

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

Diane Papan, Chair

AB 2440 (Reyes) – As Introduced February 13, 2024

SUBJECT: 30x30 goal: partnering state agencies: Department of Parks and Recreation

SUMMARY: Requires the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to prioritize promoting and supporting partnering state agencies and departments, including the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks), in the acquisition and responsible stewardship of state land. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires CNRA, in implementing the 10 pathways and specific near-term priority actions described in the Pathways to 30x30 Report to achieve the 30x30 goal, to additionally prioritize promoting and supporting partnering state agencies and departments, including State Parks, in the acquisition and responsible stewardship of state land.
- 2) Requires CNRA’s annual Pathways to 30x30 Report to specify the amount of funding expended by each partnering state agency and department for specified efforts and to include information on progress made to provide equitable outdoor access.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Directs CNRA to combat the biodiversity and climate crisis by, among other things, establishing the California Biodiversity Collaborative and establishing the goal of conserving at least 30% of the state’s lands and coastal waters by 2030 (30x30) [Executive Order (EO) No. N-82-20].
- 2) Codifies the 30x30 goal [Public Resources Code (PRC) § 71450].
- 3) Requires CNRA, in implementing actions to achieve the 30x30 goal, to prioritize specified actions. Requires the Secretary of CNRA to prepare and submit, beginning on or before March 31, 2024, an annual report to the Legislature on the progress made during the prior calendar year toward achieving that goal, as provided (PRC §§ 71451– 71452).
- 4) Establishes the California state park system and vests State Parks with control of the state park system and responsibility for administering, protecting, developing, and interpreting state parks for the use and enjoyment of the public (PRC § 5001 *et seq.*).
- 5) Allows State Parks to receive and accept any gift, dedication, devise, grant, or other conveyance of title to or any interest in real property, including water rights, roads, trails, rights-of-way, buildings, facilities, and other improvements, to be added to or used in connection with the state park system (PRC § 5005).
- 6) Declares that it is vital to ensure public confidence in amounts paid, and procedures used, for the acquisition of property by state agencies that spend taxpayer or bond funds and that it is important to ensure that an acquisition agency act expeditiously to purchase critically needed conservation lands for their preservation and protection (PRC § 5096.500).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of this bill.** According to the author, “[This bill] would incorporate [State Parks] and other agencies managing state-owned lands into the state’s goals to conserve 30% of lands and coastal waters by 2030 and require an update on progress towards expanding access to nature for all Californians. [...] Given the unique role California State Parks plays in conserving public land in the United States, there should be an explicit call out to state agencies like State Parks in the 30x30 goal. As the state plans to achieve its ambitious 30x30 goal it should track outdoor equitable access to ensure that racial, economic, and historical disparities are not being replicated. Latino and Black populations are less likely to have access to green space because of existing racial inequities while green space access is most strongly associated with higher education and high-income communities. [This bill] would push the state to be more strategic on how it’s using public assets like State Parks in the 30x30 goal and hold the state accountable on equitable outdoor access.”
- 2) **Background.** In October 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-82-20, which establishes a state goal of conserving 30% of California’s lands and coastal waters by 2030 – known as 30x30. The 30x30 goal is intended to help conserve state lands and coastal waters through voluntary, collaborative action with partners across the state to meet three objectives: conserve and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, and mitigate and build resilience to climate change. The 30x30 goal was codified by SB 337 (Min), Chapter 392, Statutes of 2023.

As of May 2023, the state has conserved 24.4% of lands and 16.2% of coastal waters for 30x30. California’s strategy to conserve an additional six million acres of land and half a million acres of coastal waters is organized into ten pathways that are specific state actions that will help achieve 30x30.

According to the May 2023 progress report, *Pathways to 30x30 California Annual Progress Report*, key actions related to land acquisition include:

- Through the California Biodiversity Council, mobilizing a state-federal interagency team to identify and secure emerging federal funding for new conservation acquisitions;
- Prioritizing additional lands for acquisition that provide habitats that are underrepresented in currently conserved areas;
- Prioritizing acquisition of unprotected lands adjacent to or surrounded by currently established public lands to expand and improve habitat and achieve climate benefits; and
- Strategically coordinate acquisitions to increase connectivity between conserved or restored habitats to provide wildlife corridors.

State Park Acquisitions. This bill requires CNRA, in implementing the efforts to achieve the 30x30 goal, to additionally prioritize promoting and supporting partnering state agencies and departments, including, State Parks, in the acquisition and responsible stewardship of state land.

California's state parks system include beaches, underwater refuges, native Californian cultural preserves, museums, lighthouses, ghost towns, recreation areas, and wilderness areas. The system of 280 state park units encompasses nearly 1.6 million acres of land, more than 340 miles of coastline, 970 miles of lake and river frontage, 15,000 campsites, 5,200 miles of trails, 3,195 historic buildings, and more than 11,000 known prehistoric and historic archaeological sites.

State Parks recognizes that California's population is expected to grow by nearly 30% in the next quarter century, which will put ever-increasing pressure on the state's remaining wild lands. Under its State Park Acquisition Guidelines, State Parks will, in part, focus its efforts on the preservation of under-protected, under-represented, and rarely found resources in California.

Specifically, the guidelines require State Parks to prioritize new lands for the park system that create linkages between existing units of the parks system to other large blocks of protected habitat, protect under-protected habitats, protect under-protected ecological regions, protect evolutionary hotspots, and other criterion that are consistent with the foundation of 30x30.

The May 2023 30x30 Progress Report notes that accomplishments that advanced the 30x30 initiative in the past year include State Parks and California Native American tribes having begun collaborative management and shared stewardship of specific park units through two new memoranda of understanding.

In addition, the state budget for 2023–2024 included \$5.8 million in one-time and ongoing support for Dos Rios Ranch in the Central Valley to become California's newest state park. This funding supplemented more than \$45 million in combined acquisition and restoration funding secured from state and federal agencies, business partners, and nonprofit organizations. The investment initiated the process of opening this spot for public access in a part of the state that lacks parks.

Other state agencies that acquire land. The 30x30 Status Report identifies projects with the specific funding committed as part of the 2022–2023 Nature Based Solutions budget package, including numerous acquisitions by state conservancies and land trusts, including:

- Sierra Nevada Conservancy investments in the Sierra County Land Trust acquisition of the Sierra Buttes O'Gara-Currens Parcels 33, 34 (\$158,000); the Bear Yuba Land Trust acquisition of the Wildflower Ridge Preserve (\$735,000); and, the Placer Land Trust acquisition of the Moy Acquisition and Protection Project (\$591,000); and
- Wildlife Conservation Board granted \$20 million for the Yanci Ranch Conservation Easement for Yolo County's land acquisition program.

Further, CNRA continues to make progress on acquiring additional lands for conservation from willing sellers. Ongoing efforts include mobilizing a state-federal interagency team to identify and secure emerging federal funding for new conservation acquisitions, including the recently approved federal infrastructure bill and expansion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and prioritizing acquisition of unprotected lands adjacent to or surrounded by currently established public lands.

By requiring CNRA's annual report to specify the amount of funding expended by each partnering state agency and department, this bill is essentially formalizing in state law information the report is already providing, and it ensures the annual reports will continue to provide that level of detail.

- 3) **Policy considerations.** According to the *2022–23 California Five-Year Infrastructure Plan*, State Park's backlog of deferred maintenance is estimated at over \$1 billion. This raises the question of how much the state should invest in new acquisitions when existing units have unmet operations and maintenance needs, especially in light of the budget deficit.
- 4) **Arguments in support.** Numerous environmental organization write in support of this bill. These groups voice concern over the threat of climate change and loss of biodiversity and believe California's state park system has a critical role in meeting the state's 30x30 goals and combatting those threats. They write, "Unfortunately, the state's massive investments in 30x30 have overlooked our state parks system, further exacerbating the ongoing struggles caused by decades of underfunding. Since 2021, California has invested over \$1 billion from the General Fund to fulfill our 30x30 goals and support multibenefit nature-based climate solutions, but only \$12 million of this nature-based solutions funding was directed to State Parks. [...] This bill will clearly recognize the important role that State Parks and other state land managers play in achieving 30x30 and will increase transparency in the state's progress towards fulfilling this goal."
- 5) **Double referral.** This bill was also referred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee and passed that committee 11–0 on March 19, 2024.
- 6) **Related legislation.** AB 2320 (Irwin) of the current legislative session requires CNRA's annual report to the Legislature on progress made to achieve the 30x30 goals to include the identification of key wildlife corridors in the state, connections between large blocks of natural areas and habitats, progress on protecting additional acres of wildlife corridors, and goals for wildlife corridor protection in the next five years. AB 2320 was referred to both this Committee and Assembly Natural Resources Committee. AB 2320 passed this Committee 12–2 on April 9, 2024 and is set for hearing in Assembly Natural Resources Committee on April 22, 2024.

AB 2285 (Rendon) of the current legislative session codifies the Outdoors for All priorities and encourages the Governor's office, state agencies, and the Legislature, when distributing resources to recognize the goals and benefits of the 30x30 and Outdoors for All and, to the extent practical, maximize investment in urban communities consistent with those initiatives. AB 2285 was referred to both Assembly Natural Resources Committee and this Committee. AB 2285 passed Assembly Natural Resources Committee 11–0 on March 19, 2024 and this Committee 14–0 on April 9, 2024.

AB 2103 (Pellerin) of the current legislative session, exempts real property acquisitions by State Parks for Big Basin Redwoods, Año Nuevo, and Butano State Parks from the requirement that the State Public Works Board be responsible for property acquisitions. AB 2103 is set for hearing in this Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California State Parks Foundation (Sponsor)
California Environmental Voters
Clockshop
East Bay Regional Park District
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Protection Information Center
Epic
Friends of China Camp State Park
Hills for Everyone
Literacy for Environmental Justice
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Mojave Desert Land Trust
Mono Lake Committee
Outdoor Alliance
Outdoor Outreach
Planning and Conservation League
Save Mount Diablo
Save the Redwoods League
Sempervirens Fund
Sierra Club California
Sierra Nevada Alliance

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Stephanie Mitchell / W., P., & W. / (916) 319-2096