**

1. AB 35 Alvarez Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024: Administrative Procedure Act: exemption: program guidelines and selection criteria.
2. AB 333 Alanis Recycling: glass beverage containers: market development payments.
3. AB 442 Hadwick Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973: working forest management plans: harvest area.
4. AB 623 Dixon Fire prevention projects: California Environmental Quality Act: coastal development permits: exemptions.
5. AB 643 Wilson Climate change: short-lived climate pollutants: organic waste reduction.
6. ****AB 946 Bryan** Natural resources: equitable outdoor access: 30x30 goal: urban nature-based projects.

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 35 (Alvarez) – As Amended January 5, 2026

SUBJECT: Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024: Administrative Procedure Act: exemption: program guidelines and selection criteria

SUMMARY: Exempts the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, approved by the voters as Proposition 4, from the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Pursuant to the APA (Government Code 11340 *et seq.*)
 - a) Establishes the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), charged with the orderly review of adopted regulations.
 - b) Prohibits any state agency from issuing, utilizing, enforcing, or attempting to enforce any guideline, criterion, bulletin, manual, instruction, order, standard of general application, or other rule, which is a regulation as defined, unless the guideline, criterion, bulletin, manual, instruction, order, standard of general application, or other rule has been adopted as a regulation and filed with the Secretary of State pursuant to the APA.
 - c) Authorizes any interested person to petition a state agency requesting the adoption, amendment, or repeal of a regulation, as provided.
 - d) Requires OAL to review all regulations adopted, amended, or repealed and submitted to it for publication in the California Code of Regulations Supplement, transmittal to the Secretary of State, and to make determinations using specified standards. Establishes timeframes by which OAL must approve or disapprove a regulation after it has been submitted to OAL for review.
- 2) Pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84), exempts the development and adoption of program guidelines and selection criteria adopted pursuant to the bond from the APA. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 75076)
- 3) Pursuant to the Natural Resources Bond or the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68), exempts the development and adoption of program guidelines and selection criteria adopted pursuant to the bond from the APA. (PRC 80010 (e))
- 4) Pursuant to the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1), exempts from the APA the development or implementation of programs or projects authorized or funded under the bond, other than Chapter 8. (Water Code 79705)
- 5) Pursuant to Proposition 4:

- a) Authorizes a regulation for the purpose of developing and adopting program guidelines and selection criteria needed to effectuate or implement the programs included in Chapters 2 through Chapter 9 to be adopted as an emergency regulation and requires an emergency regulation adopted pursuant to this bond to be filed with, but not be repealed by, OAL, and remain in effect until repealed or amended by the adopting state agency. (PRC 90135 (e))
- b) Authorizes the Legislature to enact legislation necessary to implement programs funded by the bond. (PRC 90115)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) Author's statement:

Proposition 4 reflects a clear mandate from California voters to accelerate investments in climate resilience, water quality, natural resources, and community protection. Voters approved these funds with the expectation that they would be deployed efficiently to address urgent environmental and public health challenges, including drinking water safety, flood protection, ecosystem restoration, and climate adaptation.

However, without an exemption from the APA, implementation of Proposition 4 funding faces unnecessary delays. Many administering agencies already operate established, transparent, and well-vetted guidelines, such as Intended Use Plans, competitive grant criteria, and public oversight processes that are routinely used to deploy similar bond funds. Requiring a duplicative APA rulemaking process would force agencies to create entirely new programs, divert staff resources, and delay funding for projects that are ready to move forward.

The Legislature has a long-standing precedent of authorizing APA exemptions for voter-approved bond measures, such as for all three recent climate bonds, and for complex infrastructure programs when timely deployment is essential. These exemptions do not eliminate accountability or public input; instead, they rely on existing statutory safeguards, board oversight, and reporting requirements to ensure transparency and responsible use of public funds.

AB 35 simply ensures Proposition 4 implementation as voters intended: swiftly, responsibly, and based on sound science and established practices. This APA exemption will allow state agencies to deliver critical investments to communities without delay, maximize the impact of bond funds, and respond effectively to California's pressing wildfire, climate infrastructure and clean water challenges.

- 2) Proposition 4.** Proposition 4 was approved by the voters on the November 5, 2024, statewide general election, authorizing \$10 billion in general obligation bonds to finance projects for safe drinking water, drought, flood, and water resilience, wildfire and forest resilience, coastal resilience, extreme heat mitigation, biodiversity and nature-based climate solutions, climate-smart, sustainable, and resilient farms, ranches, and working lands, park creation and outdoor access, and clean air programs.

- 3) **Administrative Procedures Act.** The APA establishes rulemaking procedures and standards for state agencies in California. The requirements set forth in the APA are designed to provide the public with a meaningful opportunity to participate in the adoption of state regulations and to ensure that regulations are clear, necessary, and legally valid.

The average timeline for APA rulemaking varies, but generally require about 12-18 months to complete a rulemaking, depending on complexity, public input, and OAL efficiency. OAL, according to its 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, has 26 employees responsible for reviewing administrative regulations proposed by more than 200 state agencies for compliance with the standards in the APA, transmitting these regulations to the Secretary of State, and publishing regulations in the California Code of Regulations.

The APA has specified timelines for review that includes a minimum 45-day public comment period after notice of publication, agency review/response to comments (which can take weeks to months), and a mandatory 30-day working day review by OAL before filing.

AB 149 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 106, Statutes of 2025, adopted language allowing regulations adopted under Proposition 4 to be adopted as emergency regulations, and allows those emergency regulations to remain in effect until repealed or amended by the adopting state agency. This APA exemption is limited in scope compared to prior natural resource bonds, including Propositions 84, 68, and 1, which provided broader exemptions from the APA for the development and adoption of program guidelines and selection criteria.

- 4) **Amending voter-approved bonds.** California's general obligation bond law and state constitution provide specific guidance on whether the Legislature can amend general obligation bonds after they're approved by voters.

California Constitution (Article XVI, § 1 and 2) generally states that once voters approve bond authorization, that law cannot be repealed or materially altered while debt remains outstanding. The General Obligation Bond Law reaffirms the constitutional provisions.

A modification, such as an APA exemption, is permissible as it is not a material change to the bond language approved by the voters, as evidenced by AB 149.

- 5) **Challenges with the APA process.** Multiple state agencies implementing Proposition 4 funding are currently dealing with issues relating to the emergency regulatory authority and the APA process.

For example, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) planned to have regulations considered by OAL on December 4, but withdrew their proposal after OAL provided indications they were going to reject them.

The regulatory process requires program guidelines to be written in a strict, formulaic way. For many programs, such as WCB's, describing these programs that span millions of acres, dozens of ecosystems, and countless project types, in formulaic regulatory language has proven difficult and inefficient. WCB staff is now planning to re-do the regulations and bring it back to the WCB in February. If WCB approves them, they will go back to OAL for review.

Granting Proposition 4 funds to fund environmental projects as expeditiously as possible is especially time-sensitive. It is estimated that under the Trump Administration federal funding cuts and rescinded funding for environmental and clean energy programs in California is significant and irreplaceable – upwards of \$7.7 billion in environmental and clean energy funds tied to California projects have been rolled back. Further, the Legislative Analyst's Office estimates California faces an approximately \$18 billion budget deficit for the 2026-27 fiscal year, which is larger than previously expected, with structural deficits projected to grow to \$35 billion annually by 2027-28.

- 6) **Expanding the APA exemption.** AB 35 adds an APA exemption to Proposition 4 to mirror the APA exemption provided in the past natural resource general obligation bonds for the development and adoption of program guidelines and selection criteria needed to effectuate or implement the programs included in the bond.
- 7) **Keeping sunshine on this climate bond.** There are 21 provisions in Proposition 4 that make \$1.82 billion available for entirely novel programs. Absent the APA process, the state could develop guidelines and regulations for these programs without any stakeholder input or transparency into the decision making. While the need to expedite this funding is real, new programs should not be developed behind closed doors. To ensure light is shed on the development processes of these new programs, the bill could be amended to require draft and final regulations to be posted on the respective state entity's website and allow opportunities for public engagement.
- 8) **Committee amendments.** The *committee may wish to consider* amending the bill to maintain PRC 90135 (e)(1)-(2) to maintain the Legislature's adoption of emergency regulatory authority pursuant to AB 149, and requiring specified transparency and public participation requirements are met if the full APA exemption is exercised.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Agricultural Institute of Marin
American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation
Association of California Water Agencies
Audobon California
Bay Area Council
Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
Bay Planning Coalition
Big Sur Land Trust
Bolsa Chica Land Trust
CalDesal
California Association of Local Conservation Corps
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
California Association of Sanitation Agencies

California Climate and Agriculture Network
California Council of Land Trusts
California Fire Chiefs Association
California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition
California Invasive Plant Council
California Local Conservation Corps Foundation
California Municipal Utilities Association
California State Association of Counties
California State Parks Foundation
California Stormwater Quality Association
California Tahoe Alliance
Calleguas Municipal Water District
Carbon Cycle Institute
Central California Environmental Justice Network

Cesar Chavez Environmental Corps
City of Sacramento
Civicorps
Clean Water Action
Climate Resolve
Coachella Valley Conservation Commission
Coastal Corridor Alliance
Collaborate Action Program
Community Water Center
Conservation Corps North Bay
Conservation Corps of Long Beach
County of San Diego
County of Sonoma
East Bay Regional Park District
East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy
Eastern Municipal Water District
El Dorado Water Agency
Endangered Habitats League
Fire District Association of California
Fresno Eoc Local Conservation Corps
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
Greater Valley Conservation Corps
Hi-desert Water District
Irvine Ranch Water District
Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
League of California Cities
Los Angeles Conservation Corps
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Mission Springs Water District
Monterey One Water
Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District
National Audubon Society
Orange County Conservation Corps
Outdoor Outreach
Outward Bound Adventures
Peninsula Open Space Trust
Placer County Water Agency
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County

Rural County Representatives of California
Sacramento Area Sewer District
Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps
San Diego County Water Authority
San Diego Natural History Museum
San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance
San Diego; County of
San Gorgonio PASS Water Agency
San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program
San Jose Conservation Corps
San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
Santa Clara Valley Water District
Santa Margarita Water District
Save Mount Diablo
Save the Redwoods League
Sempervirens Fund
Sequoia Community Corps
Sierra Consortium
Sloughhouse Resource Conservation District
Sonoma County Agriculture and Open Space
Sonoma Land Trust
Southern California Mountains Foundation
Southern California Water Coalition
Sustainable Conservation
Sweetwater Authority
Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta Resource Conservation District
The Conservation Fund
The Freshwater Trust
The Nature Conservancy
The Wilderness Society
The Wildlands Conservancy
Upper San Luis Rey Resource Conservation District
Urban Corps of San Diego County
Valley Water
Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley Advocacy Fund
Watereuse California
Wildfire Solutions Coalition

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Paige Brokaw/ NAT. RES. /

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 333 (Alanis) – As Amended April 10, 2025

SUBJECT: Recycling: glass beverage containers: market development payments

SUMMARY: Authorizes the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) to allocate up to \$20 million annually for market development payments for noncontainer glass end users.

EXISTING LAW establishes the Beverage Container Recycling and Litter Reduction Act (Bottle Bill), which:

- 1) Requires beverage containers, as defined, sold in-state to have a California redemption value (CRV) of 5 cents for containers that hold fewer than 24 ounces and 10 cents for containers that hold 24 ounces or more. Requires beverage distributors to pay a redemption payment to CalRecycle for every beverage container sold in the state. Provides that these funds are continuously appropriated to CalRecycle for, among other things, the payment of refund values and processing payments. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 14500 *et seq.*)
- 2) Defines “beverage” as:
 - a) Beer and other malt beverages;
 - b) Wine and distilled spirit coolers;
 - c) Carbonated water;
 - d) Noncarbonated water;
 - e) Carbonated soft drinks;
 - f) Noncarbonated soft drinks and sports drinks;
 - g) Noncarbonated fruit juice drinks that contain any percentage of fruit juice;
 - h) Coffee and tea drinks;
 - i) Carbonated fruit drinks;
 - j) Vegetable juice;
 - k) Wine and sparkling wine; and,
 - l) Distilled spirits. (PRC 14505)
- 3) Defines “beverage container” as the individual, separate bottle, can, jar, carton, or other receptacle in which a beverage is sold, and which is constructed of metal, glass, plastic, or any other material, or any combination of these materials. Specifies that “beverage container” does not include cups or other similar open or loosely sealed receptacles. (PRC 14505)
- 4) Authorizes CalRecycle to pay a market development payment to glass beverage container manufacturers who purchases recycled glass collected within the state for use in manufacturing new beverage containers in the state to develop markets for glass beverage containers. Specifies that the recycled glass must be collected, washed, processed, and used for manufacturing in the state. (PRC 14549.7)

- 5) Limits the glass market development payments to not more than \$150 per ton, and requires CalRecycle to consider the following when establishing the payments:
 - a) The minimum funding level needed to encourage in-state washing and processing of empty glass beverage containers collected for recycling in the state;
 - b) The minimum funding level needed to encourage in-state manufacturing that utilizes empty glass beverage containers collected for recycling in the state; and,
 - c) The total amount of funds projected to be available for glass market development payments, and the desire to maintain the minimum funding level throughout the year. (PRC 14549.7)
- 6) Authorizes CalRecycle to allocate up to \$60 million annually for glass market development payments through 2028. (PRC 14581(a)(13)(A))
- 7) Authorizes CalRecycle to allocate up to \$20 million annually for glass market development payments in years 2029-2030. (PRC 14581(a)(13)(B))

THIS BILL:

- 1) Defines “noncontainer glass product” as a product that was manufactured, in whole or in part, using empty glass beverage containers that are not accepted for the manufacturing of new glass beverage containers and would otherwise be sent to landfill.
- 2) Defines “noncontainer glass end user” as a person who purchases a noncontainer glass product.
- 3) Requires CalRecycle to pay a market development payment to a noncontainer glass end user for the purchase of noncontainer glass product within the state.
- 4) Requires CalRecycle to determine the amount of the market development payment, not to exceed \$50 per ton. When determining the amount, authorizes CalRecycle to consider:
 - a) The minimum funding level needed to encourage in-state manufacturing of noncontainer glass products in the state;
 - b) The minimum funding level needed to encourage the purchase of a noncontainer glass product; and,
 - c) The total amount of funds projected to be available for market development payments and the desire to maintain the funding level needed throughout the year.
- 5) Authorizes CalRecycle to allocate up to \$20 million annually for market development payments for noncontainer glass end users.
- 6) Makes legislative findings regarding the use of glass pozzolan, a supplementary cementitious material (SCM) serving as an alternative to Portland cement, and glass recycling.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Bottle Bill.** The Bottle Bill was established in 1986 to be a self-funded program that encourages consumers to recycle beverage containers and to prevent littering. The program accomplishes this goal by requiring consumers to pay a deposit for each eligible container purchased. Then the program guarantees consumers repayment of that deposit, the CRV, for each eligible container returned to a certified recycler. Statute includes two main goals for the program: (1) reducing litter; and, (2) achieving a recycling rate of 80% for eligible containers. Containers recycled through the Bottle Bill's certified recycling centers also provides a consistent, clean, uncontaminated stream of recycled materials with minimal processing.
- 2) **Eligible beverage containers.** Only certain containers containing certain beverages are part of the CRV program. Most containers made from glass, plastic, aluminum, and bimetal (consisting of one or more metals) are included. Containers for wine, spirits, milk, fruit juices over 46 ounces, vegetable juice over 16 ounces, and soy drinks have historically been excluded from the program. Container types that are cartons, pouches, and any container that holds 64 ounces or more have also historically been exempted. SB 1013 (Atkins), Chapter 610, Statutes of 2022, amended the program to include wine and distilled spirits, including those contained in boxes, bladders, pouches, or similar containers, beginning January 1, 2024. SB 353 (Dodd), Chapter 868, Statutes of 2023, further expands the program to include large juice containers beginning January 1, 2026.
- 3) **Ways to redeem containers.** Consumers have four potential options to redeem their empty beverage containers:
 - Return the container to a “convenience zone” recycling center located within ½-mile radius of a supermarket. These are generally small centers that only accept beverage containers and receive handling fees from the Beverage Container Recycling Fund (BCRF). During fiscal year (FY) 2019-20, convenience zone recyclers redeemed about 30% of beverage containers.
 - Return to a dealer that accepts them. In convenience zones without a convenience zone recycler, beverage dealers, primarily supermarkets, are required to either accept containers for redemption or pay CalRecycle an “in lieu” fee of \$100 per day. Few stores accept beverage containers for redemption.
 - Return the container to an “old line” recycling center, which refers to a recycler that does not receive handling fees and usually accepts large quantities of materials, frequently by truckload from municipal or commercial waste collection services. Traditional recyclers collect a little more than half of all CRV containers (58%).
 - Consumers can also forfeit their CRV and “donate” their containers to residential curbside recycling collection. In the 2019-20 FY, curbside programs collected about 12% of CRV containers. Curbside programs keep the CRV on these containers.
- 4) **Funding.** By adding new container types to the Bottle Bill, SB 1013 and SB 353 increased revenues in the BCRF due to an increase in unredeemed CRV funds. In order to incentivize recycling increased glass containers from the addition of wine and distilled spirits, SB 1013

authorized \$60 million annually from the BCRF for glass market development payments until January 1, 2028.

According to CalRecycle, it awarded only \$8.8 million in FY 2023-24. The department indicates that it projects to award \$11 million in payments in FY 2024-25 and \$50.5 million in FY 2025-26. According to the most recent report on the status of the BCRF, which was released last October and covers January through June 2024, the fund is operating at a modest surplus. However, as recycling rates for containers that were recently added, such as wine bottles, rise, the fund status may change. Prior Bottle Bill expansions have tended to result in increased revenues initially, and increased expenditures for CRV deposits further out as recycling rates increase.

The Bottle Bill also establishes glass processing incentive grants for expanding glass cullet processing in the state, as specified; \$4 million is available annually for this grant program. Another \$4 million is available annually for grants to increase the recycling of empty glass beverage containers from restaurants and on-site retail establishments. An additional \$1 million is available annually for grants to fund transportation costs for glass beverage containers.

- 5) **Pozzolan.** Ground glass pozzolan is an SCM that can replace up to 50% of Portland cement in the production of concrete. According to a life cycle analysis completed by the sponsor of this bill, ground glass pozzolan can reduce carbon emissions by approximately 95% per ton compared to conventional Portland cement.
- 6) **According to the author:**

AB 333 will help address California's environmental and recycling goals by diverting glass from the landfill to serve a beneficial purpose for many industries. This bill maximizes diversion, increases recovery, and optimizes the usage of recycled glass sourced from within California, aligning with SB 1013's goal of promoting in-state recycling and processing. As it relates to the end use for concrete, and cement AB 333 is of critical importance. California passed AB 2442 (Holden, 2022) and SB 596 (Becker, 2021), both with the support of the cement and concrete industries, which require significant decarbonization efforts. This bill will assist these industries by providing another tool in those efforts.

- 7) **Glass disposal and recycling.** CalRecycle's most recent comprehensive waste characterization study was conducted in 2021, and found that glass makes up approximately 2.3% of California's waste stream. According to *What's in California's Landfills: Measuring Single-Use Packaging and Plastic Food Service Ware Disposal* (2025), approximately 154,000 tons of glass bottles and jars are disposed in California's landfills, making up 0.39% of California's waste stream.

According to Californians Against Waste, the amount of glass collected for recycling in California is approximately 750,000 tons annually. Approximately 35 tons are non-glass residuals, leaving around 715,000 available for recycling. Of that, about 533,000 tons are recycled in state and an additional amount is exported to Mexico for recycling, leaving somewhere in the neighborhood of 100,000 tons left for possible recycling into pozzolan.

In recent years, California has moved toward funding circular recycling to support the development of a circular economy. For example, the state limited the glass market development payments to bottle-to-bottle recycling in 2022. This bill would provide funding for “downcycling,” or recycling materials into products that won’t continue to be recycled in the future. However, the author’s office notes that this bill is limited to noncontainer glass that would otherwise be landfilled.

- 8) **This bill.** This bill awards up to \$50 per ton for noncontainer glass, as defined by the bill, recycling in the state, up to \$20 million annually. Since only approximately 100,000 tons of noncontainer glass are likely available for this purpose, \$20 million is excessive. Moreover, it is not clear what percentage of noncontainer glass would be from beverage containers (which generate CRV revenues) or from other glass sources in the recycling stream (which don’t), making it difficult to determine how much money from the BCRF, if any, is appropriate for market development payments using that fund source. A significant portion of glass that is collected for recycling is from packaging subject to the Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act, which establishes a producer responsibility program for packaging. If pozzolan made from recycled glass is a viable use for this material, the bill’s sponsor may wish to work with the program’s producer responsibility organization to encourage investments from producers in this technology.

9) **Suggested amendments:**

- In order to ensure that adequate funding remains for programs that promote circular recycling, and given the amount of noncontainer glass available for pozzolan in the state’s recycling system, the *committee may wish to amend the bill* to reduce the appropriation from \$20 million to \$5 million and the amount of the market development payment from up to \$50/ton to up to \$30/ton and sunset this provision in 2030.
- In order to offset transportation costs for noncontainer glass product, the committee may wish to amend the bill to authorize up to \$1 million annually to be spent on transportation costs through 2030.
- Since noncontainer glass generally contains a significant quantity of non-glass contaminants (i.e., labels, lids, etc.), the *committee may wish to amend the bill* to specify that the incentive is available on the glass portion of the material.
- In order to clarify what the market development payments are used for, the *committee may wish to amend the bill* to replace the definition of “noncontainer glass product” with a definition of “waste glass product” that specifies that the glass cannot be used in the production of beverage containers or fiberglass and would otherwise be sent to landfill.
- Make related technical and clarifying changes.

10) **Prior legislation:**

AB 899 (Ransom), Chapter 627, Statutes of 2025, raised the cap on glass market development payments from \$50 to \$150 per ton and authorized CalRecycle to expend up to \$20 million annually for the payments through 2030. This bill also expanded the focus of these payments from glass wine bottles to all glass beverage containers and authorized CalRecycle to set different limits.

SB 1013 (Atkins), Chapter 610, Statutes of 2022, among other things, added wine and distilled spirits to the Bottle Bill. This bill established various small grant programs to incentivize the recycling of beverage container glass in the state and clarified that glass quality incentive payments may be awarded for glass beverage containers that meet specified criteria. This bill also established a glass market development payment of up to \$50 per ton for glass beverage container manufacturers who purchase recycled glass collected within the state for use in the manufacture of new beverage containers and appropriated up to \$60 million annually for this program through 2028.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

Aggreplex (sponsor)
Holliday Rock Company, Inc.
Mitsubishi Cement Corporation

Opposition

Californians Against Waste
Glass Packaging Institute
Republic Services

Analysis Prepared by: Elizabeth MacMillan / NAT. RES. /

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 442 (Hadwick) – As Amended April 21, 2025

SUBJECT: Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973: working forest management plans: harvest area

SUMMARY: Deletes the requirement that the harvest area of a working forest management plan (WFMP) be contained within a single hydrological area.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Under the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973, the Legislature finds and declares the policy of the state to encourage prudent and responsible forest management of nonindustrial timberlands by approving working forest management plans in advance. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 4511-4630.2)
- 2) Defines “WFMP” as a management plan for working forest timberlands, with objectives of maintaining, restoring, or creating uneven aged managed timber stand conditions, achieving sustained yield, and promoting forestland stewardship that protects watersheds, fisheries and wildlife habitats, and other important values. The harvest area of a WFMA must be contained within a single hydrologic area. (PRC 4597.1 (j))
- 3) Establishes a process for a WFMP prepared by a registered professional forester to be submitted to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). PRC 4597.2)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

California's forests are one of our most vital natural resources, contributing to the environmental, economic, and cultural health of our state. Poorly managed forests create catastrophic wildfire risk, threatening communities, wildlife, and critical infrastructure. Assembly Bill 442 streamlines WMFPs by removing a requirement that they cannot include more than one watershed. This bill promotes long-term, sustainable forestry practices for non-industrial landowners while protecting California's natural resources.

- 2) **Working Forest Management Plan.** A WFMP is a long-term management plan approved by CAL FIRE for landowners with fewer than 10,000 acres of land and not primarily engaged in the manufacture of forest products. Established by AB 904 (Chesbro), Chapter 648, Statutes of 2013, the objectives of a WFMP include maintaining, restoring, or creating uneven aged managed timber stand conditions, achieving sustained yield, and promoting forestland stewardship that protects watersheds, fisheries, and wildlife habitats.

According to CAL FIRE data, there is only approved one WFMP for one landowner (Region 2), which has been used 14 times for a total acreage of 4,470 (some of which may be overlapping among its uses).

- 3) **California hydrologic areas.** Under the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act, the harvest area under a WFMP cannot include more than one watershed (single hydrological area) as defined by State Water Resources Control Board's CalWater 2.2. This bill would delete the requirement that the WFMP be in a single hydrological area.

The California Interagency Watershed Map of 1999 (CalWater 2.2, updated May 2004) is the state's working definition of watershed boundaries. Each hydrologic region is progressively subdivided into six smaller, nested levels: the Hydrologic Unit (major rivers), Hydrologic Area (major tributaries), Hydrologic Sub-Area, Super Planning Watershed, and Planning Watershed. At the Planning Watershed (the most detailed level), where implemented, polygons range in size from approximately 3,000 to 10,000 acres. At all levels, a total of 7,035 polygons represent the state's watersheds.

The State Water Board notes that neither CalWater 2.2.1 nor any of its predecessors is a "pure" watershed map because administrative boundaries such as the state border were used to delineate watershed areas. Some of the boundaries, particularly in developed valley areas, also have legal and administrative purposes other than the representation of actual drainage divides. Further, CalWater is not a legal map document, as it does not represent the Regional Water Quality Control Board jurisdictions.

This restriction poses significant burdens on landowners by forcing them to develop a patchwork of WFPMs, Nonindustrial Timber Management Plans, and Timber Harvest Permits to accommodate watershed boundaries instead of a single WFPM for a harvest area. For example, cutting a tree down pursuant to a WFPM on the top of a ridgeline would violate existing law. The creation of multiple plans instead of a single plan appears to have no environmental benefit. Further, developing multiple plans costs several hundred thousand dollars that could be better be used toward fuels management.

- 4) **This bill.** AB 442 deletes the requirement that the harvest area of a WFMP be contained within a single hydrological area.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Council of Engineering Companies of California
California Forestry Association
Humboldt Redwood Company LLC
Pacific Forest Trust

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 623 (Dixon) – As Amended April 21, 2025

SUBJECT: Fire prevention projects: California Environmental Quality Act: coastal development permits: exemptions

SUMMARY: Provides exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the California Coastal Act for fuel modification projects that maintain defensible space. Additionally exempts electrical grid resilience projects from CEQA.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Pursuant to CEQA (Public Resources Code (PRC) 21000-21189.70.10):
 - a) Requires a lead agency, as defined, to prepare, or cause to be prepared, and certify the completion of an environmental impact report (EIR) on a project that it proposes to carry out or approve that may have a significant effect on the environment or to adopt a negative declaration if it finds that the project will not have that effect.
 - b) Requires a lead agency to prepare a mitigated negative declaration for a project that may have a significant effect on the environment if revisions in the project would avoid or mitigate that effect and there is no substantial evidence that the project, as revised, would have a significant effect on the environment.
 - c) Defines “project” as an activity that may cause either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and that is any of the following: an activity directly undertaken by any public agency; an activity undertaken by a person that is supported, in whole or in part, through contracts, grants, subsidies, loans, or other forms of assistance from one or more public agencies; and, an activity that involves the issuance to a person of a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement for use by one or more public agencies.
 - d) Provides specified exemptions for wildfire risk reduction projects.
- 2) Requires a person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains a building or structure in, upon, or adjoining a mountainous area, forest-covered lands, shrub-covered lands, grass-covered lands, or land that is covered with flammable material, to at all times maintain a defensible space of 100 feet from each side and from the front and rear of the structure, as provided. (PRC 4291.5)
- 3) Requires a person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains an occupied dwelling or occupied structure in, upon, or adjoining a mountainous area, forest-covered land, shrub-covered land, grass-covered land, or land that is covered with flammable material, which area or land is within a very high fire hazard severity zone (VHFHSZ) designated by the local agency to, at all times, maintain a defensible space of 100 feet from each side and from the front and rear of the structure, as provided. Requires the Board of Forestry (Board) to adopt

regulations for an ember-resistant zone for the elimination of materials that would likely be ignited by embers. (Government Code 51182)

- 4) Authorizes the director of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to provide grants to, or enter into contracts or other cooperative agreements with, entities, including, but not limited to, private or nongovernmental entities, Native American tribes, or local, state, and federal public agencies, for the implementation and administration of projects and programs to improve forest health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (PRC 4799.05)
- 5) Requires each electrical corporation to annually prepare and submit a wildfire mitigation plan (WMP) to the Wildfire Safety Division for review and approval. Defines 23 variables a WMP is required to contain, including a description of the preventive strategies and programs to be adopted by the electrical corporation to minimize the risk of its electrical lines and equipment causing catastrophic wildfires, including consideration of dynamic climate change risks. (Public Utilities Code 8386)
- 6) Pursuant to the California Coastal Act (PRC 30000 *et seq.*):
 - a) Requires a person wishing to perform or undertake any development in the coastal zone, other than a specified facility, to obtain a coastal development permit (CDP).
 - b) Exempts the following from CDP requirements:
 - i) Immediate emergency work necessary to protect life or property or immediate emergency repairs to public service facilities necessary to maintain service as a result of a disaster in a disaster-stricken area in which a state of emergency has been proclaimed by the Governor.
 - ii) Emergency projects undertaken, carried out, or approved by a public agency to maintain, repair, or restore an existing highway except for a highway designated as an official state scenic highway within the existing right-of-way of the highway, damaged as a result of fire, flood, storm, earthquake, land subsidence, gradual earth movement, or landslide, within one year of the damage.
 - c) Authorizes, to promote greater efficiency with planning, public works plans (PWP) as an alternative to project-by-project CDP review for public works projects carried out by public agencies.

THIS BILL:

- 1) Exempts the following from CEQA:
 - a) A fuel modification project to maintain defensible space of 500 feet from each side and from the front and rear of a building or structure or a fuel reduction project to prevent and contain the spread of wildfires.
 - b) An electrical grid resilience or hardening project.
- 2) Exempts the following from the Coastal Act:

- a) A fuel modification project to maintain defensible space of 500 feet from each side and from the front and rear of a building or structure.
 - b) A fuel reduction project to prevent and contain the spread of wildfires.
- 3) Provides that no reimbursement is required by this bill pursuant to the California Constitution.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

AB 623 would exempt both fuel modification and fuel reduction projects that are meant to maintain a defensible space of 500 feet from a building or structure from the requirements of CEQA and the California Coastal Act. This common sense solution will help streamline existing regulations and empower individuals to do their part in reducing wildfire risk in California. With wildfires making up a large portion of annual statewide greenhouse gas emissions, it is as important as ever that we reduce as much combustible fuel as we're able, especially near structures. By giving power back to property owners and individuals to undertake these projects we bolster our states preventative efforts to reduce the risk of wildfires.

- 2) **Defensible space.** Defensible space is the buffer created between a building on a property and the grass, trees, shrubs, or any wildland area that surrounds it. This space is needed to slow or stop the spread of wildfire, and it helps protect structures from catching fire. A 2019 analysis done by CAL FIRE of the relationship between defensible space compliance and destruction of structures during the seven largest fires that occurred in California in 2017 and 2018 concluded that the odds of a structure being destroyed by wildfire were roughly five times higher for noncompliant structures compared to compliant ones.

The defensible space for all structures within the state responsibility area (SRA) and VHFHSZs in local responsibility areas is 100 feet from a structure.

- 3) **Existing CEQA exemptions for defensible space.** Homeowners and property owners are responsible for maintaining defensible space, and are not subject to CEQA unless they have received state funding (i.e., a grant) or are working with a local agency to conduct a vegetation management project.

CEQA does apply to public agencies, and generally requires state and local government agencies to inform decision makers and the public about the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects, and to reduce those environmental impacts to the extent feasible.

There are two types of CEQA exemptions: (1) statutory exemptions and (2) categorical exemptions. There are more than a dozen statutory exemptions to CEQA in PRC 21080 (among other stand-alone statutory exemptions), including the following exemptions approved in SB 131 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 24, Statutes of 2025:

- A project consisting of “defensible space” fire clearance of up to 100 feet, as measured from the center line of the roadway, for a public roadway identified as an egress and evacuation route for a subdivision or community of 30 or more dwelling units, to remove flammable vegetation or trees of less than 12 inches in diameter as measured at chest height.
- A project consisting of the establishment or enhancement of residential home hardening or defensible space for wildfire risk reduction within 200 feet of a legal structure located in a high or VHFHSZ.
- A project consisting of a fuel break that extends up to 200 feet from structures, including the clearance of flammable vegetation and trees less than 12 inches in diameter as measured at chest height.

For categorical exemptions, the CEQA statutes require the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation to develop CEQA guidelines for implementation by public agencies, which include criteria for public agencies to follow in determining whether or not a proposed project may have a “significant effect on the environment.” Under the current guidelines (Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR)), there are two categorical exemptions available:

- Class 1 exemption covers the repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private facilities, or topographical features, such as maintenance of existing landscaping, and involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. (CCR 15301) This exemption has been used by local agencies to perform strategic fuels reduction work to remove dead, dying, or hazardous trees along roads and around structures to provide defensible space and a wildfire calming zone, and clear vegetation that encroaches into the roadway prism.
- Class 4 exemption is for minor public or private alterations which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that the activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. (CCR 15304) This exemption has been used by state and local agencies to reduce roadside fuels along well-used public roads, improve fuel break function, and vegetation removal on private roads.

In addition, CEQA does not apply to prescribed fire, reforestation, habitat restoration, thinning, or fuel-reduction projects undertaken on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Protection Act if the primary role of a state or local agency is providing funding or staffing for those projects. (PRC Section 4799.05(d)(1))

Furthermore, the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) – a CEQA-compliant program for wildfire resilience projects— was developed by the Board for prescribed burning, mechanical treatments, manual treatments, herbicides, and prescribed herbivory as tools to reduce hazardous vegetation around communities in the wildland-urban interface, to construct fuel breaks, and to restore healthy ecological fire regimes. The Board certified a

CalVTP-related Final Program EIR (FPEIR) prepared pursuant to CEQA. The FPEIR is used by more than 200 public agencies with land ownership or land management responsibilities in the treatable landscape. The FPEIR provides a helpful tool to expedite the implementation of vegetation treatments across nearly 20 million acres. The FPEIR is intended to provide broad CEQA coverage for individual projects consistent with the analysis and mitigation strategies.

- 4) **Vegetation management in the Coastal Zone.** To complement CalVTP, the Coastal Commission developed the use of PWPs to streamline fuel reduction projects in the Coastal Zone. The PWP functions like an overlay to CalVTP, so that following the PWP guarantees both CEQA and Coastal Act compliance. This approach allows applicants to safeguard sensitive biological resources and improve forest health without having to apply for individual CDPs. PWPs authorize projects with streamlined review and without the need for additional coastal permits over 10 years.

Since 2021, approximately 350,000 acres in the Coastal Zone has been certified for wildfire vegetation treatment under PWPs in Santa Cruz County, San Mateo County, San Luis Obispo County, Monterey County, and in Tomales Bay State Park. PWPs are being prepared currently for the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority. The most recent PWP was approved by the Coastal Commission in August for the Upper Salinas Las Tablas RCD and covered 88,000 acres.

PWPs can be completed in less time than a typical local CDP, and once certified, work can proceed within 30 days and no local review is required.

- 5) **Emergency proclamation.** On January 7, 2025, multiple major wildfires erupted concurrently in Los Angeles burning an area nearly the size of Washington, D.C. In response, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-4-25 exempting rebuilding efforts from CEQA and the Coastal Act to accelerate redevelopment. Two months later, on March 1 the Governor issued an emergency proclamation ordering a suspension of all laws, regulations, rules, and requirements that fall within the jurisdiction of boards, departments, and offices within the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and the California Natural Resources Agency (NRA) to be suspended for expediting critical fuels reduction projects initiated in 2025.

Fuels reduction projects include:

- Removal of hazardous, dead, and/or dying trees;
- Removal of vegetation for the creation of strategic fuel breaks as identified by approved fire prevention plans, including without limitation CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plans or Community Wildfire Preparedness Plans;
- Removal of vegetation for community defensible space;
- Removal of vegetation along roadways, highways, and freeways for the creation of safer ingress and egress routes for the public and responders and to reduce roadside ignitions;
- Removal of vegetation using cultural traditional ecological knowledge for cultural burning and/or prescribed fire treatments for fuels reduction; or,
- Maintenance of previously-established fuel breaks or fuels modification projects.

The proclamation establishes a process for use of the exemptions. Entities are required to ask NRA to make a determination that the activities are eligible under the proclamation, and all of the departments and agency under NRA and CalEPA will post on their respective websites the approved CEQA and Coastal Act exemptions. Further, any activity conducted under the temporary exemptions is still required to comply with the state Environmental Protection Plan.

It is unknown how many and which entities requested a determination to be made for an exemption; how many and which projects the exemption(s) were used; or, how the exempted projects advanced the state's wildfire mitigation and forest health treatment goals.

- 6) **Electric grid projects.** Electrical infrastructure is a common ignition point for wildfires, as is evidenced by some of the most destructive wildfires in California's very recent wildfire history.

California's investor-owned utilities (IOUs) (private electrical corporations regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC)) are responsible and accountable for ensuring safe operations of their transmission and distribution infrastructure, which includes vegetation management around that electrical infrastructure. There are various laws requiring an electric utility in the SRA to maintain around and adjacent to any pole or tower that supports a switch, fuse, transformer, lightning arrester, line junction, or dead end or corner pole, a firebreak that consists of a clearing of not less than 10 feet in each direction from the outer circumference of such pole or tower. Utilities are also required to cut, trim, or fell any dead trees, trees weakened by decay or disease, and trees or portions thereof that are leaning toward a line that can contact the line from the side, or may fall on the line. Many vegetation management activities conducted by utilities are treated as maintenance of existing facilities, which can fall under a CEQA categorical exemption (CCR 15301).

More broadly speaking in terms of CEQA application to utilities, when a utility proposes an electrical transmission or distribution project, the PUC acts as the lead agency under CEQA for utility infrastructure. Under CPUC General Order 131-E, smaller projects (such as distribution lines smaller than 50 kV or certain upgrades) may be processed through expedited reviews where utilities claim applicable CEQA exemptions. If a claimed exemption is approved by CPUC staff, CEQA review may not require a full EIR. If not approved, a full CEQA review proceeds. This doesn't eliminate CEQA entirely for grid projects, but it often streamlines or limits review depending on project size, type, and exemption fit.

California has been pursuing CEQA reforms to expedite wildfire mitigation and resilience work (e.g., certain wildfire mitigation activities exempted by SB 131). However, many resilience projects — especially those involving significant ground disturbance, new siting, or sensitive habitats — still require full CEQA review unless a specific statutory exemption now applies.

This bill exempts electrical grid resilience or hardening projects from CEQA, without any contextual definition or consideration of current requirements for CEQA review.

- 7) **Unclear what the problem is.** As it relates to CEQA exemptions for defensible space, this bill proposes exemptions for defensible space projects up to 500 feet from a structure – 5x farther out than current standards require defensible space to be maintained, and 300 feet

more than the current CEQA exemption. There is no evidence supporting a need for a broadened exemption. Furthermore, PWPs under the Coastal Act streamline the project planning process significantly, so it is unclear why a Coastal Act exemption is being pursued. Lastly, a CEQA exemption for electrical grid resilience or hardening projects needs to be fleshed out.

- 8) **Committee amendments.** The *committee may wish to consider amending the bill* to replace the current content with two reporting requirements to better inform the Legislature: 1) to assess how implementation of the Governor's emergency proclamation has been used, require NRA and CalEPA to each report to the Legislature on the implementation of the emergency proclamation; and, 2) require the Coastal Commission to report to the Legislature on CDP approvals for fuel modification projects and use of PWPs for fuel modification projects, and the average time it takes under each process for a project to be approved.

9) **Related legislation:**

- a) AB 1227 (Ellis, 2025) provides a limited, 2-year CEQA exemption for vegetation management projects conducted in VHFHSZs and requires, on or before January 31, 2026, NRA and CalEPA to each report to the Legislature on the implementation of the emergency proclamation. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- b) ABx1 6 and AB 687 (Patterson, 2025) authorize projects exclusively for noncommercial wildfire fuels reduction in timberland, paid for in part or in whole with public funds, to prepare a timber harvesting plan as an alternative to complying with CEQA, and require these projects to be regulated as timber operations. ABx1 6 was held at the Assembly desk. AB 687 was held in the Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Forestry Association
City of Oakland
Humboldt Redwood Company LLC

Opposition

California Chaparral Institute
California Native Plant Society
Center for Biological Diversity
Endangered Habitats League
Hills for Everyone
State Alliance for Firesafe Road Regulations

Analysis Prepared by: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 643 (Wilson) – As Amended January 5, 2025

SUBJECT: Climate change: short-lived climate pollutants: organic waste reduction

SUMMARY: Allows local jurisdictions to count organic material used as a beneficial agricultural amendment toward its recovered organic waste procurement target if the material meets specified conditions.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce the emissions of short-lived climate pollutants (SLCP) to achieve a 40% reduction in methane emissions, 40% reduction in hydrofluorocarbon gases, and 50% reduction in anthropogenic black carbon below 2013 levels by 2030. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 39730-39730.5)
- 2) Requires the state to reduce the disposal of organic waste by 40% from the 2014 level by 2020 and 75% by 2025 to help achieve the state's methane reduction goal. (HSC 39730.6)
- 3) Requires the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), in consultation with ARB, to adopt regulations to achieve the state's organic waste reduction requirements. Specifies that the regulations, in part:
 - a) May require jurisdictions to impose requirements on generators or other relevant entities within their jurisdiction and may authorize local jurisdictions to impose penalties on generators for noncompliance.
 - b) Include requirements intended to meet the goal that not less than 20% of edible food is recovered for human consumption by 2025.
- 4) Establishes criteria for processes used to determine if a process or technology constitutes a reduction in landfill disposal of organic waste. (California Code of Regulations (CCR) 18983.2)
- 5) Requires local jurisdictions to annually procure a specified quantity of recovered organic waste products (e.g., products made from organic waste). This organic waste product procurement target (procurement target) is calculated by CalRecycle based on population. (CCR 18993.1)
- 6) Exempts specified rural jurisdictions from the procurement targets until January 1, 2037. (Public Resources Code 42652.5)
- 7) Requires every person who manufactures or distributes fertilizing materials to obtain a license from the Secretary of Food and Agriculture for each plant and business location. (Food and Agriculture Code 14591)

THIS BILL authorizes local jurisdictions to count organic material used as a beneficial agricultural amendment toward its recovered organic waste procurement target if the following conditions are met:

- 1) The material is processed at a facility authorized by CalRecycle using technologies approved pursuant to Chapter 12 (commencing with Section 18981.1) of Division 7 of Title 14 the California Code of Regulations that meet the criteria of PRC 42652.5; and,
- 2) The material is licensed for end use as an agricultural fertilizer by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Organic waste recycling.** An estimated 35 million tons of waste are disposed of in California's landfills annually. More than half of the materials landfilled are organics. CalRecycle's 2021 waste characterization study, found that 34% of disposed waste is organic waste. According to University of California Los Angeles Center for Health Policy Research, more than a third of Californians (39%) can't afford enough food. In spite of widespread food insecurity, 11.2 billion pounds of food is disposed of annually in the state.

SB 1383 (Lara), Chapter 395, Statutes of 2016, requires ARB to approve and implement a comprehensive SLCP strategy to achieve, from 2013 levels, a 40% reduction in methane, a 40% reduction in hydrofluorocarbon gases, and a 50% reduction in anthropogenic black carbon, by 2030. In order to accomplish these goals, the law specifies that the methane emission reduction goals include targets to reduce the landfill disposal of organic waste, including food, 50% by 2020 and 75% by 2025 from the 2014 level. SB 1383 also requires that by 2025, 20% of edible food that would otherwise be sent to landfills is redirected to feed people. Specifically, the law requires: jurisdictions to establish food recovery programs and strengthen existing food recovery networks; food donors to arrange to recover the maximum amount of edible food; and, food recovery organizations and services that participate in SB 1383 to maintain specified records.

To achieve this, California's waste management infrastructure is going to have to process and recycle much higher quantities of organic materials, involving significant investments in additional processing infrastructure. Organic waste is primarily recycled by composting the material, which generates compost that can be used in gardening and agriculture as a soil amendment and engineering purposes for things like slope stabilization. Anaerobic digestion is also widely used to recycle organic wastes. This technology uses bacteria to break down the material in the absence of oxygen and produces biogas, which can be used as fuel, and digestate, which can also be used as a soil amendment. Tree trimmings and prunings can also be mulched.

In order to ensure that there are adequate markets for the state's increasing quantities of products made from organic waste, like mulch, compost, and digestate, CalRecycle established procurement requirements for local jurisdictions. The procurement targets are based on the average amount of organic waste generated by Californians annually multiplied by the population of a jurisdiction. Jurisdictions can meet the target by procuring, giving

away, or arranging for the use of the material through contracts with direct service providers. Eligible materials include compost, mulch, biomass electricity, or renewable gas, as specified.

Compliance with SB 1383 requirements is particularly challenging for less-populous areas of the state. Implementing the kinds of collection and recycling systems that work well in urban areas is infeasible in more rural areas. Altogether, the 19 counties that are currently eligible for the rural exemption have fewer than 600,000 residents; in some areas the population density drops below 10 per square mile. In higher elevations, roads can become impassable for collection trucks due to snow. These challenges make compliance disproportionately high for these communities.

2) **This bill.** This bill broadens the types of materials that local jurisdictions can use to meet the state's ambitious procurement targets to include "beneficial agricultural amendments."

3) **Author's statement:**

The Legislature has heard from many communities across the state that they are concerned they will struggle to meet their procurement targets under SB 1383. Increasing the eligibility of procurement products made from diverted organics will assist in jurisdictions in meeting their goals, provide positive impacts to the State's climate change objectives, and provides the agricultural community another tool to continue growing crops in our state.

4) **Suggested amendments:**

- In order to ensure that the amount of material credited to a local jurisdiction for procurement accurately reflects the amount of recovered organic waste, *the committee may wish to amend the bill* to specify that the calculation is based on dry weight.
- *The committee may wish to amend the bill* to specify the CDFA fertilizer licensing statute.
- In order to ensure that the material credited to a local jurisdiction pursuant to this bill is recycled materials, *the committee may wish to amend the bill* to clarify that the material must be processed by a facility that does not qualify as disposal.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of Sanitation Agencies
Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District
Goleta Sanitary District
Solano County Farm Bureau

Opposition

Active San Gabriel Valley
California Climate & Agriculture Network

California Nurses for Environmental Health & Justice
Californians Against Waste
Carbon Cycle Institute
Clean Water Action
Climate Action California
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Natural Resources Defense Council
Placer Earth Care Action
Plastic Pollution Coalition
The Climate Center
The Last Plastic Straw
Zero Waste San Diego

Analysis Prepared by: Elizabeth MacMillan / NAT. RES. /

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 946 (Bryan) – As Amended January 5, 2026

SUBJECT: Natural resources: equitable outdoor access: 30x30 goal: urban nature-based projects

SUMMARY: Requires the Governor's office, state agencies, and the Legislature, when distributing resources, to aspire to recognize the coequal goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal and the Outdoors for All initiative, and, to the extent practical, maximize investment in historically underserved urban communities consistent with those initiatives.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Directs California Natural Resources Agency (NRA) to combat the biodiversity and climate crisis by, among other things, establishing the California Biodiversity Collaborative and establishing the 30x30 goal. (Executive Order (EO) No. N-82-20)
- 2) Codifies the 30x30 goal. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 71450)
- 3) Requires NRA, in implementing actions to achieve the 30x30 goal, to prioritize specified actions. Requires the Secretary of NRA to prepare and submit, beginning on or before March 31, 2024, an annual report to the Legislature on the progress made during the prior calendar year toward achieving that goal, as provided. (PRC 71451-71452)
- 4) Establishes the Equitable Outdoor Access Act and sets forth the state's commitment to ensuring all Californians can benefit from, and have meaningful and sustainable access to, the state's rich cultural and natural resources. (PRC 1000)
- 5) Creates, under the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), a "Superfund" to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites, as well as accidents, spills, and other emergency releases of pollutants and contaminants into the environment. Provides the United States Environmental Protection Agency with the authority to seek out those parties responsible for any release and assure their cooperation in the cleanup. (42 United States Code (USC) 9601 *et seq.*)
- 6) Directs the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to implement CERCLA through the state's Hazardous Substance Account Act. (Health & Safety Code 78000 *et seq.*)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Requires the Governor's office, state agencies and state departments, and the Legislature, to advance and promote environmental, conservation, and public access policies and budget actions, when distributing resources, to aspire to recognize the coequal goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal, the Outdoors for All initiative, and, to the extent practical, maximize investment in historically underserved urban communities consistent with those initiatives.

- 2) Encourages decisionmakers to consider factors that are unique to urban settings, including, but not limited to, higher land value acquisition and development costs per acre, the use and rehabilitation of degraded lands for conservation projects, the proximity to populations lacking park and greenspace access, the acute health needs of a local population due to historic lack of greenspace access and development externalities, local park needs assessment plans, current or impending loss of parks or greenspace as a result of state or federal infrastructure projects, and the availability of mobility options near a proposed land conservation site.
- 3) Encourages regulatory agencies, including, but not limited to, DTSC, to work with local communities to restore degraded lands that could contribute to a more equitable strategy for meeting the state's environmental, conservation, and public access goals.
- 4) Requires state funding agencies, including, but not limited to, NRA, the Department of Parks and Recreation, state conservancies, and the Wildlife Conservation Board, to allow, to the extent consistent with the funding source, the funding program's authorizing statutes, and the state's goals, for urban nature-based projects on degraded lands to be eligible and competitive for state funds.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown**COMMENTS:****1) Author's statement:**

California has made a strong commitment to protecting and preserving its natural lands, but it is just as important to make sure that densely populated and underserved communities are not overlooked in this work. By urging the state to focus on greening and restoring land in heavily urbanized areas, AB 946 will ensure we take a comprehensive approach to environmental protection that supports vulnerable communities and expands access to nature throughout California.

- 2) **30x30.** In October 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-82-20 which establishes a state goal of conserving 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 – known as 30x30. The 30x30 goal is intended to help conserve our lands and coastal waters through voluntary, collaborative action with partners across the state to meet three objectives: conserve and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, and mitigate and build resilience to climate change. The 30x30 goal was codified by SB 337 (Min), Chapter 392, Statutes of 2023.

As of November 2025, the state has conserved 26.1% of its lands (26.5 million acres) and 21.9% of coastal waters (737.61 acres), which includes a network of 124 marine protected areas, toward 30x30 goals. California's strategy to conserve an additional six million acres of land and half a million acres of coastal waters is organized into ten pathways that are specific state actions that will help achieve 30x30.

- 3) **Outdoors for All.** The Outdoors for All initiative is intended to expand parks and nature access in communities with little outdoor space, supporting programs to connect people who lack access.

Spending time outdoors directly benefits mental and physical health. It improves mood and happiness, lowers stress, and strengthens people's sense of meaning. Research shows that people who visit outdoor spaces for 30 minutes or more during a week have lower rates of depression and high blood pressure. Access to outdoor spaces also facilitates exercise, which improves long-term physical health. Many healthcare professionals recognize these benefits, and in some places have started to issue medical prescriptions to spend time in nature to improve health outcomes.

Outdoor access is not equitably distributed to all communities. A history of discriminatory policies and exclusionary zoning have led to long-term disinvestment, fewer parks and outdoor spaces, and less coastal access for many communities. The practice of redlining led to neighborhoods with far fewer trees and parks that provide shade and clean the air for lower-income residents and communities of color. Instead, these neighborhoods have more paved surfaces that absorb and radiate heat. During extreme heat events some cities experience differences of up to 12 degrees between formally red- and green-lined areas.

Establishing welcoming places where all people feel safe and have a sense of belonging is essential to building an Outdoors for All. AB 30 (Kalra), Chapter 939, Statutes of 2022, codified the state's commitment to ensuring all Californians can benefit from, and have meaningful access to, the state's rich cultural and natural resources.

Outdoors for All also furthers two other NRA priorities, Nature Based Solutions and 30x30, by investing in California's public lands and natural resources. Tying it all together, the *Pathways to 30x30 Annual Progress Report* (May 2023) notes:

By increasing both the variety and accessibility of outdoor recreation, California's 30x30 initiative is working to enable everyone in California to enjoy and connect with nature. Seizing opportunities to expand conservation that also increase access has been a priority over the past year and will remain so going forward. The Outdoors for All strategy will guide this facet of its 30x30 work.

One success at the intersection of access and conservation in 2024 was the opening of Dos Rios State Park, the first new state park in more than a decade. The park opened in June 2024, offering respite and recreation in an area with few accessible parks.

- 4) **Need for urban investments.** Parks, open spaces, recreation facilities, trails, and gardens are essential community infrastructure, but, as mentioned, not all communities have access to these resources. In Los Angeles (LA) County, communities with the fewest parks often have the highest (?) environmental burdens, i.e., pollutants and other stressors that directly impact public health and well-being. In LA, people of color account for 84% of the population living in areas with highest environmental burdens. Over time, some areas of the county have accrued significant environmental burdens as the result of historic land development practices, natural resource extraction and consumption, industrial operations, transportation projects, energy production and other impacts of urbanization.

The LA County *Parks Needs Assessment Plus* identifies priority areas for environmental conservation and restoration to form the basis of a local 30x30 strategy. This assessment reimagines conservation to include both traditional efforts to acquire and protect natural lands as well as the restoration of degraded areas, such as brownfields, landfills, and oil

fields. There is a special focus on lower-income communities of color, in which vulnerable populations and environmental burdens are concentrated.

Specific actions already taken to further 30x30 in urbanized areas include the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy investment of \$1.5 million in the Colorado Lagoon Open Channel Improvement Project to remove a 900 foot long culvert that runs through Marina Vista Park and replace it with a shallow earthen channel, reintroducing full tidal connectivity between Colorado Lagoon and Alamitos Bay to create 3.35 acres of new subtidal habitat and enhance 17.28 acres of existing marsh habitat at Colorado Lagoon. The project includes tree planting and other amenities to contribute to recreational benefits.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy also invested \$8.3 million in the River Wilderness Park (RWP) to serve as a trailhead at the northern terminus of the San Gabriel River Bike Trail, which stretches approximately 38 miles through the Los Angeles Basin and to the ocean—linking many of the region’s most underserved communities to dynamic open spaces. Construction of the RWP will include walking paths, river overlooks, extension of the San Gabriel River Bike trail, and public amenities, such as interpretive features, restrooms, play areas, and concessions.

There could be additional urban investments to advance these state goals. Maps that show where land has been conserved toward 30x30 goals demonstrate that it is nearly all outside of disadvantaged, urbanized communities. Indeed, much of the LA region, including Southeast LA County, and East LA, show no conserved lands. This is also true for more challenged Bay Area communities, such as Oakland, Richmond, and San Leandro. Public feedback gathered through the 30x30 Partnership 2024 Summit informed NRA of the key lesson that conservation and biodiversity are highly relevant to urban communities and historically excluded groups, and develop more connections and projects in these communities.

In November 2024, California voters enacted the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act, approving \$10 billion for climate, water, and fire resilience projects. NRA is charged with implementing the bond, which allocates at least 40% of funds to benefit disadvantaged, severely disadvantaged, and vulnerable communities.

- 5) **This bill.** AB 946 requires state funding agencies to allow for urban nature-based projects on degraded lands to be eligible and competitive for state funds. While nothing in current law or the Governor’s EO prohibits these investments, this bill would expressly prioritize them.
- 6) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee.
- 7) **Related legislation.** AB 2285 (Rendon, 2024) was identical to this bill. It was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Park & Recreation Society

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /