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Zbur, Rick Chavez

California State Assembly

NATURAL RESOURCES



ISAAC G BRYAN
CHAIR

AGENDA

Monday, March 23, 2026

Upon Call of the Chair -- State Capitol, Room 437

Chief Consultant
Lawrence Lingbloom

Principal Consultant
Elizabeth MacMillan

Senior Consultant
Paige Brokaw

Committee Secretary
Martha Gutierrez

BILLS HEARD IN SIGN-IN ORDER

**** = Bills Proposed for Consent**

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1. | **AB 1699 | Rogers | Good Fire Act: Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program: burn bosses: California Environmental Quality Act. |
| 2. | AB 1777 | Garcia | Air pollution: indirect sources. |
| 3. | **AB 1780 | Michelle Rodriguez | Beverage containers: redemption payments: exemption. |
| 4. | **AB 1891 | Connolly | Forestry: Beneficial Fire Capacity Program. |
| 5. | **AB 1893 | Gallagher | Wildfire prevention: local assistance grant program: eligible activities. |
| 6. | AB 1938 | Irwin | Coastal recreation: designated state surfing reserves. |
| 7. | AB 2051 | Wicks | Public resources: Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group. |
| 8. | AB 2483 | Elhawary | Wildland firefighters: Formerly Incarcerated Firefighter Certification and Employment Program. |
| 9. | AB 2494 | Rogers | State forests: forest management. |
| 10. | AB 2566 | Soria | Huron Hawk Conservancy. |
| 11. | ACR 149 | Hart | California Coastal Act of 1976. |

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 1699 (Rogers) – As Introduced February 3, 2026

SUBJECT: Good Fire Act: Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program: burn bosses: California Environmental Quality Act

SUMMARY: Establishes the Good Fire Act to indefinitely extend the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program (Program) and facilitate greater beneficial burning to meet the state's forest treatment goals.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) 4477:
 - a) Requires the State Fire Marshal (SFM), with the involvement of the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee, to develop a curriculum for, or amend into an existing curriculum, a certification program for burn bosses, who possess authority to engage in a prescribed burning operation and to enter into the necessary contracts related to a prescribed burning operation. The curriculum shall provide for the initial certification as well as the continuing education of burn bosses.
 - b) Requires the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to develop a training program for prescribed fire users to certify professionals in any agency or organization as burn bosses. Requires CAL FIRE to certify these individuals to a common standard. It is the intent of the Legislature that the department use its discretion to ensure that burn bosses are thoroughly qualified to engage in prescribed burning operations prior to issuing certifications.
 - c) Requires the SFM to post and update on its internet website the number of burn bosses with an active burn boss certification.
- 2) Declares cooperation by CAL FIRE with a person desiring to use prescribed burning as a means of converting brush-covered lands into forage lands or to help meet wildland management goals, which has as its objective the prevention of high intensity wildland fires, watershed management, range improvement, vegetation management, forest improvement, wildlife habitat improvement, restoring ecological integrity and resilience, community wildfire protection, carbon resilience, enhancement of culturally important resources a public purpose. (PRC 4491)
- 3) Authorizes a person, firm, or corporation, or a group or combination of persons, firms, corporations, or groups, that owns or controls brush-covered land, forest lands, woodland, grassland, shrubland, or any combination thereof within a state responsibility area (SRA) to apply to CAL FIRE for permission to utilize prescribed burning for those public purposes in PRC 4491. (PRC 4492)
- 4) Requires, upon receipt of an application, CAL FIRE to inspect the land in company with the applicant to determine whether a permit shall be granted; to prescribe the manner in which

the site for the prescribed burning shall be prepared; and, to require any precautions to be taken by the applicant as may be considered reasonable to prevent damage to the property of others by reason of the burning. (PRC 4493)

- 5) Authorizes the director of CAL FIRE to enter into an agreement with the owner or any other person who has legal control of any property, any public agency with regulatory or natural resource management authority over any property that is included within any wildland, or any nonprofit organization to conduct joint prescribed burning operations that serve the public interest and are beneficial to the state. Requires the agreement to establish guidelines for the cooperative management of joint prescribed burning operations and requires the completion of a project agreement for each prescribed burn. (PRC 4497)
- 6) Defines “burn boss” as a person certified pursuant to PRC 4477 to conduct prescribed burning operations and to enter into contracts related to prescribed burning operations; or, a person qualified for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group position title of “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 1” or “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 2.” (PRC 4500 (a))
- 7) Establishes the Program to increase the pace and scale of the use of prescribed fire and cultural burning and to reduce barriers for conducting prescribed fires and cultural burning. (PRC 4500 (b))
- 8) Establishes the Prescribed Fire Claims Fund (Claims Fund) to support coverage for losses from prescribed fires and cultural burning by nonpublic entities, such as cultural fire practitioners, private landowners, and nongovernmental entities. Requires moneys in the fund to be under the control of CAL FIRE, and CAL FIRE, or the third-party administrator with whom CAL FIRE contracts, is authorized to direct payments for claims from the Fund. (PRC 4500 (c)(1))
- 9) Establishes the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to provide a process to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided, and provides specified exemptions for wildfire risk reduction projects. (PRC 21000 *et seq.*)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Finds and declares it is critical that the state take more action to further expedite and expand beneficial fire projects, where appropriate, to enable practitioners to more effectively implement safe and effective beneficial fire projects.
- 2) Requires, as part of the continuing education of burn bosses, the SFM to require recertification no sooner than every three years. Requires CAL FIRE to consider methods to increase the pool of available instructors for the certification program, including the use of nondepartmental instructors.
- 3) Requires, in addition to the curriculum and certification program developed, CAL FIRE to, in consultation with the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee, develop a mechanism to allow individuals certified by CAL FIRE as a prescribed fire incident commander or equivalent, individuals qualified for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group position title of “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 1” or “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss

Type 2” or equivalent, or individuals certified as prescribed fire managers or similar positions by other states pursuant to a certification program that is substantially similar to the program to be designated as a state-certified burn boss. Once certified, an individual may use the recertification process to maintain currency.

- 4) Authorizes CAL FIRE to waive the inspection requirement or modify the standard precautions for an application submitted by any of the following individuals:
 - a) A person certified pursuant to Section 4477 to conduct prescribed burning operations and to enter into contracts related to prescribed burning operations;
 - b) A person qualified for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group position title of “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 1” or “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 2;”
 - c) A cultural fire practitioner; and,
 - d) Other parties as determined by the director.
- 5) Prohibits a state agency, department, board, or commission that has awarded grant funds or other sources of funds to an awardee, who is paying individuals engaged in the preparation for or implementation of beneficial fire projects from those funds, from, in the disbursement of the award, restrict payment covering the cost of providing overtime or double rates of pay unless that restriction is required by the applicable statute establishing the funding. The restriction shall apply to, but not be limited to, the CAL FIRE’s Forest Health Program.
- 6) Clarifies moneys in the Claims Fund are to support coverage for losses from prescribed fires and cultural burning by led by individuals and entities other than CAL FIRE or the federal government.
- 7) Requires a claim for money in the Claims Fund to meet additional conditions.
- 8) Provides that CAL FIRE approval is not required for a plan reviewed and approved by a burn boss as a condition for payment of claims from the Fund.
- 9) Requires the guidelines for the Program and administration of the Claims Fund to include methods for prioritizing broadcast burns and burns by nonpublic individuals or entities or California Native American tribes in the event the Fund is oversubscribed.
- 10) Deletes the January 1, 2028, sunset date on the Program.
- 11) Exempts from CEQA actions taken by CAL FIRE to assist in the implementation of prescribed fire or cultural burning projects that do not otherwise require compliance with CEQA.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:**1) Author's statement:**

For generations, California Tribes have stewarded the landscape with fire. This community wide effort created a safer and healthier ecosystem for all. Tragically, one of the first laws ever passed by this Legislature outlawed this practice. We restricted cultural burning practices and ignored that wisdom. We eventually set up a fire response system that extinguished all flames, even when they were desperately needed to clear overly dense vegetation and support fire dependent plants. AB 1699 is about righting that historic wrong. The use of beneficial fire, a prescribed fire, or a controlled burn are all examples of "Good Fire". We know all too well about the opposite, catastrophic wildfires that burn out of control. We need much more Good Fire to address that very real threat that far too many of us have learned to live with. We need to follow the leadership of our Tribes and build up the systems to use more Good Fire.

2) Wildfires. Wildfires in California are continuing to increase in frequency and intensity, resulting in loss of life and damage to public health, property, infrastructure, and ecosystems.

Fire has always been present in California landscapes either occurring by lightning strikes or used by Native American tribes to preserve certain useful plants and prevent larger fires. Low-intensity fires have clear ecological benefits, such as creating habitat and assisting in the regeneration of certain species of plants and trees. Low-intensity fire also reduces surface fuel, which decreases future wildfire intensity.

A century of suppressing low-intensity fires, logging of older growth and more fire-resistant trees, and a significant five-year drought has increased the size and severity of California's fires. Climate change has also contributed to wildfire risk by reducing humidity and precipitation and increasing temperatures.

3) Prescribed burning. Science strongly points to the need to re-establish more frequent fire across a significant part of the state. In significant parts of California, reintroduction of fire in controlled circumstances can limit the scope of catastrophic wildfire and improve ecosystem resilience. In many ecosystems, beneficial fire may be the only restoration tool available.

Prescribed burning is the controlled application of fire to the land to reduce wildfire hazards, clear downed trees, control plant diseases, improve rangeland and wildlife habitats, and restore natural ecosystems. Prescribed fires are typically conducted in compliance with a written prescribed fire plan that outlines the conditions necessary for the burn to be "within prescription." Recent researchⁱ on California's 2020 wildfire season found prescribed fires decreased wildfire burn severity by 16% and led to a net reduction of 14% in smoke emissions.

California's *Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire*ⁱⁱ (March 2022) estimates that between 10 and 30 million acres in California would benefit from some form of fuel reduction treatment and sets a target for deploying beneficial fire on 400,000 acres annually.

Last year, the Air Resources Board released data on California's Natural and Working Lands Carbon Inventory that show the carbon impacted by prescribed fire is more than ten times

lower than that from wildfires, while processing harvested wood products emits about 60% as much as wildfires emissions on average.

According to the *Strategic Plan*, approximately 125,000 to 150,000+ acres are treated with prescribed burning in California annually by state and federal agencies. According to the Wildfire Forest Resilience Task Force Dashboardⁱⁱⁱ, 188,000 acres were treated with beneficial burns in 2024. While this rate is increasing to manage wildfire hazards, it remains far below the long-term goal of 400,000 acres annually and the roughly 4.5 million acres that burned annually before the year 1800.

Prescribed burns are safe: the US Forest Service reported in 2022 that 99.84% of prescribed burns operate as planned without incident.

- 4) **Burn bosses.** SB 1260 (Jackson), Chapter 624, Statutes of 2018, required CAL FIRE to develop a professional “burn boss” curriculum and certification program that would create a consistent standard for the education and skills needed for people to conduct prescribed fires. Under this program, CAL FIRE staff members and private individuals or companies could become certified in order to increase the workforce capable of safely conducting prescribed fires.

As of September 2025, California has certified 65 prescribed fire burn bosses to approve burn plans and lead prescribed burning operations to reduce wildfire risks.

California needs to significantly increase its force of certified burn bosses to manage a goal of 400,000 to 1 million+ acres of controlled burns annually. To meet this need, the state requires hundreds to thousands of certified professionals to manage a massive backlog of 20 million acres that would benefit from fire

- 5) **Liability coverage.** SB 332 (Dodd), Chapter 600, Statutes of 2021, updated the state’s liability standards so that no person would be liable for any fire suppression or other costs otherwise recoverable for a prescribed burn if specified conditions are met, including, among others, that the burn be for the purpose of wildland fire hazard reduction, ecological maintenance and restoration, cultural burning, silviculture, or agriculture, and that, when required, a certified burn boss review and approve a written prescription for the burn. The law is intended to assist private prescribed fire practitioners overcome a barrier to conducting prescribed fire, which is the associated liability. Federal and state prescribed fires do not have the same concerns because they are able to self-insure.

Many private entities, such as cultural fire practitioners and nonprofits, have stated that it is incredibly difficult to obtain insurance to cover any damages that could arise if the prescribed fire went out of prescription. Many private entities are unwilling to conduct public purpose burning without insurance or some liability protection.

To support the use of prescribed burns to meet the state’s treated acreage goals, SB 170, Budget Act of 2021, included \$20 million to CAL FIRE to establish the Program, in consultation with the Department of Insurance and the California Natural Resources Agency that creates a prescribed fire claims fund to support coverage for losses from permitted prescribed fires by non-public entities, such as Native American tribes, private landowners, and nongovernmental entities.

SB 926 (Dodd), Chapter 606, Statutes of 2022, set parameters to operationalize the \$20 million budget appropriation by establishing the Prescribed Fire Liability Claims Fund (Claims Fund) to support coverage for losses from permitted prescribed fires by individuals and specified entities. The Claims Fund will provide up to \$2 million in coverage for prescribed fire projects led by a qualified burn boss or cultural practitioner. The Claims Fund is meant to demonstrate that prescribed fire, when carefully planned, resourced, and implemented, is a low-risk land management tool that mitigates the larger, more damaging risks of high-severity wildfires. According to CAL FIRE, the Claims Fund will also advance cultural burning, helping Indigenous Californians restore their connection to fire.

Current statute authorizes the Claims Fund until January 1, 2028. This bill proposed to delete that sunset date.

Proponents of the bill inducing Pacific Forest Trust state that making the Claims Fund permanent by removing the 2028 sunset is essential for long-term planning. The Claims Fund has proven successful in accelerating beneficial fire by providing coverage where commercial insurance is unavailable or prohibitively expensive. Since its rollout in June 2023, the Claims Fund has enrolled hundreds of projects totaling tens of thousands of acres across the state. Strong statewide demand exists and the initial funding remains intact. Removing the uncertainty of a sunset provision now will provide the assurance needed to undertake large, multi-year projects and sustain California's momentum over time.

To date, none of the \$20 million has been drawn down (because none of the fire projects enrolled in the program have needed it).^{iv}

- 6) **Executive action.** Last year, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order (EO) N-35-25^v expressing concern that strict compliance with various statutes and regulation would prevent, hinder, or delay the use of beneficial fire to limit dangerous wildfire conditions that threaten life and property, and ordered the following, among other things:
- CAL FIRE to assist local agencies and beneficial fire practitioners that limit fire conditions and suspended those efforts from CEQA.
 - The suspension of PRC 4493, which requires CAL FIRE to conduct a site visit or inception before issuing a state burn permit for projects undertaken by a burn boss or a cultural fire practitioner.
 - Suspend the limitation on public and governmental agencies enrolling in the Pilot Program to the extent it prohibits resource conservation districts and volunteer fire departments.
 - CAL FIRE to review and update its prescribed fire guidebook to more effectively support prescribed fires that are primarily planned or conducted by non-CAL FIRE entities.
- 7) **Codifying the EO.** This bill is largely an effort to codify the Governor's EO. Consistent with the Governor's EO, this bill:
- Exempts actions taken by CAL FIRE to assist in prescribed fire or cultural burning projects from CEQA.

- Amends PRC 4493 to allow CAL FIRE to waive the inspection requirement or modify the standard precautions for a permit application submitted by specified individuals, including burn bosses, to conduct prescribed burning.
 - Modifies the entities eligible to receive money from the Claims Fund to include “individuals and entities other than CAL FIRE or the federal government,” which includes RCDs and volunteer fire districts (and others).
 - Expands the pool of eligible individuals to be designated as a state-certified burn boss and authorizes those individuals to be certified and recertified to maintain currency.
- 8) **Overtime.** According to the author, many state grant funds prohibit grantees from paying overtime and this can be problematic for prescribed fire, which requires around-the-clock work during and after the burn for safety purposes.

This bill would prohibit a state entity that has awarded grant funds for beneficial fire projects from restricting those funds for use as payment for overtime or double rates of pay.

- 9) **CEQA.** The bill exempts actions that assist in the implementation of prescribed burning or cultural burning to the extent they do not otherwise require compliance with CEQA.

Pacific Forest Trust argues that this bill avoids unnecessary paperwork by clarifying CEQA does not trigger new CEQA obligations solely due CAL FIRE involvement. This bill allows CAL FIRE to actively help with projects rather than only being present in case something goes wrong, increasing capacity for prescribed burns during critical weather windows. While the October 29 Executive Order temporarily addressed this issue, AB 1699 offers a permanent fix.

- 10) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Emergency Management Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

3 Suns Farm	Campfire Restoration Project
All Hands Ecology	Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association
American Rivers	Central Coast State Parks Association
Biswell Forestry	Colusa County Resource Conservation
Briceland Volunteer Fire Department	District
Burnbot INC.	Confluence West
Cal Poly Humboldt Fire Resilience Institute	Contra Costa Resource Conservation
California Association of Local	District
Conservation Corps	Cross Contour LLC
California Cattlemen's Association	Cultural Fire Management Council
California Indian Environmental Alliance	Danoxa Fish and Wildlife, Robinson
California Licensed Foresters Association	Rancheria Pomo Indians of California
California Tahoe Alliance	Defenders of Wildlife
California Tribal Business Alliance	Ecoflight
Calwild	Environmental Defense Fund

Environmental Protection Information Center
 Fave Trainings
 Firegeneration Collaborative
 Firewerx
 Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program
 Forevergreen Forestry
 Friends of Plumas Wilderness
 Friends of the Lost Coast
 Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake
 Hayfork Prescribed Burn Association
 Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association
 Hyampom Prescribed Burn Association
 Indigenous Stewardship Network
 Keep Tahoe Blue
 Lake County Land Trust
 Los Angeles Prescribed Burn Association
 Marin Resource Conservation District
 Mattole Restoration Council
 Mid Klamath Watershed Council
 Mother Lode Land Trust
 Mount Hermon Northwest
 Nourishing Futures
 Pacific Forest Trust
 Peninsula Open Space Trust
 Plumas Corporation
 Plumas County Fire Safe Council
 Plumas Underburn Cooperative
 Prometheus Fire Consulting LLC
 Rain
 Resource Renewal Institute
 Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition
 San Luis Obispo Prescribed Burn Association
 Santa Clara County Firesafe Council
 Santa Rosa Junior College Shone Farm
 Save Mount Diablo
 Save the Redwoods League
 Scott River Watershed Council
 Sempervirens Fund
 Sequoia Riverlands Trust
 Sierra Business Council
 Sierra Nevada Alliance
 Solano Resource Conservation District
 Sonoma Land Trust
 South Bay Prescribed Burn Association
 Spye Conservation INC.
 Sugar Pine Foundation
 Terra Fuego Resource Foundation
 The Climate Center
 The Fire Restoration Group
 The Lookout
 Treepeople
 Trees Foundation
 Tribal Ecorestoration Alliance
 Trinity County Resource Conservation District
 Trout Unlimited
 Trust for Public Land
 Tuolumne Prescribed Burn Association
 Western Watersheds Project
 Wild and Scenic Rivers
 Yolo County Fire Safe Council
 Yolo County Resource Conservation District
 Yolo PBA
 Yosemite Gateway Prescribed Burn Cooperative
 Yosemite Rivers Alliance

Opposition

None on file

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

ⁱ Kelp, M., Burke, M., Qiu, M., Higuera-Mendieta, I., Liu, T., and Diffenbaugh, N.S. (2025)

ⁱⁱ [california-strategic-plan-for-prescribed-fires.pdf](https://ebudget.ca.gov/2026-27/pdf/GovernorsBudget/3000/3540FCS.pdf)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Interagency Tracking System](#)

^{iv} <https://ebudget.ca.gov/2026-27/pdf/GovernorsBudget/3000/3540FCS.pdf>

^v www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Executive-Order-Beneficial-Fire.pdf

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 1777 (Garcia) – As Introduced February 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Air pollution: indirect sources

SUMMARY: Authorizes the Air Resources Board (ARB) to adopt regulations to reduce or mitigate emissions from indirect sources of pollution.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) The federal Clean Air Act (CAA) and its implementing regulations set National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants, designate air basins that do not achieve NAAQS as nonattainment, and require states with nonattainment areas to submit a State Implementation Plan (SIP) detailing how they will achieve compliance with NAAQS. (42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes ARB as the air pollution control agency in California and requires the ARB, among other things, to control emissions from a wide array of mobile sources and coordinate with local air districts to control emissions from stationary sources in order to implement the CAA. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 39000 *et seq.*)
- 3) Requires, subject to the powers and duties of the ARB, air districts to adopt and enforce rules and regulations to achieve and maintain the state and federal air quality standards in all areas affected by emission sources under their jurisdiction, and to enforce all applicable provisions of state and federal law. (HSC 40001)
- 4) Requires air districts to develop attainment plans detailing how they will attain and maintain state air quality standards, and submit those plans to ARB. (HSC 40910 *et seq.*)
- 5) Requires ARB to:
 - a) Review the district attainment plans to determine whether the plans will achieve and maintain state air quality standards by the earliest practicable date.
 - b) Review district rules, regulations and programs to determine whether they are sufficiently effective to achieve and maintain state air quality standards.
 - c) Review district and other local enforcement practices to determine whether reasonable action is being taken to enforce their programs, rules, and regulations. (HSC 41500)
- 6) Authorizes ARB, if it finds that the program or the rules and regulations of a district will not likely achieve and maintain state air quality standards, to establish a program, or rules and regulations it deems necessary to enable the district to achieve and maintain such standards, which shall have the same force and effect as a district program, rule, or regulation and shall be enforced by the district. (HSC 41504)

- 7) Authorizes ARB, if it finds that a district is not taking reasonable action to enforce the statutory provisions, rules, and regulations relating to air quality in such a manner that will likely achieve and maintain state air quality standards, to exercise any of the powers of that district to achieve and maintain such standards. (HSC 41505)
- 8) Requires ARB to adopt rules and regulations that, in conjunction with measures adopted by the air districts and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, will achieve and maintain NAAQS. (HSC 39602.5)
- 9) Authorizes a district to adopt and implement regulations to reduce or mitigate emissions from indirect and areawide sources of air pollution, while preserving the existing authority of counties and cities to plan or control land use. (HSC 40716)
- 10) Requires each district with moderate air pollution to include provisions to develop areawide source and indirect source control programs in its attainment plan. (HSC 40918)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Authorizes ARB, if necessary to carry out its duties under HSC 39602.5 to achieve and maintain NAAQS, to adopt regulations to reduce or mitigate emissions from indirect sources of pollution, and finds and declares that this provision is declaratory of, and does not constitute a change in, existing law.
- 2) Defines “indirect source” by reference to the CAA definition, i.e., “a facility, building, structure, installation, real property, road, or highway which attracts, or may attract, mobile sources of pollution...” (42 U.S.C. 7410(a)(5)(C))

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Background.** The CAA defines indirect sources as “a facility, building, structure, installation, real property, road, or highway which attracts, or may attract, mobile sources of pollution.” For example, a warehouse or port could be an indirect source; it does not produce significant emissions itself, but it causes concentration of mobile sources in a place they may not otherwise have been. New indirect sources are reviewed to ensure they will not attract sufficient mobile sources to exceed any NAAQS.

Actions taken to reduce these emissions (indirect source rules, or ISRs) can vary significantly and be implemented flexibly. Implementing an ISR could look like installing zero-emission vehicle infrastructure, requiring mobile sources to use cleaner technology, or requiring other mitigations or fees. In California, ISRs are currently the exclusive purview of the air districts, although many of the actions required under an ISR may have significant overlap with other mobile source regulations imposed by ARB. Still, other actions considered as part of an ISR could resemble actions taken by local governments, such as carrying out projects that are part of a Sustainable Communities Strategy. In short, the exact confines and contours of what an ISR can and cannot be are not entirely clear in statute.

In 2021, the South Coast Air Quality Management (SCAQMD) adopted an ISR rules for warehouses (Rule 2305), which requires warehouses greater than 100,000 square feet to directly reduce nitrogen oxide (NOx) and diesel particulate matter (PM) emissions, or to otherwise reduce emissions and exposure of these pollutants in nearby communities.

According to SCAQMD, warehouses are a key destination for heavy-duty trucks and have other sources of emissions like cargo handling equipment, all of which contribute to local pollution, including toxic emissions, to the communities that live near them. Emissions from sources associated with warehouses account for almost as much NOx emissions as all the refineries, power plants, and other stationary sources in the South Coast Air Basin combined. Those living within a half mile of warehouses are more likely to include communities of color, have higher rates of asthma and heart attacks, and a greater environmental burden.

As part of the rule, warehouse operators need to earn a specified number of points annually. These points can be earned by completing actions from a menu that includes acquiring and using natural gas near-zero and/or zero-emission on-road trucks, zero-emission cargo handling equipment, solar panels, or zero-emission charging and fueling infrastructure and more. As alternatives to the points system, warehouse operators can prepare and implement a custom plan specific to their site or choose to pay a mitigation fee. Funds from mitigation fees will be used to incentivize the purchase of cleaner trucks and charging/fueling infrastructure in communities near the warehouse that paid the mitigation fee.

SCAQMD has also proposed, but not adopted, an ISR rule for the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, as well as voluntary measures through a memorandum of understanding (MOU). In February 2025, SCAQMD published its first draft of a proposed rule (Rule 2304) that would require the two ports to develop a plan by August 2027 to build charging and fueling stations to switch thousands of pieces of diesel equipment, trucks and vessels to electricity and hydrogen.

The proposed rule aimed to ensure that the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports can achieve the clean-air goals they set for themselves back in 2017: converting 100% of their diesel cargo-handling equipment – such as tractors and giant, 60-foot cranes that move containers – to zero emissions by 2030. They also aim for all drayage trucks, which haul the ports’ containers of cargo to warehouses, to run on electricity or hydrogen by 2035.

In November 2025, SCAQMD and the ports approved an MOU to address port emissions and SCAQMD put its ISR rulemaking process on hold.

2) **Author’s statement:**

Assembly Bill 1777 reflects a changing legal and policy environment across the United States where the Trump Administration has taken it upon themselves to be the most environmentally destructive Administration since science first understood the health impacts of pollution.

AB 1777 reflects this changing environment and aims to add more tools for California to combat the drastic rollback by the Trump Administration’s desire to jeopardize Californians health and safety. Against all science and despite widely agreed upon facts from scientists across the world, the Trump Administration decided to reverse the

Endangerment Finding, reaching the non-scientific conclusion that greenhouse gas emissions do not affect the health of generations of Americans.

The indirect source rule around warehouses by the South Coast Air Quality Management District is already helping residents of the 50th Assembly District and the rest of the Inland Empire. The warehouse ISR is helping Californians and our goods movement sector wean off foreign oil, made more vulnerable by the irresponsible acts of the Trump administration in the Middle East.

AB 1777 codifies regulatory authority for the California Air Resources Board to focus on combating the public health catastrophe of the Trump Administration. By using Indirect Source Rules, ARB can allow flexible compliance mechanisms that allow companies to choose how to meet their obligations.

- 3) **If air districts have ISR authority, then ARB has ISR authority (if they want it).** ARB's authority to regulate indirect sources is...indirect. Under current law, if ARB finds that a district is not taking reasonable action to enforce the statutory provisions, rules, and regulations relating to air quality in such a manner that will likely achieve and maintain state air quality standards, ARB may exercise any of the powers of that district to achieve and maintain such standards. This bill elevates ARB's role in the ISR world, giving ARB explicit authority to regulate indirect sources, potentially on a statewide basis, as opposed to district by district.

4) **Prior legislation:**

AB 914 (Garcia, 2025) required ARB to adopt rules to control emissions of criteria pollutants and toxic air contaminants from indirect sources, and authorized ARB to adopt fees on indirect source to fund implementation of the rules. AB 914 passed this committee on April 28, 2025, but was not taken up for a vote on the Assembly Floor.

SB 34 (Richardson, 2025) limited SCAQMD's authority to impose new or additional emissions reduction requirements on sources of air pollution associated with operation of the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles until 2031. SB 34 passed this committee on July 7, 2025, but was later vetoed by the Governor, who commented:

With the current federal Administration directly undermining our state and local air and climate pollution reduction strategies, it is imperative that we maintain the tools we have and encourage cooperative action at all levels to avoid the worst health and climate impacts. To that end, I am encouraged by the productive discussions between the SCAQMD and the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to identify and advance prudent air quality improvement measures and the SCAQMD's recent unanimous direction to staff to further their efforts to reach a Cooperative Agreement. This locally driven and collaborative approach toward reducing air and climate pollution is the type of consensus that should be supported and encouraged. This bill interferes with this approach, the progress made, and the ongoing good faith efforts made by the SCAQMD and the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

SB 1028 (Padilla, 2007) enacted the section amended by this bill, requiring ARB to adopt rules and regulations governing motor vehicle emissions that are necessary, cost-effective,

and technologically feasible that, together with other measures, will achieve federal ambient air quality standards.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

350 Humboldt

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

American Lung Association in California

Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Breast Cancer Prevention Partners

California Environmental Voters

CalSTART

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice

Center for Environmental Health

Central California Asthma Collaborative

Central California Environmental Justice Network

Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy

CleanEarth4Kids.org

Climate Action California

Coalition for Clean Air

Communities for a Better Environment

E2

Earthjustice

Environmental Defense Fund

Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)

Facts Families Advocating for Chemical and Toxics Safety

Friends Committee on Legislation of California

Greenlining Institute

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners - San Francisco Bay Area Chapter

Natural Resources Defense Council

Nurse Heroes for Zero

Ocean Conservancy

Orange County Chapter of National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

Pacific Environment

Pesticide Action and Agroecology Network

Plug in America

Prevention Institute

Regional Asthma Management and Prevention (RAMP)

Resource Renewal Institute

San Bernardino County Medical Society

San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility

Sierra Club California

Society of Latinx Nurses

St. John's Community Health

Streets for All

The Climate Center
Union of Concerned Scientists

Opposition

American Council of Engineering Companies
American Trucking Association
Associated General Contractors
Association of Equipment Manufacturers
BOMA California
California Advanced Biofuels Alliance
California Alliance for Jobs
California Association of Port Authorities
California Association of Realtors
California Automotive Wholesalers' Association
California Building Industry Association
California Business Properties Association
California Business Roundtable
California Chamber of Commerce
California Citrus Mutual
California Construction and Industrial Materials Association
California Cotton Ginners & Growers Association
California Family Beer Distributors
California Forestry Association
California Fuels and Convenience Alliance
California Grocers Association
California Hotel & Lodging Association
California Manufacturers & Technology Association
California Moving and Storage Association
California New Car Dealers Association
California Railroads
California Renewable Transportation Alliance
California Retailers Association
California Self Storage Association
California State Council of Laborers
California Strawberry Commission
California Tow Truck Association
California Trucking Association
California Walnut Commission
California Waste Haulers Council
Can Manufacturers Institute
Clean Energy
Downtown San Diego Partnership
Family Business Association of California
Hexagon Agility
Industrial Environmental Association
International Longshore & Warehouse Union Local 13
International Longshore & Warehouse Union Local 63
International Longshore & Warehouse Union Local 94

International Warehouse Logistics Association
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles County Business Federation (BIZ-FED)
NAIOP of California
NAIOP SoCal
Orange County Business Council
Pacific Merchant Shipping Association
Port of Long Beach
Rebuild SoCal Partnership
Resource Recovery Coalition of California
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce
Southern California Leadership Council
Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA)
Supply Chain Council
The Transport Project
Transportation California
Western Growers Association
Western Propane Gas Association
Western States Petroleum Association
Western States Trucking Association
Western Tree Nut Association

Analysis Prepared by: Lawrence Lingbloom / NAT. RES. /

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 1891 (Connolly) – As Introduced February 12, 2026

SUBJECT: Forestry: Beneficial Fire Capacity Program

SUMMARY: Establishes the Beneficial Fire Capacity Act.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) 4477:
 - a) Requires the State Fire Marshal (SFM), with the involvement of the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee, to develop a curriculum for, or amend into an existing curriculum, a certification program for burn bosses, who possess authority to engage in a prescribed burning operation and to enter into the necessary contracts related to a prescribed burning operation. The curriculum shall provide for the initial certification as well as the continuing education of burn bosses.
 - b) Requires the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to develop a training program for prescribed fire users to certify professionals in any agency or organization as burn bosses. Requires CAL FIRE to certify these individuals to a common standard.
 - c) Requires the SFM to post and update on its internet website the number of burn bosses with an active burn boss certification.
- 2) Declares cooperation by CAL FIRE with a person desiring to use prescribed burning as a means of converting brush-covered lands into forage lands or to help meet wildland management goals, which has as its objective the prevention of high intensity wildland fires, watershed management, range improvement, vegetation management, forest improvement, wildlife habitat improvement, restoring ecological integrity and resilience, community wildfire protection, carbon resilience, enhancement of culturally important resources a public purpose. (PRC 4491)
- 3) Authorizes a person, firm, or corporation, or a group or combination of persons, firms, corporations, or groups, that owns or controls brush-covered land, forest lands, woodland, grassland, shrubland, or any combination thereof within a state responsibility area (SRA) to apply to CAL FIRE for permission to utilize prescribed burning for those public purposes in PRC 4491. (PRC 4492)
- 4) Requires, upon receipt of an application, CAL FIRE to inspect the land in company with the applicant to determine whether a permit shall be granted; to prescribe the manner in which the site for the prescribed burning shall be prepared; and, to require any precautions to be taken by the applicant as may be considered reasonable to prevent damage to the property of others by reason of the burning. (PRC 4493)

- 5) Authorizes the director of CAL FIRE to enter into an agreement with the owner or any other person who has legal control of any property, any public agency with regulatory or natural resource management authority over any property that is included within any wildland, or any nonprofit organization to conduct joint prescribed burning operations that serve the public interest and are beneficial to the state. Requires the agreement to establish guidelines for the cooperative management of joint prescribed burning operations and requires the completion of a project agreement for each prescribed burn. (PRC 4497)
- 6) Defines “burn boss” as a person certified pursuant to PRC 4477 to conduct prescribed burning operations and to enter into contracts related to prescribed burning operations; or, a person qualified for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group position title of “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 1” or “Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 2.” (PRC 4500 (a))
- 7) Establishes the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program to increase the pace and scale of the use of prescribed fire and cultural burning and to reduce barriers for conducting prescribed fires and cultural burning. (PRC 4500 (b))
- 8) Establishes the Prescribed Fire Claims Fund (Fund) to support coverage for losses from prescribed fires and cultural burning by nonpublic entities, such as cultural fire practitioners, private landowners, and nongovernmental entities. (PRC 4500 (c)(1))
- 9) Requires \$165 million to be appropriated from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) in the annual Budget Act each year through the 2023–24 fiscal year to CAL FIRE for healthy forest and fire prevention programs and projects that improve forest health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by uncontrolled wildfires. Requires \$35 million to be appropriated from GGRF in the annual Budget Act each year through the 2023–24 fiscal year to CAL FIRE to complete prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects through proven forestry practices consistent with the recommendations of the Forest Carbon Plan, including the operation of year-round prescribed fire crews and implementation of a research and monitoring program for climate change adaptation. (Sec. 45 of SB 901 (Dodd), Chapter 626, Statutes of 2018)
- 10) Requires the annual proceeds of the GGRF to be continuously appropriated, until FY 2028–29, to CAL FIRE as follows: \$200 million for healthy forest and fire prevention programs, and \$35 million for the completion of prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects through proven forestry practices consistent with the recommendations of the California Forest Carbon Plan, including the operation of year-round prescribed fire crews and implementation of a research and monitoring program for climate adaptation. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 39719 (b)(4))
- 11) Requires, after specified amounts = are fully allocated, as determined by the Department of Finance, moneys in GGRF to be continuously appropriated, without regard to fiscal year, so that \$200 million goes to CAL FIRE as follows: 82.5% for healthy forest and fire prevention programs and projects that improve forest health and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases caused by uncontrolled wildfires, and 17.5% for the completion of prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects through proven forestry practices consistent with the recommendations of the California Forest Carbon Plan, including the operation of year-round prescribed fire crews and implementation of a research and monitoring program for climate adaptation. (HSC 37919.4 (c)(1)(E))

THIS BILL:

- 1) Finds and declares that increased use of beneficial fire is an essential component of reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and related emissions of greenhouse gases from the state's forests and other ecosystems. Investment in training, organizational capacity, and project implementation is critical to meeting and sustaining this longer-term goal, regardless of the immediate quantification of emission reductions.
- 2) Establishes in CAL FIRE the Beneficial Fire Capacity Program (Program) to expand training, organizational capacity, and support for community-led beneficial fire programs, including those developed by California Native American tribes, nongovernmental organizations, universities and colleges, resources conservation districts, volunteer fire districts, and other local or special districts.
- 3) Requires CAL FIRE to use not less than 10% of funding continuously appropriated to CAL FIRE from the GGRF, HSC 39719 (b)(4), or HSC (c)(1)(E) to implement the Program.
- 4) Requires the Program to do both of the following:
 - a) Support and implement community-led beneficial fire programs, including training, building and maintaining capacity, and implementing beneficial fire projects. Requires those programs to be funded using direct awards from CAL FIRE, including block grants, and may involve subawards. Organizations with demonstrated effectiveness developing or leading beneficial fire programs shall be prioritized; and,
 - b) Establish a competitive grant program for beneficial fire implementation, capacity building, research, innovation, and training.
- 5) Requires at least 25% of the Program funds to be awarded to California Native American tribes or tribally led or indigenous-led organizations.
- 6) Requires CAL FIRE to collaborate with other relevant state agencies, beneficial fire practitioners, and organizations currently engaged in beneficial fire programs to establish guidelines governing the program and the administration of the funding.
- 7) Requires CAL FIRE to do all of the following:
 - a) Provide technical assistance to enhance capacity and assist in the development of projects;
 - b) Assist grantees in identifying potential funding sources for additional beneficial fire projects;
 - c) Reduce grant application and reporting requirements and reduce reliance on acres treated metrics to the maximum extent feasible; and,
 - d) Use grant terms of five years or more.
- 8) Requires CAL FIRE to publish and update on its internet website all of the following information related to implementation of the Program:

- a) A list of entities funded by the Program;
- b) The outcomes of any block grant, including a summary of the benefits, such as the number of people trained or certified or both trained and certified to engage in prescribed fire, cultural burning, and wildfire managed for resource benefit; the number of project plans developed; the number of projects conducted; and how increasing capacity has facilitated increased burn-day utilization and larger or higher priority projects, as applicable; and,
- c) A description of the estimated need for additional funding for similar work to help meet the state's goals for beneficial fire as they change and increase over time.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

AB 1891 sets aside 10% of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund allocated to CalFire for wildfire resiliency and forest health to support beneficial fire, with 25% of that dedicated specifically to tribes and tribal organizations. Beneficial fire has been a proven practice utilized by California's first peoples for thousands of years. The evidence is clear, beneficial fire projects help our ecosystems foster biodiversity, reduce wildfire risk, and preserve natural habitats and forests. It is time we expand these practices and give California another tool to help make our state more resilient to wildfires and natural disasters.

2) **Wildfires.** Wildfires in California have been increasing in frequency and intensity, resulting in loss of life and damage to public health, property, infrastructure, and ecosystems.

California's landscapes are among the most naturally fire-dependent on Earth. One study suggests that prior to 1800, approximately 4.5 million acres of the state burned annually. Native Americans were likely responsible for a significant portion of this acreage. With colonization, many of these practices were significantly reduced or eliminated, fundamentally altering fire scope and intensity across the state.

Low-intensity fires have clear ecological benefits, such as creating habitat and assisting in the regeneration of certain species of plants and trees. Low-intensity fire also reduces surface fuel, which decreases future wildfire intensity.

A century of suppressing low-intensity fires, logging of older growth and more fire-resistant trees has increased the size and severity of California's fires. Climate change has also contributed to wildfire risk by reducing humidity and precipitation and increasing temperatures.

3) **Prescribed burning.** Science strongly points to the need to re-establish more frequent fire across a significant part of the state. In significant parts of California, reintroduction of fire in controlled circumstances can limit the scope of catastrophic wildfire and improve ecosystem resilience. In many ecosystems, beneficial fire may be the only restoration tool available.

Prescribed burning is the controlled application of fire to the land to reduce wildfire hazards, clear downed trees, control plant diseases, improve rangeland and wildlife habitats, and restore natural ecosystems. Prescribed fires are typically conducted in compliance with a written prescribed fire plan that outlines the conditions necessary for the burn to be “within prescription.” Recent researchⁱ on California’s 2020 wildfire season found prescribed fires decreased wildfire burn severity by 16% and led to a net reduction of 14% in smoke emissions.

California’s *Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire*ⁱⁱ (March 2022) estimates that between 10 and 30 million acres in California would benefit from some form of fuel reduction treatment and sets a target for deploying beneficial fire on 400,000 acres annually.

Last year, the Air Resources Board released data on California’s Natural and Working Lands Carbon Inventory that show the carbon impacted by prescribed fire is more than ten times of wildfires emissions on average.

According to the *Strategic Plan*, approximately 125,000 to 150,000+ acres are treated with prescribed burning in California annually by state and federal agencies. According to the Wildfire Forest Resilience Task Force Dashboardⁱⁱⁱ, 188,000 acres were treated with beneficial burns in 2024. While this rate is increasing to manage wildfire hazards, it remains far below the long-term goal of 400,000 acres annually and the roughly 4.5 million acres that burned annually before the year 1800.

Prescribed burns are safe: the US Forest Service reported in 2022 that 99.84% of prescribed burns operate as planned without incident.

- 4) **Beneficial Fire Capacity Program.** This bill establishes the Program at CALFIRE to expand training, organizational capacity, and support for community-led beneficial fire programs, including those developed by California Native American tribes, nongovernmental organizations, universities and colleges, resources conservation districts, volunteer fire districts, and other local or special districts.

Funding from GGRF would be used to support and implement community-led beneficial fire programs, and to create a competitive grant program for beneficial fire implementation, capacity building, research, innovation, and training. At least 25% of the Program funds would be awarded to California Native American tribes or tribally led or indigenous-led organizations.

Under the Program, CAL FIRE would be required to provide technical assistance to enhance capacity and assist in the development of projects, assist grantees in identifying potential funding sources for additional beneficial fire projects, and reduce grant application and reporting requirements and reduce reliance on acres treated metrics to the maximum extent feasible.

- 5) **Funding.** Recognizing the importance of prescribed fire, SB 901 established the precedent for appropriating \$200 million to CAL FIRE from the GGRF through FY 2023–24 fiscal year, including \$35 million to complete prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects through proven forestry practices consistent with the recommendations of the Forest Carbon Plan.

SB 155 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 258, Statutes of 2021, extended SB 901's continuous appropriations to CAL FIRE through FY 2028-29 for those same forest health, fire prevention, and fuel reduction projects.

The \$35 million appropriation has been part of CAL FIRE's broader wildfire resilience and forest health funding from California Climate Investments. Some dollars are folded into larger programs like fuels reduction crews and forest health projects.

That said, a primary use of the \$35 million allocation has been to establish and operate dedicated prescribed fire crews. For example, early budget plans under SB 901 projected using this funding to create additional prescribed fire staffing and support administrative and technical roles needed to carry out burns on SRAs. In FY 20/21, funds were used to complete prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects consistent with the recommendations of the Forest Carbon Plan, including the operation of year-round prescribed fire crews and implementation of a research and monitoring program for climate change adaptation. That included funding full-time crews (beyond seasonal firefighters) and associated support personnel assigned to conduct controlled burns and related fuel reduction tasks.

Part of the appropriation has also been directed toward research and monitoring initiatives tied to prescribed fire's role in climate adaptation. Some funds have been used to provide training for burn bosses and crew members, and support planning, mapping, and coordination needed for larger scale prescribed fire operations consistent with SB 901's intent.

The Governor has proposed trailer bill language^{iv} (TBL) this year to strike the earmarked percentages enacted pursuant to SB 155 for forest projects and prescribed fire, and instead allocate CAL FIRE's \$200 million for *any* project listed.

This bill requires CAL FIRE to use no less than 10% of its continuously appropriated funding from GGRF to implement the Beneficial Fire Capacity Program – which is 7.5% less than the current earmarks in SB 901 and SB 155, but a maintained earmark.

The Legislature will be negotiating both the GGRF spending plan and the Governor's proposed FY 2026-27 budget proposal, so the author may wish to work with the Assembly Budget Committee on funding for this proposed program.

6) **Related legislation:**

AB 1699 (Rogers) establishes the Good Fire Act to indefinitely extend the Prescribed Fire Liability Program, eliminate the requirement for CAL FIRE approval for a plan reviewed and approved by a burn boss, and exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) specified actions taken by CAL FIRE to assist in the implementation of prescribed fire or cultural burning projects that do not otherwise require compliance with CEQA, among other things to facilitate beneficial fire. This bill is referred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

AB 2184 (Wilson) requires, after the amounts in HSC 39719 (a)-(b) and HSC 39719.4 are fully allocated as determined by the Department of Finance, the remaining moneys in the GGRF, up to \$300 million, to be appropriated from the GGRF in the annual Budget Act each FY from the 2027–2028 through the 2045–46 fiscal year, inclusive, to achieve nature-based

climate solutions, as specified. This bill is referred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

All Hands Ecology	Friends of the Lost Coast
Amah Mutsun Tribal Band	Friends of the River
American Rivers	Hamey Woods
Audobon California	Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association
Biswell Forestry	Humboldt Fire Resilience Institute
Briceland Volunteer Fire Department	Hybrid Incident Support
California Association of Local Conservation Corps	Klamath Forest Alliance
California Cattlemen's Association	Mak-warép Ohlone Land Conservancy
California Environmental Voters	Mattole Restoration Council
California Forward	Mid Klamath Watershed Council
California Indian Environmental Alliance	Mount Hermon Northwest
California Native Plant Society	Mount Madonna Center
Calwild	Mt. Madonna Challenge
Campfire Restoration Project	National Audubon Society
Camptonville Community Partnership	Nevada County Resource Conservation District
Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association	Nourishing Futures
Colusa County Resource Conservation District	Pacific Forest Trust
Community Environmental Council	Plumas County Fire Safe Council
Community Wildfire Planning Center	Plumas Underburn Cooperative
County of Yuba - Office of Emergency Services	Prometheus Fire Consulting LLC
Cross Contour LLC	Rain
Cultural Fire Management Council	Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
Ecoflight	Resource Renewal Institute
El Dorado Amador Prescribed Fire Association	Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition
Environmental Defense Fund	Salmon River Restoration Council
Environmental Protection Information Center	San Benito Resource Conservation District
Fave Trainings	San Luis Obispo Prescribed Burn Association
Feather River College	Sandhills of Quail Hollow Firewise
Fire Resilience Institute	Santa Clara County Firesafe Council
Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology (FUSEE)	Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency
Firegeneration Collaborative	Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Council
First Rain Land Stewardship Services	Save Mount Diablo
Forestscapes LLC	Save the Redwoods League
Forevergreen Forestry	Scott River Watershed Council
Friends of Plumas Wilderness	Semillas for Safe Soil
Friends of the Inyo	Sierra Business Council
	Sierra Nevada Alliance
	Sonoma Land Trust

South Bay Prescribed Burn Association
Spey Conservation INC.
Storm King Mountain Technologies, INC.
Sustainable Tahoe
Terra Fuego Resource Foundation
The Adidam Holy Domains
The Fire Restoration Group
The Hatchet Emergency Response INC.
The Lookout
The Wilderness Society
Transition Habitat Conservancy

Tribal Ecorestoration Alliance
Trinity County Resource Conservation
District
Trout Unlimited
Tuolumne Prescribed Burn Association
Ventura County Resource Conservation
District
Volcano Land Company
Yosemite Gateway Prescribed Burn
Cooperative

Opposition

None on file

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

ⁱ Kelp, M., Burke, M., Qiu, M., Higuera-Mendieta, I., Liu, T., and Diffenbaugh, N.S. (2025)

ⁱⁱ [california-strategic-plan-for-prescribed-fires.pdf](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Interagency Tracking System](#)

^{iv} [RN2608676 v3](#)

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Isaac G. Bryan, Chair
AB 1780 (Michelle Rodriguez) – As Introduced February 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Beverage containers: redemption payments: exemption

SUMMARY: Exempts distributors of beverages subject to the California Beverage Container and Litter Reduction Act (Bottle Bill) from redemption payments for water or juice beverages donated to California-based nonprofit organizations.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Bottle Bill, which is administered by the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). The Bottle Bill requires beverage containers to have a California Redemption Value CRV of 5 cents for most beverage containers that hold fewer than 24 ounces and 10 cents for most containers that hold 24 ounces or more. The Bottle Bill additionally sets a CRV of 25 cents for boxes, bladders, or pouches containing wine, distilled spirits, wine coolers, or distilled spirit coolers. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 14500 *et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes the California Beverage Container Recycling Fund (BCRF) and continuously appropriates moneys in the BCRF to CalRecycle for specified purposes for the Bottle Bill, including paying operation costs, paying grants, and paying handling fees. (PRC 14580)
- 3) Defines “beverage” to include beer and malt beverages, wine and distilled spirit coolers, carbonated and noncarbonated water, soft drinks, sport drinks, fruit drinks, coffee and tea drinks, vegetable juice, distilled spirits, and wine. (PRC 14504)
- 4) Defines “beverage container” as the individual, separate bottle, can, jar, carton, or other receptacle in which a beverage is sold, and that is constructed of metal, glass, plastic, or any other material, or any combination of these materials. (PRC 14505)
- 5) Defines “distributor” as every person who engages in the sale of beverages in beverage containers to a dealer in the state, including any manufacturer who engages in these sales and any person who imports beverages from outside of the state for sale to dealers or consumers in the state. (PRC 14511)
- 6) Requires distributors to pay CalRecycle the redemption payment (i.e., the CRV), minus 1.5%, for every beverage container sold or transferred to a dealer. (PRC 14574)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Exempts distributors from paying redemption payments to CalRecycle for beverage containers filled with water or juice that the distributor donates to a tax-exempt organization located in California.
- 2) Specifies that donations, samples, giveaways, or other transactions other than those identified above are subject to the redemption payment.

- 3) Requires a distributor to prepare and maintain records of any donations for not less than five years and to make the records available to CalRecycle upon request, including:
 - a) A charitable donation receipt issued by the recipient organization;
 - b) The date of the donation;
 - c) The number, size, and material type of beverage containers donated;
 - d) The amount of redemption payments that would have been paid if not exempted; and,
 - e) The original bill of lading and similar third-party shipping document or receipt indicating the entity that received the shipment.

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 provide a consistent, clean, uncontaminated stream of recycled materials with minimal processing.
- 2) **Funding.** The CRV is paid up-front by distributors to CalRecycle for every covered beverage container sold in the state. Next, distributors are paid by retailers for the CRV collected on beverages sold, and retailers collect the CRV from consumers at the time of retail sale. CRV is paid into the BCRF, which is used to fund CRV redemption when consumers return beverage containers for recycling. Unredeemed CRV funds are used to fund the administration of the Bottle Bill, grants that advance recycling, and various payments that keep the program running.

When the recycling rate increases, less funding is available to make all the budgeted payments prescribed in statute, including funding CRV redemptions, administration, local grants, and other payments. A structural deficit occurs when funding needs exceed revenue. When recycling rates are high, the BCRF operates in a structural deficit. If a structural deficit persists long enough to threaten funding sufficiency, CalRecycle is required to "proportionally reduce" spending equally across nearly all funding expenditures to preserve sufficient funding to refund CRV to consumers.

- 3) **This bill.** This bill exempts distributors from the requirement to pay the CRV for containers for noncarbonated water and juice donated to a California-based nonprofit organization.

The Bottle Bill requires distributors to pay the CRV for every covered beverage container "sold or offered for sale" in the state. According to the bill's proponents, CalRecycle has interpreted this provision to include beverages donated by distributors to California-based

nonprofit organizations, including during states of emergency. For example, Anheuser-Busch has donated nearly 300,000 cans of drinking water to the Los Angeles area following wildfires that struck the area in January 2025. Under the current interpretation of the law, this donation would require Anheuser-Busch to remit nearly \$15,000 to CalRecycle for the CRV, even though this deposit was not collected from consumers.

Depending on the labeling of the donated beverages, consumers may still return the containers to a recycling center and receive the CRV from a certified recycler, which would impose a cost to the BCRF. It is unknown how many beverage containers would fall under this exemption; however, given that more than 33 billion beverage containers are sold in the state annually, it is likely to have a minor impact on the program.

4) Author's statement:

California has long demonstrated leadership in environmental stewardship and emergency response. However, recent administrative interpretations of the state's Beverage Container Recycling Program threaten to undermine a critical lifeline for communities in need: the donation of bottled water to charitable organizations and disaster survivors.

AB 1780 is necessary to clarify that bottled water donated to charitable organizations — including donations directed by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) during times of state emergencies — is not subject to California Redemption Value (CRV) redemption payments and processing fees.

Continued access to donated bottled water is critically important to charitable organizations throughout California. During natural disasters, extreme heat events, infrastructure failures, and other emergencies, communities can lose access to safe drinking water. In those moments, bottled water donations are not a commercial transaction — they are an act of public service that protects health and safety.

It has come to our attention that CalRecycle has determined that beverage manufacturers and distributors must remit CRV redemption payments and processing fees for bottled water that is donated rather than sold. This interpretation creates unintended financial and administrative burdens on companies that step up to support communities in crisis. It risks discouraging donations at the very time they are needed most.

The Public Resources Code governing CRV clearly applies to beverage containers that are sold in California. Charitable donations are not sales. The Legislature did not intend for emergency relief donations to be treated as retail transactions. AB 1780 provides needed statutory clarification to ensure that charitable donations of bottled water are expressly exempt from CRV requirements.

This bill protects the integrity of California's recycling program while ensuring that humanitarian aid is not penalized. It supports charitable organizations, strengthens our emergency response infrastructure, and removes barriers to lifesaving donations.

AB 1780 is a common-sense clarification that ensures California's environmental policies work hand in hand with our commitment to public health, disaster response, and community support.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

International Bottled Water Association

Niagara Bottling

Primo Brands

Opposition

None on file

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

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 1893 (Gallagher and Schultz) – As Introduced February 12, 2026

SUBJECT: Wildfire prevention: local assistance grant program: eligible activities

SUMMARY: Expands the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection’s (CAL FIRE) local assistance grant program for fire prevention and home hardening education activities to include projects undertaken by a local governmental entity involving the acquisition or installation of mobile rigid dip tanks or similar mobile and permanent infrastructure that is capable of providing helicopter-accessible water supplies for firefighting response or suppression purposes in very high and high fire hazard severity zones or by a local agency.

EXISTING LAW, pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) 4124.5:

- 1) Requires CAL FIRE to establish a local assistance grant program for fire prevention and home hardening education activities in California. Eligible groups for grants include local agencies, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, the California Conservation Corps, certified community conservation corps, University of California Cooperative Extension, the Board of Commissioners under California Volunteers, Native American tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations.
- 2) Requires the local assistance grant program to establish a robust year-round fire prevention effort in and near fire-threatened communities that focuses on increasing the protection of people, structures, and communities. Requires CAL FIRE to prioritize, to the extent feasible, projects that are multiyear efforts.
- 3) Requires eligible activities to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:
 - a) Development and implementation of public education and outreach programs. Programs may include technical assistance, new technologies, game elements to enhance and accelerate the education of property owners, workforce recruitment and training, and equipment purchases;
 - b) Fire prevention activities, as defined;
 - c) Projects to improve compliance with defensible space requirements;
 - d) Technical assistance to local agencies to improve fire prevention and reduce fire hazards;
 - e) Creation of additional “Firewise USA” communities in the state or other community planning or certification programs deemed as appropriate by CAL FIRE;
 - f) Projects to improve public safety, including, but not limited to, access to emergency equipment and improvements to public evacuation routes;
 - g) Vegetation management along roadways and driveways to reduce fire risk;

- h) Public education outreach regarding making homes and communities more wildfire resilient, including training on defensible space and prescribed grazing;
- i) Projects to reduce the flammability of structures and communities to prevent their ignition from wind-driven embers;
- j) Development of a risk reduction checklist for communities that includes defensible space criteria, structural vulnerability potential, and personal evacuation plans; and,
- k) Projects involving the application of prescribed grazing, which may include the installation of fencing or watering improvements.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author’s statement:**

Wildfire prevention must include every effective tool available. AB 1893 ensures that mobile rigid dip tanks, permanent dip tanks, and similar helicopter-accessible water supplies—proven to reduce response times and save lives—can qualify for wildfire prevention grants. This targeted clarification strengthens local firefighting capabilities without imposing new mandates or additional spending.

- 2) **Wildfires.** In CAL FIRE’s 2020 Fire Siege Report, the Director states, “at the end of 2020, we closed the book on, arguably, the worst fire year ever experienced on the west coast, and specifically in California.” While fewer wildfires threatened California in 2023 due to the increased number of weather events and atmospheric rivers, the vegetative growth from the significant rainfall contributed to devastating wildfires in 2024 and 2025. In 2024, the Park Fire became the fourth-largest fire in California’s history. Despite aggressive initial attack suppression efforts, the fire rapidly expanded, ultimately consuming 429,603 acres across Butte and Tehama counties.
- 3) **Los Angeles fires.** On January 7, 2025, multiple mega fires erupted in Los Angeles (LA) in Eaton and Pacific Palisades. As firefighters were contending with the extraordinary circumstances with strong winds and bone-dry conditions, the local water systems got overwhelmed and failed. Three million gallons of water (enough water to cover 2 football fields in a foot of water) were stored in three large tanks for fire hydrants in the area before the Palisades fire, but the supply was exhausted because of the extraordinary nature of this urban-wildland fire. Because of the high water demand fighting multiple fires concurrently, pump stations at lower elevations did not have enough pressure to refill tanks at higher elevations, and the ongoing fire hampered the ability of crews to access the pumps. The issue wasn’t water shortage; Orange County Water District, which supplies groundwater to the north half of the county, had enough supply to carry its 2.5 million customers through the worst of any potential droughts for 3 to 5 years. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California — which serves 19 million people mostly with imported water — also had an abundance, “with a record 3.8 million acre-feet of water in storage.” That’s enough water to supply 40 million people for a year. Also, reservoirs were full, but they were not close to the fire, thus taking a herculean effort to transport the amount of water needed in order to be effective.

Public water systems are not designed for catastrophic wildfires. Fire hydrants are used to extinguish 1-2 structure fires, not wildland fires. (Wildland firefighters don't use hydrants — they use water tenders.)

California water agencies are increasingly positioned to support firefighting through infrastructure that enhances access to water supplies for aerial crews. This is vital in urban-wildland interface areas lacking conventional sources. The author notes that mobile and permanent systems reduce response times and improve suppression, resilience, and effectiveness.

- 4) **Firefighting water supplies.** Firefighting helicopters use dip tanks when other water sources are not an option. Dip tanks cut the distances that helicopters must travel to the nearest body of water, help when the local water source is not deep enough, or alleviate the environmental concerns with using local water. Dip tanks come in many sizes and shapes and are mobile so they can be positioned for optimum access and effect during a fire incident.

According to the author's office, permanent infrastructure costs about \$300,000-400,000 per unit. Mobile infrastructure costs about \$75,000 per unit, which includes the trailer to make them mobile. There are advantages to each kind of infrastructure and different geographies really drive the analysis about which is a better fit for permanent vs. mobile.

Several dozen local governments have acquired and/or installed permanent or mobile firefighting infrastructure. The Crescenta Valley Water District owns a mobile unit, which is regularly borrowed and used elsewhere in Los Angeles County or in other counties. Jurupa Community Services District, San Geronimo Pass Water Agency, Yorba Linda Water District, Fallbrook Public Utility District, and Rainbow Municipal Water District are a handful of agencies that are known to currently own and utilize helicopter-accessible water supply infrastructure; most of these are of the permanent variety (not the mobile rigid dip tank).

These infrastructure needs are regularly showcased at trade associations, in newsletters, at ribbon-cuttings, etc., and numerous local governments including cities, special districts, fire agencies, neighborhood fire councils, and others continue to express that they would like such infrastructure but wouldn't know where to find the funding for them. According to the author's office, the demand would easily be in the hundreds of units if funding were available.

- 5) **Local assistance grant program.** The Wildfire Resilience Program pursuant to PRC 4124.5 is tasked with assisting nonindustrial timberland owners with wildfire resilience efforts by providing technical and financial assistance for their forest management needs. The Wildfire Resilience Program includes several state forestry assistance programs within CAL FIRE that share the goal of improving the health and productivity of private forest lands and reducing the threat posed from wildland fires. According to CAL FIRE, over the last six years, CAL FIRE has awarded more than \$566 million in Wildfire Prevention Grants to more than 575 projects across the state.

The Wildfire Prevention Grants Program is funded as part of the state's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Strategy, in part with Cap-and-Invest auction proceeds administered with Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund moneys. For FY 2025-26, CAL FIRE's granted

Wildfire Grant Prevention \$62.7 million for 84 grants, ranging from \$63,000 to \$949,000; the average grant amount was \$750,000.

AB 1893 provides the statutory basis for CAL FIRE and the State Office of Emergency Services to include helicopter-accessible water supply infrastructure as eligible activities in guidelines for future wildfire prevention grant funding opportunities and programs. The bill further intends to provide clarity that dip tanks, useful for fire suppression, would be eligible for funding under this grant program.

- 6) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Emergency Management Committee.
- 7) **Related legislation.** SB 90 (Seyarto, 2025) includes in the list of eligible projects under the \$135 million wildfire mitigation grant program, authorized pursuant to Proposition 4, improvements to public evacuation routes in very high and high fire hazard severity zones, mobile rigid dip tanks, as defined, to support firefighting efforts, prepositioned mobile rigid water storage, as defined, and improvements to the response and effectiveness of fire engines and helicopters. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

- | | |
|--|---|
| Bellflower Somerset Mutual Water Company | Rainbow Municipal Water District |
| Crescenta Valley Water District | Rancho California Water District |
| Cucamonga Valley Water District | Rowland Water District |
| Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District | Rubio Canon Land and Water Association |
| Fallbrook Public Utility District | San Gabriel County Water District |
| Jurupa Community Services District | San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District |
| Kinneloa Irrigation District | San Geronio PASS Water Agency |
| LA Habra Heights County Water District | Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency |
| Las Virgenes Municipal Water District | Southern California Water Coalition |
| Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster | Valencia Heights Water Company |
| Montebello Land and Water Company | Valley County Water District |
| Paradise Irrigation District | Walnut Valley Water District |
| Pico Water District | West Valley Water District |
| Quartz Hill Water District | Western Municipal Water District |

Opposition

None on file

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

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 1938 (Irwin) – As Introduced February 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Coastal recreation: designated state surfing reserves

SUMMARY: Authorizes the designation of surfing reserves.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires, pursuant to the California Coastal Act of 1976, oceanfront land suitable for recreational use to be protected for recreational use and development unless present and foreseeable future demand for public or commercial recreational activities that could be accommodated on the property is already adequately provided for in the area. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 30221)
- 2) Establishes, pursuant to the California Ocean Protection Act, the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) and provides that the purpose of the Act is to integrate and coordinate the state's laws and institutions responsible for protecting and conserving ocean resources, including coastal waters and ocean ecosystems, to provide for public access to the ocean and ocean resources, including to marine protected areas, for recreational use, and aesthetic, educational, and scientific purposes, consistent with the sustainable long-term conservation of those resources, among other objectives. (PRC 35600 *et seq.*)
- 3) Directs the 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 No. N-82-20)
- 4) Establishes surfing as the official state sport. (Government Code 424.7)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Defines the following terms:
 - a) "Local government" as a city, county, or city and county, including a chartered city or county, with jurisdiction, in whole or in part, in the coastal zone; and,
 - b) "Surfing reserve" as an area designated pursuant to this chapter that would feature waves, surf zones, and surrounding environments, recognize the surfing area's environmental, cultural, and historical significance, and meet OPC's standard as an "other effective area-based conservation measure" as described in the "30x30 Decision-Making Framework for Coastal Waters."
- 2) Requires, on or before July 1, 2027, OPC to establish criteria and an application process for purposes of designating an area of the coastline as a state surfing reserve. Authorizes OPC to require, as one of the criteria, a letter of recommendation for the designation of a state surfing reserve from the California Coastal Commission (Commission).

- 3) Requires OPC, when establishing criteria for purposes of the state surfing reserve designation, to consider factors, including, but not limited to, wave quality and consistency, surf culture and history, environmental characteristics, and management priorities.
- 4) Authorizes a local government, after adopting a formal resolution, to apply to OPC for purposes of designating an area of the coastline within the jurisdiction of the local government as a state surfing reserve.
- 5) Requires the local government to include in its application all of the following:
 - a) A description of the proposed surfing reserve, including the specific geographic location and coastal access;
 - b) A description of the cultural, historical, ecological, and economic value of the proposed surfing reserve;
 - c) Management priorities for the surfing reserve; and,
 - d) Any other eligibility criteria required by OPC.
- 6) Requires OPC to approve the application from the local government if the area of the coastline meets the established criteria.
- 7) Requires OPC, once the application is approved, to designate the area as a state surfing reserve.
- 8) Requires OPC, as appropriate, and upon appropriation by the Legislature, to publicize approved surfing reserves and partner with local governments to erect signs designating approved surfing reserves.
- 9) Authorizes OPC to accept donations.
- 10) Authorizes OPC, if, at any time, it determines that the designated state surfing reserve no longer meets the criteria, to revoke its designation as a state surfing reserve.
- 11) Requires OPC to include designated state surfing reserves in the state's goal to conserve at least 30% of coastal waters pursuant to 30x30 goals.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

With a coastline that spans 1,100 miles, our state is home to a number of world-famous surf breaks including Malibu, Rincon, Trestles, and Mavericks. These breaks are destinations for millions of domestic and international surfers, and generate several billion dollars of economic activity every year. While the state is a leader in ocean conservation, California does not have a policy framework designed to specifically protect surf resources, which are all the natural resources and conditions that work together to create surfable waves.

Climate change, coastal erosion and pollution are damaging the health and longevity of California's surfing communities. A lack of official recognition of California's surfing areas prevents the state from elevating urgently needed coastal stewardship opportunities that acknowledge the role surfing and its community play in protecting our coast.

Designating surf reserves will empower local communities to implement conservation measures, improve water quality, and enhance coastal access for generations to come.

- 2) **Surfing in California.** Surfing competitions were established along the California coast during the 1920s, and a booming surf culture was created when the automobile became readily accessible, enabling inland individuals to visit the coast. Today, surfing is an iconic California sport, and the state is home to a number of world-famous surf breaks like Malibu, Trestles, Mavericks, Rincon, Steamer Lane, Ocean Beach, and Huntington Beach, which are destinations for both domestic and international surfers. Every year, California hosts numerous domestic and international surf events, including the International Surf Festival, the U.S. Open of Surfing, and the Big Wave Surf Contest. California is also home to the Surfers' Hall of Fame, the International Surfing Museum, and the California Surf Museum.

The sport of surfing has buoyed both economic innovations and scientific advancements. The commercial surfboard industry started in California in the 1950s. The science of wave forecasting was pioneered at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego and allows surfers to predict when and where to go surfing all over the world. The invention of world's first neoprene wetsuit is attributed to a physicist at the University of California at Berkeley.

The United States is home to approximately 3.3 million surfers, who spend between \$1.9 and \$3.3 billion each year on local surf trips. Professional surfers brought in \$140 billion in domestic surf tourism in California in 2018 alone, and the surf industry, which is almost exclusively based in California, generates more than \$6 billion in United States annual retail sales. Additionally, a report published by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, indicated that California has the highest number of individuals who surf in the country.



Surfing today is one of the fastest-growing sports in the world with the Summer Olympics now including surfing as an event. In 2028, Los Angeles will host the Summer Olympics with surfing events, highlighting both the sport and California's waves for the world to see.

In recognition of the importance and contributions of surfing to California, in 2018, the Legislature enacted AB 1782 (Gray), Chapter 162, Statutes of 2018, to name surfing the official sport of California. That same year, the Legislature named September 20 as California Surfing Day.

- 3) **Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECM).** The term ‘other effective area-based conservation measure’ describes a geographic site that is not within a protected area but that delivers long-term biodiversity conservation that is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant value. Protected areas and OECMs have a subtle yet critical distinction. Protected areas are designated and managed with a primary conservation objective in mind, such as preserving habitat for endangered species. Their core function is to promote the conservation of biodiversity within a given site. OECMs are defined as managed areas that deliver effective conservation of biodiversity within a given site, regardless of whether that is the goal.

The OPC’s most recently adopted 30x30 Decision-Making Framework for Coastal Waters states:

To qualify as a 30x30 Conservation Area, OECMs must also demonstrate that they promote access to nature and climate mitigation or resilience. Confirmed OECMs in coastal waters that also provide access and climate resilience benefits will qualify as 30x30 Conservation Areas.

AB 1938 allows for a surfing reserve designation, in part, if the area meets OPC’s standard as an OECM.

- 4) **Benefits of designated surfing reserves.** In addition to honoring the cultural and recreational benefits of surfing, designation could attract tourists, and designations would also instill a reverence for the coastline’s recreational values, coastal views, and the “blue spaces” both Californians and tourists seek out. Save the Waves, a California-based nonprofit with the goal of protecting 1,000 surf ecosystems by 2030, created a program 15 years ago that identifies, designates, and preserves outstanding waves, surf zones, and their surrounding environments around the world as World Surfing Reserves. There are 13 designated sites worldwide with two in California: Santa Cruz and Malibu.

A joint study between the Center for Responsible Travel at Stanford University and the University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization on the economic value of Mavericks found that the average visitor received \$57 in consumer surplus per trip to Mavericks. In other words, the visitor received \$57 in additional value that was received from either surfing or watching the wave. With an estimated 421,431 visitors annually, the net economic value of Mavericks is about \$24 million dollars.

- 5) **Local control.** To designate a surfing reserve, the onus is on a local government that wants the designation. The bill requires a local government to adopt a formal resolution and submit an application to OPC with information related to geography and coastal access; description of the cultural, historical, ecological, and economic value of the proposed surfing reserve; and, management priorities. If the application meets the OPC’s criteria, the area earns its designation. Surfing status is revocable if the reserve fails at any time to meet the criteria.

- 6) **Committee amendments.** The *Committee may wish to consider the* following amendments:
- a) Strike the option for the OPC to require a letter of recommendation from the Coastal Commission and allow for letters from any public agency or coastal organization.
 - b) Strike reference to management plans and instead refer to compliance with applicable local and state laws.
 - c) Require, if OPC revokes a designation that no longer meets the criteria, any signage to be removed upon revocation of designation.
 - d) Strike requirements for OPC to publicize surfing reserves and accept donations.
 - e) Strike references to 30x30 (per author's request)

7) **Related legislation:**

AB 452 (Irwin, 2025) was identical to AB 2177. It was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 2177 (Irwin, 2022) Requires, on or before July 1, 2026, the State Coastal Conservancy to establish criteria and an application process for purposes of designating an area of the coastline as a state surfing reserve. It was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

ACR 116 (Nguyen) 2022 recognizes September 20, 2022, and every year on that date thereafter, as California Surfing Day to celebrate the California surfing lifestyle.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Center for Coastal Resilience at UC Santa Cruz
City of Santa Cruz
League of California Cities
Richard Schmidt Surf School
Santa Cruz Longboard Union
Save the Waves Coalition
Surf Industry Members Association
Surfrider Foundation
US Board Riders Clubs

Opposition

Sea of Clouds

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

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 2483 (Elhawary) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Wildland firefighters: Formerly Incarcerated Firefighter Certification and Employment Program

SUMMARY: Requires, on and after July 1, 2027, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), in partnership with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the California Conservation Camp program, to implement a standardized process to ensure that all individuals who successfully complete CAL FIRE's firefighting training program (FFT program) while incarcerated receive official written certification before their release from prison.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Conservation Camps for the purpose of having incarcerated persons work on projects supervised by CAL FIRE. Establishes the policy of this state to require the inmates and wards assigned to such camps to perform public conservation projects including, but not limited to, forest fire prevention and control, forest and watershed management, recreation, fish and game management, soil conversion, and forest and watershed revegetation. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 4951)
- 2) Requires CAL FIRE to utilize inmates and wards assigned to California Conservation Camps in performing fire prevention, fire control, and other work of CAL FIRE. (PRC 4953)
- 3) Establishes the Education and Employment Reentry Program within the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and authorizes the director of CCC to enroll formerly incarcerated individuals who successfully served on a California Conservation Camp program crew and were recommended for participation as a program member by the Director of CAL FIRE and the Secretary of CDCR. (PRC 14415.1)
- 4) Authorizes an incarcerated individual who has successfully participated in either a California Conservation Camp program or a county program as an incarcerated individual hand crewmember, as determined by specified authorities, and has been released from custody, to file a petition for expungement relief. Incarcerated individuals who have been convicted of specified crimes are ineligible for this relief. (Penal Code 1203.4b)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Requires, on and after July 1, 2027, CAL FIRE, in partnership with CDCR and the California Conservation Camp program, to implement a standardized process to ensure that all individuals who successfully complete CAL FIRE's FFT program while incarcerated receive official written certification before their release from prison.
- 2) Requires the official written certification to include, but is not limited to, the following certifications:

- a) CAL FIRE Forestry Training, or its successor certification.
 - b) S-190 Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior, or its successor certification.
- 3) Requires, on and after January 1, 2028, if a qualified formerly incarcerated individual applies for a Fire Fighter 1 (FF1) Classification position with CAL FIRE, CAL FIRE to award hiring preference to the qualified formerly incarcerated individual under Category Placement 2.
 - 4) Requires, on and after January 1, 2028, if a qualified formerly incarcerated individual applies for a Forestry Technician Classification position with CAL FIRE, CAL FIRE to count the duration of training and field work as an incarcerated hand crew member towards the minimum qualifications for the Forestry Technician classification, and award hiring preference to the qualified formerly incarcerated individual under Rank 2 Placement. This requirement only applies to Forestry Technician 1 fuels mitigation assignments and does not apply to Forestry Technician 1 defensible space inspectors.
 - 5) Provides that nothing in this bill precludes CAL FIRE from placing a formerly incarcerated person in a higher category for hiring based on their level of training, certification, employment history, or other factors.
 - 6) Provides that nothing in this bill precludes other state agencies with wildland management responsibilities from establishing similar pathways to support wildfire prevention, mitigation, and response efforts with priority hiring reserved for formerly incarcerated individuals who completed the FFT program.
 - 7) Defines “qualified formerly incarcerated individual” as any formerly incarcerated individual who completed the FFT program, has a valid certification, and has successfully participated as an incarcerated hand crew member in the California Conservation Camp program.
 - 8) Authorizes CAL FIRE, if it establishes new entry level classifications or positions, including, but not limited to, the successor classifications of those mentioned in this bill, and the training matches the minimum qualifications for these new classifications or positions, to provide hiring preference analogous to that described in this bill to qualified formerly incarcerated individuals.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Inmate fire fighters.** After inmates were dispatched to extinguish a 1944 fire in Southern California near a forestry camp, the state created the Rainbow Conservation Camp in 1946 near San Diego. It was administered through an agreement between the corrections and forestry departments, and established a model for the camps we have now. Today, inmate firefighters form handcrews, creating breaks in vegetation and carving out swaths of barren soil that deny flames fuel to go further. They manage these perimeters by hand, using chainsaws, shovels, and axes. Firefighting provides job skills training that can be employed post release and a sense of purpose during incarceration.

California’s inmate firefighter ranks have plummeted in recent years, due in part to measures to reduce the prison population under Governor Newsom and hastened by the early release of

non-violent offenders during the pandemic. In 2011, more than 4,000 incarcerated individuals were in a firefighting program; as of March 2026, there are 1,865 incarcerated individuals at conservation fire camps.

- 2) **Conservation Camp Program.** CDCR, in cooperation with CAL FIRE and the Los Angeles County Fire Department, jointly operates 35 conservation camps, commonly referred to as fire camps, across 25 counties. All camps are minimum-security facilities, staffed with correctional staff, and typically located within a few miles of a small population center.

Once volunteers pass the physical fitness test, they must complete CAL FIRE's FFT program, which consists of four days of classroom training and four days of field training, taught by CAL FIRE staff.

An inmate must volunteer for the fire camp program; no inmate is involuntarily assigned to work in a fire camp. Volunteers must have "minimum custody" status, or the lowest classification for inmates based on their sustained good behavior in prison, their conforming to rules within the prison and participation in rehabilitative programming. Some conviction offenses automatically make an inmate ineligible for conservation camp assignment, even if they have minimum custody status. Those convictions include sexual offenses, arson, and any history of escape with force or violence.

- 3) **Inmate firefighting certification.** According to CAL FIRE, incarcerated hand crew members are provided the minimum training necessary to meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and are currently provided training equivalent to L180, S130, and S190, which are fundamental training courses for entry-level wildland firefighters. They are frequently taken together as a "basic red card" training package required to work on firelines.

CAL FIRE generates a certificate of completion when an incarcerated individual completes the required hand crew training, and CDCR maintains custody of the document until the individual paroles. The certificate can be used by formerly incarcerated individuals to apply for FFI positions at CAL FIRE. Upon hire and placement into a CAL FIRE Unit on a hand crew, the FFI hand crew member is trained by the hiring Unit, and provided the minimum training necessary for response capabilities and fuels mitigation.

- 4) **Fire fighter training confusion.** FFI is an entry-level position for seasonal firefighters, requiring basic training and skills for fire suppression, wildland firefighting, and hazardous materials response. This requires NFPA certifications 1010: Fire Fighter 1, 1140: Wildland Fire Fighter 1, and NFPA 470: Hazardous Material Awareness and Operations.

The CAL-FIRE Forestry Training and the S-190 Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior certifications required to be provided by this bill do not align with the certifications required for FF 1 eligibility.

Further, "firefighting training program" is not semantically interchangeable with CAL FIRE's Fire Fighting Training Centers. CAL FIRE operates four Fire Fighting Training Centers (Ione, Riverside, Redding, and Atwater) where CAL FIRE provides year-round training in fire prevention and protection, emergency response, law enforcement, and enhancement of natural resource systems. The training of a hired CAL FIRE firefighter is

different than the training for an incarcerated individual hand crew member. Achieving the FF1 certification can be a minimum qualification, but it doesn't serve to replace an academy when a firefighter is hired and then goes through a CAL FIRE Fire Fighter Training Center.

5) **Preferential hiring.** This bill requires, on and after January 1, 2028, if a qualified formerly incarcerated individual applies for a FF1 Classification position with CAL FIRE, CAL FIRE to award hiring preference to the qualified formerly incarcerated individual under Category Placement 2, and requires, if a qualified formerly incarcerated individual applies for a Forestry Technician Classification position with CAL FIRE, CAL FIRE to count the duration of training and field work as an incarcerated hand crew member towards the minimum qualifications for the Forestry Technician classification, and award hiring preference to the qualified formerly incarcerated individual under Rank 2 Placement. There are currently 4 categories for placement:

- **Category 0:** The applicant has returnee rights to a CAL FIRE Unit.
- **Category 1:** The applicant is considered "fully trained" and has provided an acceptable document showing completion of all of the required trainings.
- **Category 2:** The applicant is considered "partially trained" and has provided an acceptable document showing completion of at least one of the required trainings listed.
- **Category 3:** The applicant has not provided acceptable documentation for any of the required trainings.

The Firefighter Candidate Testing Center maintains a list of eligible candidates to be used by California fire departments during their hiring process. According to the California Professional Firefighters, there are currently more than 5,000 individuals on list that have completed the physical agility and written exams through the Firefighting Joint Apprenticeship Committee and are actively trying to get hired by CAL FIRE. It's hard to know exactly how many individuals are currently qualified in each specific category as applicants specify locations where they are willing to work. As such, the number of applicants can vary widely in different parts of the state. Additionally, hand crew firefighters with the California Military Department, CCC, and incarcerated hand crew members are all included in the same "category placement 2." If this is codified in statute, it could create future difficulties with how CAL FIRE categorizes applications for FFI positions, as the categories are determined internally and could require updates based on future training or hiring requirements.

Notably, Forestry Technician and FFI Hand Crew positions are separate classifications. A Forestry Technician is hired for wildfire resiliency efforts with a focus on fuel reduction disciplines. The FFI has the Forestry Technician component in addition to the fire suppression component on emergency incidents. Additionally, the Forestry Technician is a permanent civil service classification, which requires the merit-based hiring process. As such, there is no "Rank 2 Placement." Additionally, the California Constitution (Article VII, Sec. 6) provides the Legislature with the ability to provide an exclusive hiring preference to "veterans and their surviving spouses" for civil service classifications.

- 6) **Firefighting classifications.** This bill references specific classifications that should be prioritized for formerly incarcerated inmates. However, should any of the training nomenclature change at CAL FIRE, the course names being enshrined in statute would be problematic. The author may wish to work with CAL FIRE to determine the appropriate references in the bill for earned certifications and eligible classifications.
- 7) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Public Safety Committee.
- 8) **Committee amendments.** The *committee may wish to consider* amending the bill to clarify that the certifications provided shall be commensurate with the training received and minimum qualifications met, clarify the training achieved, delete reference to Rank 2, and make a technical, nonsubstantive change.
- 9) **Author's statement:**

AB 2483 is a restorative justice measure that creates a real path to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals who trained and served in California's fire camps. Despite gaining hands-on experience fighting wildfires alongside CAL FIRE, these individuals are often released without certification and shut out of the very workforce they helped sustain.

By requiring CAL FIRE and CDCR to issue formal certification and prioritizing the hiring of qualified former fire camp participants, AB 2483 invests in rehabilitation, reduces recidivism, strengthens our firefighting workforce, and promotes equity by ensuring that those most impacted by the justice system have the opportunity to serve their communities with dignity.

- 10) **Related legislation.** AB 1380 (Elhawary, 2025) Requires CAL FIRE, in partnership with the CDCR and the California Conservation Camp program, to implement a standardized process to ensure that all individuals who complete CAL FIRE's FFT program while incarcerated receive official written certification before their release, and requires this certification to be adequate for employment at CAL FIRE in the classification of FF1. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Forestry Association
 Center for Employment Opportunities
 Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program
 Michelson Center for Public Policy
 Prosecutors Alliance Action

Opposition

None on file

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

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 2051 (Wicks) – As Introduced February 18, 2026

SUBJECT: Public resources: Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group

SUMMARY: Requires the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency (NRA), in consultation with the Secretary for Environmental Protection (CalEPA), to convene a Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group (Working Group) for the purpose of developing a Coastal Resilience Permitting Roadmap (Roadmap) for coastal resilience projects proposed along the California coast and in the San Francisco Bay, and in and adjacent to state and federal waters.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Coastal Act), establishes the California Coastal Commission (Coastal Commission), and prescribes the membership and duties of the Coastal Commission. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 30301)
- 2) Establishes the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) to regulate the San Francisco Bay and the first 100 feet inland from the shoreline around the Bay. (Government Code (GC) 66620)
- 3) Pursuant to the Permit Streamlining Act (GC 65920-65923.8), which applies to all public agencies:
 - a) States that there is a statewide need to ensure clear understanding of the specific requirements which must be met in connection with the approval of development projects and to expedite decisions on such projects.
 - b) Provides specified timeframes by which a public agency that is the lead agency for a development project is required to approve or disapprove a project.
 - c) Requires any public agency to determine in writing whether an application is complete within 30 days of receiving the application for a development project. Establishes iterative processes and timelines for reviewing complete applications.
 - d) Requires, upon final approval of a housing development project, a city, county, or city and county to provide the development proponent with an itemized list and a good faith estimate of the total sum amount of all fees and exactions that will apply to the project within 30 business days.

THIS BILL:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of NRA, in consultation with the Secretary for CalEPA, to convene a Working Group for the purpose of developing a Roadmap for coastal resilience projects proposed along the California coast and in the San Francisco Bay, and in and adjacent to state and federal waters.

- 2) Requires the Working Group to consist of representatives from federal, state, and local agencies, including, but not limited to, representatives from all of the following entities:
 - a) The Coastal Commission;
 - b) CalEPA;
 - c) The California Regional Water Quality Control Boards, San Francisco Bay, North Coast, and Central Coast (regional water boards);
 - d) The Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW);
 - e) The Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation;
 - f) NRA;
 - g) The Ocean Protection Council (OPC);
 - h) BCDC;
 - i) The State Coastal Conservancy (SCC);
 - j) The State Historical Resources Commission;
 - k) The State Lands Commission;
 - l) The State Office of Historic Preservation; and,
 - m) The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB).
- 3) Requires development of the Roadmap to incorporate, but not delay, progress to advance responsible permitting and development of coastal resilience projects.
- 4) Requires, on or before January 1, 2028, the Secretary of NRA to submit the Roadmap to the Governor and the relevant fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature. Sunsets this requirement on January 1, 2032.
- 5) Requires the Roadmap to include, at a minimum, recommendations that address all of the following:
 - a) Administrative reforms that can be implemented by state agencies within their existing authority to improve permit issuance timelines, including all of the following:
 - i) Streamlining the process for determinations that applications are complete, including limits on additional information requests and timelines for initial and successive reviews;
 - ii) Unified applications with a predictable sequence and timeline of permitting information requests and interagency reviews;

- iii) An interagency project management team for multiagency permitting, modeled on the Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team;
 - iv) Methods to standardize compensatory mitigation across agencies, including use of engineering with nature features to enable projects to self-mitigate and a de minimis fill policy that allows de minimis fill within defined thresholds without the need to mitigate;
 - v) Delegating permit issuance to executive officers or using consent calendars when commission or board action is required by law;
 - vi) Expanded use of regional general permits and programmatic agreements for known categories of coastal resilience projects;
 - vii) Process improvements that allow for permit approval earlier in the design process, and for subsequent design changes arising from field conditions and in-depth engineering analysis; and,
 - viii) Standard measures that can be applied to pile driving and fill placement techniques, and other practices that are known to safeguard marine resources, including the types of conditions under which these measures should be utilized and can be scaled to varying project scope and footprint.
- b) A state process to align agency mitigation requirements and enable in-lieu fees or advance mitigation through which applicants can contribute funding to eligible restoration or mitigation initiatives, thereby avoiding temporal loss of habitat and associated increased mitigation requirements, and reducing the need for individual applicants to develop and implement project-specific compensatory mitigation projects.
 - c) Legislative reforms that can further accelerate permitting for projects that increase coastal resilience, with a focus on current legislative requirements that result in extensive analysis that could be avoided by application of standardized compensatory mitigation, advance mitigation, or standard construction practices.
 - d) If needed to test alternative approaches, a coastal resilience project pilot program along with any required legislative authorizations to evaluate the effectiveness of recommended reforms and environmental protection.
 - e) An evaluation of whether consolidated coastal resilience permits similar to those provided for offshore wind projects would facilitate timely permits.
 - f) A workforce assessment and funding options for regulatory staffing positions and as-needed permitting support contracts to supplement staff, including a specific analysis of recommended pay scales needed to recruit and retain permitting staff that reflect the educational requirements for these positions, the cost of living in areas where these staff live and work, and private sector compensation for similar skills.
- 6) Requires, on or before April 1, 2027, the Coastal Commission and BCDC, in collaboration with CDFW, and the regional water boards with jurisdiction over the California coast and San Francisco Bay, to convene a Coastal Resilience Permit Advisory Group (Advisory

Group). Requires the Advisory Group membership to include, but not be limited to, representatives of each of the following:

- a) The Department of Transportation, SCC, and other relevant state agencies that seek permits for projects in coastal areas;
 - b) Local governments required to update their local coastal plans for sea level rise;
 - c) California ports;
 - d) Local transportation agencies and wastewater treatment agencies;
 - e) California Native American tribes that are on the contact list administered and maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission; and,
 - f) Other members of the public, including businesses, home and affordable housing builders, commercial and recreational fishers, environmental organizations, environmental justice organizations, and others.
- 7) Requires the Coastal Commission and BCDC, in consultation with the CDFW, and the regional water boards, to conduct a series of public workshops with the Advisory Group to do all of the following:
- i) Solicit feedback regarding challenges with existing permitting processes, and recommendations and concerns from permittees and other interested parties regarding streamlining proposals; and,
 - ii) Review and seek comment on draft reform proposals from the Working Group's Roadmap.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Permit reform.** Permits and approvals are required and administered under various statutes and regulations at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. The value of an approved permit is assurance a project is in compliance with all applicable laws. The specific types of permits and approvals that are required for a project will depend on the scale and nature of the proposed project, location in a special area (i.e., the coastal zone, on public land), ecological conditions (when protected biological resources are or are anticipated to be, in or adjacent to the project area), or project size.

The bill's findings state that the combination of overlapping, and sometimes duplicative, federal and state authorities, requirements for project-specific studies, limited regulatory agency staffing, interagency coordination needs, and inconsistency and uncertainty regarding mitigation requirements results in extended permitting timelines for all projects in or adjacent to federal waters, including coastal resilience projects.

Improved communication, coordination, and collaboration can reduce unnecessary duplication of effort, streamline information needs, and decrease the time and cost for permit approvals.

- 2) **Permit Streamlining Act.** The Legislature enacted the Permit Streamlining Act in 1977 to expedite permit processing across all public agencies. Under the Act, once an agency receives an initial application, it has 30 days to notify the applicant of any additional materials needed to complete the application. There is no timeline for when the applicant must respond or provide the requested information, but when the public agency does, it has another 30 days to review it to determine whether it is complete. If not, the 30-day cycle starts again. Once the application is complete, the agency is required to take final action within 180 days. That time limit may be extended one time for up to 90 days upon the mutual consent of the agency and the applicant. If an agency fails to approve or disapprove the permit within the time limits specified, the permit is subject to being deemed approved.

The PSA has resulted in truncated permit timelines, but doesn't address a project's cumulative timing for obtaining numerous permits from different public entities.

- 3) **Cutting the Green Tape.** In 2019, NRA launched the Cutting Green Tape initiative to accelerate ecological restoration, conservation, and stewardship by advancing permitting and funding efficiencies across agencies, regulations, policies, and practices. The initiative has led to programmatic permits to authorize a set of related projects or multiple projects that are substantially similar. This approach significantly reduces time and resources that would otherwise be devoted to issuing individual permits at the project level. These authorizations require substantial up-front investment, but once established, have been shown to reduce permitting times by up to 50%. Programmatic permits are currently offered across different agencies for environmental restoration projects.

Examples include the SWRCB's Large Habitat Restoration General Order, a programmatic permit for common habitat restoration activities exceeding five acres in size to streamline larger projects for improvements to stream crossing and fish passage, floodplain restoration, and removal of non-native invasive species. CDFW developed a new process for issuing consistency determinations that involves CDFW's "pre-approval" of biological opinions to ensure general consistency with the California Endangered Species Act coupled with an expedited review of project-specific applications. CDFW also developed the Restoration Management Permit (RMP) after meeting with restoration stakeholders to identify the specific constraints they face when implementing restoration projects where protected species are present. The RMP consolidates authorizations that voluntary habitat restoration projects may need into a single streamlined permit, truncating permit processing from up to five state departments and up to two years to four to five months. Also, the Coastal Commission uses Public Works Plans (PWP) to streamline fuel reduction projects in the coastal zone. PWPs authorize projects with streamlined review and without the need for additional coastal permits over 10 years.

- 4) **Other permit reform.** BCDC is proposing amendments to its regulations as part of an ongoing effort to modernize its permitting program. In 2024, staff completed a year-long assessment of the permitting process and developed a roadmap identifying targeted improvements for the permitting program. BCDC's existing regulations allow BCDC to authorize similar categories of activities under two different permit programs, one for regionwide permits and another for abbreviated regionwide permits. The proposed amendments will repeal the existing regulations governing regionwide permits and abbreviated regionwide permits in their entirety and adopt a new set of amended regulations

for the regionwide permit program only. BCDC notes that its proposed amendments are consistent with statewide efforts to improve permitting processes.

The Bay Restoration Regulatory Integration Team (BRRIT) is comprised of staff from each of the six state and federal regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over San Francisco Bay. This team provides project proponents with a “one-stop shop” for complex multi-benefit habitat restoration and associated flood management projects, increasing efficiencies by 1) establishing a collaborative pre-application process in which agencies and project proponents identify and resolve issues early in project planning, and 2) diminishing the time involved for serial review, one agency at a time, for needed multi-agency permitting.

- 5) **Select Committee on Permit Reform.** In 2024, the Select Committee met to discuss permit challenges and permit process reform for infill housing, clean energy, transit, and climate resiliency projects. The resultant *California Assembly Select Committee on Permitting Reform Final Report*¹ (March 2025) notes that despite permit reforms already undertaken, many stakeholders expressed concern that further permitting reform is necessary for the state to achieve its housing production goals, such as eliminating uncertainty in the application process; minimizing uncertainty in the entitlement process; creating more consistency across permitting entities; focusing CEQA on environmental issues; and, minimizing uncertainty for post-entitlement permits.

The report identified best practices for permitting reform, including prioritizing agency objectives and workload, providing a clear and straightforward permit application process, and establishing specific timeframes for reviewing permits.

NRA participated in the Select Committee’s hearings, and the SWRCB, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, CDFW, and other public agencies contributed to the research and preparation of the report, all of which can facilitate incorporation of preexisting feedback into the Working Group’s Roadmap.

- 6) **This bill.** AB 2051 requires NRA to convene a Working Group to develop a Roadmap for coastal resilience projects proposed along the California coast and in the San Francisco Bay, and make recommendations on myriad administrative reforms and alignment of agency requirements to streamline permitting processes and timeframes.

Numerous recent reports completed by agencies participating in the Working Group and/or Advisory Group have been published with recommendations to streamline the permitting process for coastal development projects. These reports can both inform the Roadmap and eliminate unnecessary redundancies in the Working Group’s efforts.

For instance, this bill acknowledges some of those reports, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s North-Central California Coastal Sediment Coordination Committee’s *2024 Efficient Permitting Roadmap* that synthesizes guidance, tips, and best practices from 20 federal, state, and local agencies to create a ‘how to’ guide and clearinghouse of information for navigating efficient permitting and environmental review process for coastal habitat restoration projects. The 2023 *Cutting Green Tape Along the Coast and San Francisco Bay* report recommended an interagency permitting team in Southern California to be established as a subteam of the existing Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, which is comprised of essentially the same agencies as the

BRRIT. This bill gleans from that by requiring consideration of an interagency project management team for multiagency permitting, modeled on BRRIT.

- 7) **Staff resources.** The bill acknowledges that workforce capacity is a contributing factor to permit review and turnaround times and requires the Working Group to include a workforce assessment and funding options for regulatory staffing positions. It is worth noting that the agencies being required to participate in the Working Group may not have surplus staff time to commit to developing the Roadmap, which could lead to reduced staff needed to process current permit applications. To reconcile that, the author may wish to consider working with the public agencies to address participating in the Working Group without jeopardizing permit review. Alternatively, adjusting the timeframes in the bill to allow more time for the Working Group to meet and report to the Legislature could address potential workload and personnel issues.
- 8) **Statewide application.** The Working Group's Roadmap would apply to statewide permitting reform, but the 1,100 mile coast line is incredibly topographically, meteorologically, and economically variable, and permit reform under the auspices of any one-size-fits-all is unlikely. The Bay Area region, for instance, is roughly 30% of the state's coastline, but bay-shoreline is quite different from Pacific Ocean shoreline. The author may wish to consider either teasing apart Bay Area coastal resilience permit reform from the rest of the state, or narrowing the bill with a regional focus.
- 9) **Defining climate resiliency.** Coastal resilience refers to the ability of coastal ecosystems and communities to adapt, recover, and withstand disturbances such as storms, sea level rise, and other climate related impacts. It involved both natural solutions, like restoring wetlands, and engineered solutions, such as hard armoring with seawalls. The concept emphasizes the importance of adaptive strategies to enhance both natural and built environments, ultimately reducing vulnerabilities to future threats and ensuring long-terms sustainability. Establishing a definition for 'coastal resilience' projects would provide clarity for the Working Group about how to discuss permit reform in the roadmap. Further, directing the Working Group to consider permit reforms for project-types may help focus relevant permit improvements depending on whether the project is nature-based, infrastructure-based, or a combination of the two.

10) **Author's statement:**

AB 2051 takes a targeted, expert-driven approach. Rather than legislating specific process changes from Sacramento, the bill directs the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency to convene a Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group — drawing on the California Coastal Commission, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, Regional Water Boards, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and other state, federal, and local partners — to develop a Coastal Resilience Permitting Roadmap. The Roadmap will identify actionable reforms: administrative changes to improve permit timelines, a state process to align agency mitigation requirements, legislative recommendations to accelerate permitting, and a workforce assessment to address staffing gaps.

The communities most at risk from climate change are disproportionately low-income and communities of color, located in low-lying areas adjacent to San Francisco Bay and the Pacific coast, with limited resources to self-finance

adaptation. Every year of permitting delay is a year these communities remain exposed to harm they did not cause and cannot afford to absorb. AB 2051 would outline a process that could help accelerate the delivery of flood protection, wetland restoration, and shoreline adaptation infrastructure to the people who need it most.

Vitally, AB 2051 does not alter existing permitting requirements or weaken any environmental protection. The bill's Coastal Resilience Permit Advisory Group is specifically charged with ensuring that streamlining efforts do not weaken protections for fish and wildlife habitat, tribal cultural resources, or public access. California has made commitments and investments. What we need now is the institutional capacity to deliver. AB 2051 is a practical, durable, and overdue step toward making that possible.

11) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee.

12) **Committee amendments.** The *committee may wish to consider* the following amendments to clarify that administrative reforms should be recommended to the extent feasible, provide a definition for “coastal resilience project,” require CNRA as a single facilitator for the advisory groups, and other clarifying changes.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Bay Area Council
Bay Planning Coalition
California State Association of Counties
Exploratorium, the
Kiewit Infrastructure West Co.
McFadden Finch Holdings Company
Port of San Francisco
San Francisco International Airport
Wareham Development

Opposition

None on file

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

ⁱ [permitting reform report cover 042525 v2](#)

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 2494 (Rogers) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: State forests: forest management

SUMMARY: Revises the state’s management policies for Demonstration State Forests (DSFs).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Pursuant to the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practices Act, prohibits a person from conducting timber operations unless a timber harvest plan (THP) prepared by a registered professional forester has been submitted for such operations to the Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (CAL FIRE). (Public Resources Code (PRC) 4511-4630)
- 2) Pursuant to the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund (TRFR Fund) (PRC) 4629 - 4629.13
 - a) Establishes the intent of the Legislature to identify and implement efficiencies in the regulation of timber harvesting between state agencies.
 - b) Imposes an assessment on a person who purchases a lumber product or an engineered wood product, as determined by the Board of Forestry, for storage, use, or other consumption in this state, at the rate of 1% of the sales price.
 - c) Requires moneys deposited in the TRFR Fund to be used, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for specified purposes and identifies specified proprieties for appropriations from the TRFR Fund.
- 3) Pursuant to the State Forest Law (PRC 4631-4664):
 - a) Declares it to be in the interest of the welfare of the people of this state and their industries and other activities involving the use of wood, lumber, poles, piling, and other forest products, that desirable cutover forest lands, including those having young and old timber growth, be made fully productive and that the holding and reforestation of such lands is a necessary measure predicated on waning supplies of original old growth timber. (PRC 4631)
 - b) Declares it to be in the interest of the welfare of the people of this state that the state retain the existing land base of DSFs in timber production for research and demonstration purposes, and cooperate with local governments in mitigating the impacts on school enrollment of geothermal development which occurs in proximity to state-owned forest lands. (PRC 4631.5)
 - c) Defines “management” as the handling of forest crop and forest soil so as to achieve maximum sustained production of high-quality forest products while giving consideration

to values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, fisheries, and aesthetic enjoyment. (PRC 4639)

- d) Requires the management of DSFs and the cutting and sale of timber and other forest products from DSFs to conform to regulations prepared in conformity with forest management practices designed to achieve maximum sustained production of high-quality forest products while giving consideration to values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, fisheries, and aesthetic enjoyment. (PRC 4651)
 - e) Authorizes CAL FIRE to permit a limited amount of commercial timber operations on the property within the Soquel DSF in order to provide funds for the maintenance and operation of the state forest and to allow fulfillment of the objectives for the Soquel DSF. Income from the state forest property shall sustain all costs of operation and provide income for research and educational purposes. (PRC 4661)
- 4) Creates the Forest Resources Improvement Fund (FRIF) from which moneys may only be expended, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for the cost of operations associated with management of lands held in trust by the state and operated as demonstration state forests by CAL FIRE, including restoration activities, and to reimburse CAL FIRE's cost of maintaining and improving the campground facilities, associated recreational facilities, natural environment, and access thereto. (PRC 4799.3)
 - 5) Establishes the California Timberland Productivity Act of 1982, to (1) maintain the optimum amount of the limited supply of timberland to ensure its current and continued availability for the growing and harvesting of timber and compatible uses; (2) discourage premature or unnecessary conversion of timberland to urban and other uses; (3) discourage expansion of urban services into timberland; and, (4) encourage investment in timberlands based on reasonable expectation of harvest. (Government Code 51100 *et seq.*)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Expands eligible uses of the TRFR Fund to include support for DSFs.
- 2) Includes DSFs as a priority for appropriations from the TRFR Fund.
- 3) Requires the secretary of Natural Resources Agency's (NRA) report to the Joint Legislative Budget Committees to include a listing of the costs associated with THP permits and agreements, the number of THPs approved in the past fiscal year, any expenditures or transfers from the TRFR Fund, an assessment of whether there is adequate staff to efficiently and effectively review plans under the forest practice program, any identified staffing needs by CAL FIRE and costs per position to support a more efficient review of THPs, the number of THPs submitted, returned for incompleteness, accepted, reviewed, and approved, the average time for THP review and time of review for any subsequent agreements or permits to support the conduct of timber operations under an approved THP, and percentage of preharvest inspections attended by each review team agency.
- 4) Revises the legislative intent for DSFs to declare that desirable forest lands, including those having young and old timber growth should be restored to fulfill ecological conditions and processes, and managed consistent with the definition of "management." Further declares it to be the policy of the state to respect California Native American tribal sovereignty and to

seek opportunities for co-management and integration of indigenous traditional ecological knowledge in forest management.

- 5) Further revises the policy of the state to acquire by purchase, exchange, lease, or grant all of the following:
 - a) The reforestation or restoration of which is not assured under private ownership, to reforest or restore such lands with locally appropriate species.
 - b) Disposal of forest lands primarily suitable for timber production, which may be acquired under precutting agreements.
 - c) Demonstration forests to furnish local needs of investigation, demonstration, and education throughout the state.
- 6) Strikes the 40,000 acreage cap for DSFs in specified districts.
- 7) Further declares that the state should do both of the following:
 - a) Retain the existing land base of DSFs primarily for research and demonstration purposes and allow the sale of timber and other forest products only when harvest occurs for ecological restoration or research purposes; and,
 - b) Cooperate with local governments in mitigating the impacts on school enrollment of geothermal development that occurs in proximity to state-owned forest lands.
- 8) Redefines “management” as the handling of forest vegetation and soils within DSFs, including, but not limited to, demonstration state forests, for biodiversity conservation and fire resilience, while maximizing the promotion of durable onsite carbon storage and sequestration, climate resiliency goals, equitable forest access, wildlife and recreation opportunities, and compatible research efforts.
- 9) Prohibits the sale of timber and other forest products unless harvest occurs for ecological restoration or research purposes in a manner consistent with the definition of management.
- 10) Requires the regulations for the management of DSFs and the cutting and sale of timber and other forest products from state forests to prioritize management practices consistent with the definition of management.
- 11) Redirects all recreational user fees received by CAL FIRE during each fiscal year from the FRIF to the TRFR Fund.
- 12) Redirects receipts from the sales of forest products and recreational user fees from the FRIF to the TRFR Fund.
- 13) Requires any other funds generated by a DSF, including, but not limited to, any funds that are deposited into the FRIF, to be transferred to the TRFR Fund.
- 14) Add foraging as a reasonable use of DSFs.

15) Strikes the use of mining in DSFs.

16) Provides that no reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to the California Constitution.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Demonstration State Forests.** California has 14 DSFs totaling 85,000 acres – less than 1% of the state’s 31 million acres of forested land. The DSFs represent the most common forest types in the state and serve as a living laboratory for how to care for California’s timberlands. The forests provide research and demonstration opportunities for natural resource management, while providing public recreation opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat, and watershed protection. Not only do these forests matter for government-owned areas, but their findings inform private owners of California's 40% privately owned forest land across the state.

Common activities on DSFs include experimental timber harvesting techniques, watershed restoration, mushroom collecting, hunting, firewood gathering, cone collecting for seed, a variety of university research projects, horseback riding, camping, mountain biking, and hiking.

Timber harvesting has long been a primary activity in DSFs; current law stipulates managing DSFs to achieve maximum sustained production. Timber harvesting is also a component of research and development. Collectively, DSFs grow approximately 75 million board feet (MBF) of timber annually and harvest an average of 20 MBF each year, enough to build 12,500 single-family homes. Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) in Mendocino County is the largest of CAL FIRE's DSFs. On average, JDSF harvests 14.3 MBF of conifer timber each year.

2) **Funding DSFs.** The FRIF is a special revenue fund established to support management of the DSFs. Revenue comes primarily from timber sales with a minor amount, less than 1%, coming from recreational activities such as camping, mushroom foraging permits, firewood permits, and special use events like mountain bike races. The Legislature appropriates monies annually in the State budget, which sets a spending cap from this account.

According to CAL FIRE’s most recent fund condition statementⁱ, \$10.728 million was appropriated from the FRIF in FY 2025/26 and \$11.386 million is proposed for FY 2026/27. Jackson, Boggs Mountain, Soquel, LaTour, and Mountain House DSFs have the greatest personnel and operational expenses. The remaining DSFs do not have assigned staff and are overseen by Resource Management personnel from the closest local CAL FIRE Administrative Unit.

In addition to FRIF, CAL FIRE’s Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) conducts and supports scientific research and monitoring related to a variety of wildfire and forest health issues at DSFs and administers grants for high-level scientific research. As of

November 2024, \$2.8 million from California Climate Investments have been implemented in DSFs.

Further, revenue generated from timber harvesting on DSFs is required by law to be spent on the DSFs. It cannot be spent on other things such as firefighting.

According to CAL FIRE, from timber sales between calendar year 2017-2024, JSDF (Mendocino County) generated \$42 million, LaTour (Shasta County) generated \$2.5 million, Mountain Home (Tulare County) generated \$812,000, and Sequel (Santa Cruz County) generated \$2.7 million. Importantly, timber revenues *do not* historically cover the DSFs operating, personnel, or research costs. For example, JSDF timber sales generated \$1.13 million in 2023, but its annual operating expenses were three times that amount (\$4.5 million).

- 3) **Shifting the state policy on management.** DSFs were established as testing ground for forest management and have historically included timber harvesting to show that ecological management and economically driven endeavors can coexist.

The state's policy on DSFs states that it is in the interest of the welfare of the people of this state and their industries and other activities involving the use of wood, lumber, poles, piling, and other forest products, that desirable forest lands, including those having young and old timber growth, be made fully productive and that the holding and reforestation of such lands is a necessary measure predicated on waning supplies of original old growth timber.

This bill is recasting the state's management policy to instead say that desirable forest lands, including those having young and old timber growth, should be restored to fulfill ecological conditions and processes, and managed consistent with this bill's definition of management, and that it is further declared to be the policy of the state to respect California Native American tribal sovereignty and to seek opportunities for co-management and integration of indigenous traditional ecological knowledge in forest management. Mendocino County Supervisor, Mo Mulheren, writes in support that, "From a local perspective, this is also about economic transition. Rural counties like ours need pathways that support restoration work, recreation, and stewardship jobs alongside responsible timber practices. AB 2494 helps create that balance."

The DSFs need to continue to be used for ongoing research and demonstration, and science-based research can take years to draw information from. This bill proposes to update the management policies away from timber harvesting and more toward restoration and biodiversity protections consistent with state environmental restoration goals. Logging is a vital tool for healthy forest management and fire risk reduction and needs to continue in DSFs.

- 4) **AB 1492 timber tax.** AB 1492 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 289, Statutes of 2012, requires a 1% tax on lumber and engineered wood products sold at the retail level to pay for agency staffing, permits, oversight, and environmental protection of California's forested ecosystems. The law also includes provisions to reduce regulatory costs to make California wood products more competitive with imports.

The intent of AB 1492 is to improve the state's ability to monitor the economic and environmental consequences of timber regulation, provide for a more efficient regulatory process that potentially takes a broader view than individual THPs, and fund critical restoration activities.

According to the *Report to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee on the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Program Assembly Bill 1492 Fiscal Years 2021-22 & 2022-23*ⁱⁱ, the AB 1492 TRFR Program's annual operating budget ranges from \$69 million - \$111 million.

In fiscal year (FY) 2021-22, the TRFR Fund had \$90.2 million in available resources, of which approximately \$59.2 million came from annual forest product sales assessment revenues. Of the \$90.2 million available, \$40.5 million was expended to support Program operations statewide. By the end of fiscal year 2021-22, the Fund had a balance of \$49.7 million.

In FY 2022-23, the TRFR Fund had \$111.4 million in available resources, of which approximately \$61.8 million came from annual forest product sales assessment revenues. Of the \$111.4 million available, \$52.1 million was expended to support Program operations statewide. At the end of fiscal year 2022-23, the Fund showed an ending balance of \$59.3 million.

To supplant the downshift in timber harvest revenues supporting DSFs, this bill would move the DSF budgeting to TRFR Fund to tap into those revenues by including DSFs as a funding priority.

Because DSFs have greater operating and personnel expenses than timber revenues they generate, even without reduced timber production, shifting to the TRFR Fund will create a drawdown on that fund to operate the DSFs, and how the DSFs are prioritized under the current statutory funding framework will impact the available resources to manage them.

Stakeholders in opposition to this bill cite concerns with shifting the DSFs budget to the TRFR noting that because the TRFR Fund prioritizes regulatory and programmatic functions first, support for DSFs would be pushed to a lower priority tier. They state, "This change creates significant uncertainty about whether the forests will have the reliable funding needed to maintain infrastructure, support research programs, and carry out forest health projects."

The author may wish to work with CAL FIRE and the Assembly Appropriations Committee to determine the best state account to maintain reliable funding for DSFs.

- 5) **CAL FIRE Management Plans.** The state is required to develop forest management plans (FMP) for the DSFs and update them every 10 years. CAL FIRE is currently working on updating the JDSF management plan, which provides overarching goals and general parameters for the management of JDSF for the next 10 years, or until a subsequent plan or major revision is approved.

The final draft FMP with public comments is expected to be released March 2026, and plan approval and public comment response is expected in May. A change to the statute governing DSF management will interrupt CAL FIRE's current administrative process to update the Jackson FMP, likely creating both delays and costs to CAL FIRE.

The author may wish to consider working with CAL FIRE to align the timing of this bill to the greatest extent possible with that ongoing administrative effort to update Jackson's FMP.

- 6) **Timber yield taxes.** In California, Timberland Production Zones (TPZs) are designated areas created by local governments and are restricted to the production of timber for an initial 10-year term. The land within a TPZ is assessed based on its ability to grow trees, which may result in a lower assessed value compared to land zoned for other uses. Special restrictions apply to rezoning TPZ lands, and if the land is removed from timberland production classification, a tax recoupment fee is payable based on a statutory factor multiplied by the last pre-timberland production classification assessed value of the property and on the number of years remaining in the 10-year term.

The five largest working-forest DSFs representing ~68,000 acres (80% of all DSF land) are located in counties with TPZs, including Jackson, Boggs Mountain, Soquel, LaTour, and Mountain Home. Taxes on the timber produced get remitted to the state, and then the state returns yield tax revenues to the county of harvest. The yield taxes are designed to replace the property taxes that used to be paid on standing timber. The state timber yield tax rate (rate varies by tree species) is applied to the harvest value and then paid to a county. Annually, the DSFs contribute about \$175,000 in timber yield tax across all forests combined.

If timber production is reduced in DSFs, those revenues will be lost to the counties that receive them for local public services. The author's office and local supporters counter that the forests will encourage greater visitation and the benefits from that tourism will help buffer any yield tax revenue reduction.

- 7) **30x30.** The state has a goal of conserving 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 – known as 30x30. The 30x30 goal was codified by SB 337 (Min), Chapter 392, Statutes of 2023.

As of November 2025, the California Natural Resources Agency reported 26.1% of state land (26.5 million acres) and 21.9% coastal waters (737.61 acres) have been protected under 30x30. California must protect an additional 4.8 million acres of land and 500,000 acres of coastal waters by 2030 to reach its goal. To be eligible for 30x30 protections, lands must be durably conserved and managed for biodiversity. If the DSF governing policy pursuant to this bill is adopted, the DSFs could help advance the state meeting its 30x30 goals. But, the state will need to consider the trade-offs for that benefit under this bill.

- 8) **Author's statement:**

Our Demonstration State Forest system contains precious old growth redwoods, madrones and oaks, and allows for innovative research around wildfire resiliency and watershed restoration. Under current state law, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is responsible for the Demonstration State Forest system, and their first priority is to achieve maximum sustained production of high-quality timber products. These management principles are outdated and do not reflect the state's current climate resiliency goals.

This bill prioritizes the environment, recreation, scientific research and addressing climate change as the main focuses for these public lands. The updated management principles in this bill align with Governor Newsom's 30x30

initiative by encouraging climate change adaptation within Demonstration State Forests. Furthermore, this bill declares that it is the intention of the State of California to pursue co-management of Demonstration State Forests with California's Native American tribes and integrate Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge to achieve restoration.

This bill also moves the state away from relying on commercial timber harvesting by providing an alternative funding method for the Demonstration State Forest system, while also moving communities away from harmful extractive economies.

- 9) **Committee amendments.** The *Committee may wish to consider* the following amendments to clarify that timber harvesting is maintained as an acceptable DSF management activity.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

350 Humboldt	Marin
Alta Peak Chapter, California Native Plant Society	Epic
Bay Area Coalition for Headwaters	Fog Eater Cafe
Biofuel Watch	Forests Forever
Bolsa Chica Land Trust	Fortunate Farm
California Environmental Voters	Friends Committee on Legislation of California
California Institute for Biodiversity	Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
California Native Plant Society	Friends of South Fork Gualala
California Native Plant Society Dorothy King Young Chapter	Friends of the Eel River
California Native Plant Society Sequoia Chapter	Friends of the Lost Coast
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership	Intertribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council
California Trout	Klamath Forest Alliance
Calwild	Latino Outdoors
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton	Mendocino Producers Guild
Center for Biological Diversity	Mendocino Trail Stewards
Center for Environmental Health	Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
Central Valley Partnership	Natural Resources Defense Council
Clean Earth 4 Kids	Northern California Regional Land Trust
Clean Water Action	Prodemocracy Workgroup, Grassroots Institute
Coalition to Save Jackson State Forest	Resource Renewal Institute
Council of Mexican Federations in North America Cofem	Sierra Club, Redwood Chapter
Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians	Sierra Nevada Alliance
Earthlings Unite	Siskiyou Crest Coalition
Endangered Habitats League	Siskiyou Land Conservancy
Environmental Action Committee of West	Symbiotic Restoration
	The Alliance for Social, Environmental and Indigenous Justice
	The Climate Center

The Grassroots Institute
 The Study Club
 The Wildlands Conservancy
 Three Springs Institute

Trout Unlimited
 Valerie
 Wildlands Network

Opposition

Amador County Farm Bureau
 Associated California Loggers
 Association of Consulting Foresters
 Butte County Farm Bureau
 Calaveras County Farm Bureau
 California Farm Bureau Federation
 California Forestry Association
 California Licensed Foresters Association
 California Women in Timber
 Del Norte County Farm Bureau
 El Dorado County Farm Bureau
 Forest Landowners of California
 Gualala Redwood Timber LLC
 Hearst Forests
 Humboldt County Farm Bureau
 Jefferson Resource Company
 Ken Pimlott, Director, CAL FIRE* (**retired
 - as an individual*)
 Lake County Farm Bureau
 Lassen County Farm Bureau
 Mariposa County Farm Bureau

Mendocino Farm Bureau
 Modoc County Farm Bureau
 Napa County Farm Bureau
 Nevada County Farm Bureau
 Plumas-Sierra County Farm Bureau
 Redwood Empire
 Redwood Timber Co.
 Rural County Representatives of California
 (RCRC)
 Sacramento County Farm Bureau
 San Mateo County Farm Bureau
 Santa Clara Farm Bureau
 Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau
 Shasta County Farm Bureau
 Siskiyou County Farm Bureau
 Stanislaus County Farm Bureau
 The Buckeye Conservancy
 Trinity County Farm Bureau
 Tuolumne County Farm Bureau
 Yuba-Sutter Farm Bureau

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

ⁱ <https://ebudget.ca.gov/2026-27/pdf/GovernorsBudget/3000/3540FCS.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Forest-Stewardship/FYs-21-22-to-22-23-AB-1492-Report-Final.pdf>

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 2566 (Soria) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Huron Hawk Conservancy

SUMMARY: Establishes the Huron Hawk Conservancy (Conservancy) in the California Natural Resources Agency (NRA).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the NRA, which oversees six state departments, 11 conservancies, 17 boards and commissions, 3 councils, and 1 urban park in Los Angeles that consists of 2 museums. (Government Code 12805)
- 2) Establishes 11 conservancies under the NRA to oversee restoration projects, land acquisitions, and recreational opportunities, among other things, in their respective regional jurisdictions. (Public Resources Code divisions 21-23.6)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Defines the following terms:
 - a) “Board” as the governing board of the Conservancy.
 - b) “Fund” as the Huron Hawk Conservancy Fund.
 - c) “Huron Hawk area” as the land area north of the City of Huron, bordered on the east by the San Luis Canal, bordered on the west by South Trinity Avenue, bordered on the south by West Marmon Avenue, and including a spur of land extending along the east side of Lassen Avenue to a point between West Marmon Avenue and Palmer Avenue.
 - d) “Member agencies” as the County of Fresno, the City of Huron, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), NRA, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks), the Department of Finance (DOF), and the State Lands Commission (SLC).
- 2) Establishes the Conservancy as a state agency within NRA for all of the following purposes:
 - a) To acquire and manage public lands within the Huron Hawk area and to provide recreational, open space, wildlife habitat restoration and protection, and lands for educational uses within the area.
 - b) To acquire and manage open-space lands within the Huron Hawk area.
 - c) To provide for the public’s enjoyment and to enhance the recreational and educational experience on public lands in the Huron Hawk area in a manner consistent with the protection of lands and resources in the area.

- 3) Limits the Conservancy's jurisdiction to the Huron Hawk area.
- 4) Establishes the Fund in the State Treasury. Moneys in the fund shall be made available for expenditure by the Conservancy, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for the purposes of this bill.
- 5) Requires the Board to consist of 12 members, appointed as follows:
 - a) One member of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Fresno appointed by a majority of the members of the board of supervisors. A majority of the members of the board of supervisors may appoint an alternate member from the board of supervisors.
 - b) The Mayor of the City of Huron or a member of the Huron City Council designated by that mayor. The mayor may designate an alternate member from the Fresno City Council.
 - c) The Director of the Department of Parks, After School, Recreation, and Community Services of the County of Fresno or the director's designee.
 - d) Three public members, two of whom shall be residents of the County of Fresno and one of whom shall be a resident of the City of Huron. The three public members shall be appointed in accordance with all of the specified procedures.
 - e) The Executive Director of the WCB or a member of the executive director's staff designated by the executive director.
 - f) The Secretary of NRA or a member of the secretary's staff designated by the secretary.
 - g) The Director of DFW or a member of the director's staff designated by the director.
 - h) The Director of State Parks or a member of the director's staff designated by the director.
 - i) The Director of DOF or a member of the director's staff designated by the director.
 - j) The Executive Officer of the SLC or a member of the executive officer's staff designated by the executive officer.
- 6) Requires six of the members of the Board to constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of the Conservancy. The Board shall not transact the business of the Conservancy if a quorum is not present at the time a vote is taken. A decision of the Board requires an affirmative vote of five of the members of the Board, and the vote is binding with respect to all matters acted on by the Conservancy.
- 7) Requires members of the Board to serve for two-year terms. A vacancy on the Board shall be filled within 60 days from its occurrence by the appointing authority.
- 8) Prohibits a person from continuing as a member of the Board if the person ceases to hold the office that qualifies them for Board membership. Upon the cessation of holding that office, the person's membership on the Board shall automatically terminate.
- 9) Requires the chairperson and vice chairperson of the Board to be selected by a majority of the members of the board for one-year terms.

- 10) Requires meetings of the Board to be subject to the requirements of the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.
- 11) Requires members of the Board to receive reimbursement for actual, necessary, and reasonable expenses. A member of the Board who is not a full-time public employee shall be compensated at a rate not to exceed \$100 per regular meeting, not to exceed 12 regular meetings a year. A member of the Board may waive compensation.
- 12) Requires the Conservancy to obtain and maintain adequate liability insurance or its equivalent for acts or omissions of the Conservancy's agents, employees, volunteers, and servants.
- 13) Requires the Board to adopt rules and procedures for the conduct of business by the Conservancy.
- 14) Requires the Conservancy to have, and may exercise, all rights and powers, expressed or implied, necessary to carry out the purposes of this bill, except as otherwise provided. The Conservancy shall not have the power to levy a tax, regulate land use, or exercise the power of eminent domain.
- 15) Requires the Conservancy to facilitate and coordinate the activities of its employees with the personnel of State Parks and DFW.
- 16) Authorizes the Conservancy to manage, operate, administer, and maintain lands and facilities owned by the Conservancy. Lands acquired by the Conservancy shall not be open to public use until the Board determines there are adequate funds available for the management of those lands. The Conservancy may adopt regulations governing the public use of Conservancy lands and may provide for the enforcement of those regulations.
- 17) Authorizes the Conservancy to employ an executive officer and other staff to perform functions that cannot be provided by the existing personnel of member agencies on a contractual basis or by volunteers.
- 18) Authorizes the Conservancy to recruit and coordinate volunteers and experts to conduct recreational programs and to assist with construction projects and the maintenance of facilities.
- 19) Authorizes the Conservancy to determine acquisition priorities and may acquire real property or an interest in real property within the Huron Hawk area from willing sellers and at fair market value or on other mutually acceptable terms. The Conservancy may acquire the property on its own or coordinate the acquisition through a member agency or other public agencies with appropriate responsibility and available funding or land to exchange.
- 20) Authorizes the Conservancy to provide technical assistance to landowners to ensure that their activities are compatible with or enhance the Huron Hawk area.
- 21) Authorizes the Conservancy to undertake site improvement projects; regulate public access; revegetate and otherwise rehabilitate degraded areas, in consultation with other public

agencies with appropriate jurisdiction and expertise; upgrade deteriorating facilities; and, construct new facilities as needed for outdoor recreation, nature appreciation and interpretation, and natural resource protection. These projects may be undertaken by the Conservancy on its own or by member agencies, with the Conservancy providing overall coordination through setting priorities for projects and assuring uniformity of approach.

- 22) Authorizes the Conservancy to accept revenue generated and contributed to the Conservancy by member agencies, which shall be deposited into the Fund. The Conservancy may also accept revenue, money, grants, goods, and services contributed by a public agency, private entity, or person, and the revenue, money, and grants shall be deposited into the Fund.
- 23) Provides that the Conservancy may sue and be sued.
- 24) Authorizes the Conservancy to enter into a contract or joint powers agreement with a public agency, private entity, or person necessary for the proper discharge of the Conservancy's duties.
- 25) Authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to local public agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations.
- 26) Requires grants to nonprofit organizations for the acquisition of real property or interests in real property to be subject to all of the following conditions:
 - a) The Conservancy may acquire property at fair market value and consistent with the Property Acquisition Law, except that the acquisition price of lands acquired from public agencies shall be based on the public agencies' cost to acquire the land;
 - b) The Conservancy shall approve the terms under which the interest in land is acquired;
 - c) The interest in land acquired pursuant to a grant from the Conservancy shall not be used as security for a debt incurred by the nonprofit organization unless the Conservancy approves the transaction;
 - d) The transfer of land acquired pursuant to a grant shall be subject to the approval of the Conservancy and the execution of an agreement between the Conservancy and the transferee sufficient to protect the interests of the Conservancy;
 - e) The Conservancy shall have a right of entry and power of termination in and over all interests in real property acquired with state funds, which may be exercised if an essential term or condition of the grant is violated; and,
 - f) If the existence of the nonprofit organization is terminated for any reason, title to all interest in real property acquired with state funds shall immediately vest in the Conservancy, except that, before that termination, another public agency or nonprofit organization may receive title to all or a portion of that interest in real property, by recording its acceptance of title, together with the Conservancy's approval, in writing.

- 27) Requires a deed or other instrument of conveyance whereby real property is acquired by a nonprofit organization pursuant to be recorded and shall set forth the executory interest or right of entry on the part of the Conservancy.
- 28) Authorizes the Conservancy to lease, rent, sell, exchange, or otherwise transfer real property, an interest in real property, or an option acquired under this bill to a local public agency, state agency, federal agency, nonprofit organization, individual, or other entity for management purposes pursuant to terms and conditions approved by the Conservancy. The Conservancy may request the Director of General Services to undertake these actions on its behalf.
- 29) Authorizes the Conservancy to initiate, negotiate, and participate in agreements for the management of land under its ownership or control with local public agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, individuals, or other entities and may enter into any other agreements authorized by state or federal law.
- 30) Provides that this bill shall become operative only upon appropriation by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act for purposes of the Conservancy, or upon approval of a general obligation bond authorizing funds to be provided for purposes of the Conservancy.
- 31) Provides that if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

Conservancies offer an opportunity to support projects to the benefit of the natural environment and local communities. The defined Huron Hawk area stands as a vacant 3,000 acre plot of land home to a multitude of flora and fauna alongside a local community readily interested in projects to improve the site. However, there is an absence of any central entity or governmental body to facilitate the funding and development of these projects. The establishment of the Huron Hawk Conservancy would promote equitable access to a healthy environment for the underserved Central Valley region.

- 2) **State conservancies.** There are currently 11 independent conservancies under NRA that are charged with the protection and preservation of the lands within their statutorily specified jurisdictions. The conservancies also work to provide recreational opportunities, facilitate climate adaptation, connect people to the regional landscapes, and bring state investments to the region for the aforementioned purposes. The current conservancies include:

- Coastal Conservancy – established in 1976
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy – established in 1980
- Tahoe Conservancy – established in 1985
- Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy – established in 1991
- San Joaquin River Conservancy – established in 1992

- San Diego River Conservancy – established in 2003
- Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy – established in 2010
- San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy – established in 1999
- Baldwin Hills and Urban Watersheds Conservancy – established in 2000
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy – established in 2004
- Salton Sea Conservancy – established in 2024

All conservancies have a governing board, mission statement, geographic territory, and stipulated powers, duties, and limitations.

Existing law also establishes the WCB in DFW to provide a single and coordinated program for the acquisition of lands and facilities suitable for recreational purposes, and adaptable for conservation, propagation, and utilization of the fish and game resources of the state. The state's conservancies collaborate with the WCB to provide conservation and restoration programs and funding for the entire state.

The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (Proposition 4) authorizes various funding amounts for each of the existing conservancies. Should this bill be enacted, the Conservancy would not be eligible for the conservancies' line-item Proposition 4 funding.

- 3) **Huron Hawk Region.** The San Luis Canal Westside Detention Basin within Fresno County and near the City of Huron consists of an area with important opportunities for ecological, recreational, educational, and economic benefits to the neighboring central valley area, and is the largest publicly-owned riparian habitat in the Tulare Basin.

The City of Huron recognizes the multi-benefit potential of this area, having requested the United States National Park Service in 2022 for assistance in transforming the land into a regional park and nature reserve. In 2023, the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program selected the area to receive technical assistance.

The project site is owned by the United States Bureau of Reclamation and co-managed by the Department of Water Resources, in addition to being monitored by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The author sees the area having unique and unutilized potential for 3,000 acres that can support the nearby communities. The author further contends that while many local groups have expressed interest in conducting projects that improve the site and provide environmental, educational, and recreational benefits to the region, there is no central entity to coordinate projects or collect and distribute funding, and no existing conservancy contains this site in its jurisdiction.

The 2020 *Nature Gap* report by the Center for American Progress and the Hispanic Access Foundation found that Latino communities are three times more likely than white communities to live in areas with limited access to nature. This inequity is particularly pronounced in the San Joaquin Valley, where Latinos represent a significant share of the population and where access to parks, green space, and healthy environments remains limited. Fresno County, which is at least 54 percent Latino, is home to over 164 special status plant and wildlife species and is regularly impacted by extreme heat and drought—factors that compound the challenges of habitat loss and nature deprivation.

GreenLatinos writes that the land north of Huron is largely unused, and the site supports diverse native plant and animal life and presents a unique opportunity for ecological restoration and the creation of much-needed green space. Projects at this site could simultaneously enhance the environment, offer recreational and educational opportunities, and provide direct benefits to surrounding communities—many of which have long been underserved.

- 4) **Related legislation.** AB 721 (Soria, 2025) was identical to this bill. It was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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

Date of Hearing: March 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

ACR 149 (Hart, et al.) – As Introduced February 25, 2026

SUBJECT: California Coastal Act of 1976

SUMMARY: Acknowledges and celebrates 50 years of coastal protection through the California Coastal Act.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Coastal Act), establishes the California Coastal Commission (Commission), and prescribes the membership and duties of the Commission. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 30301)
- 2) Finds and declares that the California coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital and enduring interest to all the people and exists as a delicately balanced ecosystem, and that the permanent protection of the state's natural and scenic resources is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation. (PRC 30001)

THIS RESOLUTION:

- 1) Resolves by the Assembly of the State of California that the Legislature proudly acknowledges and celebrates 50 years of coastal protection.
- 2) Affirms the state of California's longstanding commitment to protecting its coastal waters and recognizes the importance of carefully evaluating activities, including offshore oil and gas drilling and coastal development, to ensure consistency with the state's coastal protection laws, climate goals, and the public trust in a clean and healthy coast.
- 3) Acknowledges the value of ecologically sound coastal protection combined with carefully planned development as essential to the economic and social well-being of the state for the next 50 years and beyond, and reaffirms the findings of our predecessors from 1976 that the permanent protection of the state's natural and scenic coastal resources is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **California's coast.** California's coastal zone, which represents roughly 1% of California's total land mass, is one of the most unique areas on earth. Stretching 1,100 miles from the Oregon border to Mexico, California's coast boasts the largest ocean-based economy in the United States.

California's marine wildlife – including whales, dolphins, and the threatened southern sea otter – attract millions of visitors a year to our coastline. California's coastline counties are home to 68% of the state, and millions of people visit California coastal state parks every

year. The state coast is home to endangered species, such as the California condor, who find sanctuary along the coast, highlighting the area's importance for conservation efforts, and the coast is a vital part of the Pacific Flyway for migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, and the Western Monarch butterfly.

Coastal tourism and recreation industries in California are valued at approximately \$27 billion annually. Professional surfers brought in \$140 million in surf tourism to California in 2018 alone.

Valued at \$51 billion annually, the ocean off the California coast employs more than half a million people and supports a vast diversity of marine life, as well as fishing communities that depend on fish, shellfish, and seaweeds for their livelihoods. California's aquaculture industry has a \$200 million annual impact on the state economy; fisheries support 19,750 recreational fishing jobs, with the commercial fishing and seafood industry generating 155,258 jobs.

The coastal agricultural economy, represented by hundreds of different fruits, vegetables, flowers, nuts, seeds and other crop commodities, contributes to nearly 1.5 million agricultural jobs in California.

And, California's world-leading 100% clean energy goals are driving interest in exploring use of coastal resources to achieve those goals, including wave renewable energies and assessing offshore wind capacity and feasibility.

- 2) **History of the Coastal Act.** In 1972, the people of California approved Proposition 20, the California Coastal Zone Conservation Act, establishing that protection of the California coast and ocean is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation.

In 1976, the Legislature enacted the California Coastal Act and the State Coastal Conservancy Act, based on findings that the California coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital and enduring interest to all the people.

Since 1976, California's population has nearly doubled, growing from approximately 22 million to almost 40 million people. But despite ongoing pressure to privatize some of the world's most valuable real estate, the coast is demonstrably cleaner, healthier and more accessible than it was when the Coastal Act was signed into law.

The Coastal Act as implemented by the Coastal Commission in partnership with local governments, nonprofit advocacy groups, and in coordination with other state and federal agencies has been responsible for:

- The creation of more than 2,500 public accessways to and along the coast;
- Protecting 12,000 acres of open space and habitat;
- Restoring or creating more than 4,600 acres of habitat;
- Opening 875 miles of the California Coastal Trail open to the public;

- Providing \$30 million to local governments to plan for sea level rise;
- Awarding \$25.5 million in Whale Tail grants to 1,074 Tribes, schools and nonprofits for outdoor education, stewardship and public access projects;
- The establishment 64 Local Coastal Programs created by local governments to guide development in the coastal zone; and,
- The protection of 350,000 acres of wildlands across five counties covered by fire resilience plans.

The enduring legacy of the Coastal Act is evidenced in the coastal wetlands not filled, the sensitive habitats not destroyed, the access trails not blocked, the farms and ranches not converted to urban uses, the freeways and gated communities and industrial facilities not built.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Coastal Act.

3) **Author's statement:**

The California Coastal Act stands as a landmark commitment to protecting and preserving California's coastline. Enacted at the urging of millions of Californians, the Act reflects a clear and enduring responsibility to safeguard our coastal and marine resources for present and future generations. It establishes the framework to protect marine life, ocean ecosystems, public access, and surrounding coastal areas as shared public treasures to be enjoyed.

For 50 years, the Coastal Act has served as the foundation of California's coastal stewardship, consistently prioritizing environmental health, sustainability, and responsible use of our invaluable coastal resources. ACR 149 celebrates this legacy and reaffirms the State's commitment to upholding the Coastal Act's protections for decades to come.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Audubon California
Azul
Black Surf Santa Cruz, INC
Business Alliance for Protecting the Pacific Coast
California Coastal Protection Network
California Coastkeeper Alliance
Center for Biological Diversity
City Surf Project
County Park Friends
Environment California
Environmental Action Committee of West

Marin
Environmental Defense Center
Environmental Protection Information Center
Fish on
Heal the Bay
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Monterey Bay Aquarium
Mujeres De LA Tierra
Natural Resources Defense Council
Orange County Coastkeeper

Outdoor Outreach
Paddle for Peace
Queer Surf
Salted Roots

Save Our Shores
Surfrider Foundation
Un Mar De Colores
Wildcoast

Opposition

None on file

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