

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

Diane Papan, Chair

AB 2578 (Rogers) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Public recreation access and outdoor economy support organizations

SUMMARY: Permits the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to enter into a statewide agreement with a public recreation access and outdoor economy support organization. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Permits CNRA to enter into a statewide agreement with a support organization to facilitate and implement, among other objectives, the findings and recommendations of the Department of Parks and Recreation’s (State Parks) Outdoors for All initiative, the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development’s (GOBiz) Jobs First Report, and California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force’s (Task Force) Joint Strategy for Sustainable Recreation and Wildfire Resilience (Joint Strategy) to develop greater capacity to expand, enhance, and complement projects and programs through the following methods:
 - a) Developing and engaging new sources of public and private funding for the vast network of outdoor businesses and outdoor industry outlets owned, administered, or supported by the agency, including philanthropic sources and enterprise- and revenue-generating activities, where appropriate;
 - b) Supporting marketing and communications activities that promote the programs, amenities, and resources of CNRA, its departments, and its partners;
 - c) Supporting programs, policies, projects, and completion of projects that facilitate increased outdoor recreation, outdoor access, and visitations to visitor-serving amenities and facilities, including, but not limited to, the establishment of new trail corridors that connect people to nature and communities and the establishment of bicycle greenway routes or systems;
 - d) Enhancing outdoor recreation educational opportunities, particularly for younger and more diverse audiences;
 - e) Promoting the health and well-being of the state’s residents;
 - f) Promoting strategic research, data collection, and economic modeling for, among other things, tracking outdoor recreation trends and outdoor participation rates in California;
 - g) Providing communities of interest, including regional outdoor recreation collaboratives, with technical assistance to better inform, educate, and capitalize on intrinsic and economic values of public recreation access; and
 - h) Reinforcing and building upon the definition of “outdoor recreation” as inclusive to activities such as, off-highway vehicle and consumptive activities, including hunting and fishing.

- 2) To complement these efforts, requires CNRA and the support organization to collaborate with GOBiz on a suite of interventions designed to promote the outdoors, including, but not limited to, the implementation of the following:
 - a) Regional industry sector activation plans for the recreation and tourism sector;
 - b) Regional economic development strategies; and
 - c) Regional tourism strategies that do not duplicate efforts underway by Visit California.
- 3) Requires the collaboration in #2, above, to organize and prioritize recommendations rooted in the work of the Task Force's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation and Wildfire Resilience.
- 4) Requires the collaboration in #2, above, to establish a single point of contact as a federal lands liaison to communicate and respond to federal policies and practices of impact to federal lands within California and stakeholder interests.
- 5) Requires, the support organization, in consultation with CNRA, to do the following:
 - a) Communicate and coordinate with government entities, partners, friends, and volunteers to ensure that activities undertaken pursuant to the agreement complement, support, facilitate, and amplify ongoing partnerships, programs, and projects in support of increasing access to the outdoors; and
 - b) Engage with public agencies and organizations that manage, operate, and support protected lands in the state.
- 6) Permits the Director of State Parks, the Director of Finance, the Secretary of CNRA, and the Director of GOBiz, or their respective designees, to serve as ex officio, nonvoting members of the support organization's board of directors to provide for effective communication and coordination of efforts between the agency and the support organization.
- 7) Affirms that a public recreation access and outdoor economy support organization is not a state agency or a state body.
- 8) Requires, if CNRA enters into an agreement with a support organization, CNRA and the support organization to collaborate to develop an annual list of strategic initiatives and projects that are statewide priorities for CNRA and for the support organization and that the support organization will undertake in partnership with CNRA.
 - a) Further, requires any initiative or project included on the priority list to be consistent with the purposes specified in subdivision #1 (a–h), above.
 - b) Requires, for the first three years of the agreement, the support organization and CNRA to prioritize a limited subset of focus areas and projects from the list of purposes, consistent with #2, above.
 - c) Requires any initiative or project included on the priority list involving properties operated or managed by State Parks to be consistent with Public Resources Code (PRC)

§ 5001.2 and § 5019.53 regarding protection of the natural, scenic, cultural, and ecological values of the state park system.

- d) Requires CNRA to post a copy of the priority list on its internet website and provide copies of the list to the chairpersons of the Assembly and Senate Budget and relevant Policy Committees.
- 9) Requires the agreement between CRNA and the support organization to include, at a minimum, the following:
- a) Clear goals and objectives;
 - b) Any commitments of oversight, staffing, and coordination that are needed to accomplish the goals and objectives and
 - c) The process for developing the priority list of strategic initiatives and projects.
- 10) Permits CNRA to develop and enter into supplementary agreements with a support organization for the purpose of securing any expertise, capacity, or financial resources that may be needed to identify, plan, develop, or implement strategic initiatives and projects on the priority list. Allows the supplementary agreement to include grants, contracts, memoranda of understanding, staff-sharing agreements, leases, and rights of entry onto specified public lands.
- 11) Allows the Secretary of CNRA to receive donations of projects, services, and funds from a support organization.
- 12) Allows the Director of Finance 60 days to review and approve or disapprove any agreement, or any substantial amendment to such an agreement. Upon approval of the agreement, the secretary of CNRA may accept donations and enter into supplementary agreements.
- 13) Determines that nothing in this bill shall be interpreted as a limitation on the ability of a support organization to apply for, receive, or administer grants, loans, or other funds from public entities other than the agency and its departments. A support organization shall consult with the agency.
- 14) Makes findings and declarations regarding the health, fitness, mental, and economic value of outdoor recreation and the benefit of establishing a partnership between CNRA and a support organization.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the Director of State Parks to promote and regulate the use of the state park system in a manner that conserves the scenery, natural and historic resources, and wildlife in the individual units of the system for the enjoyment of future generations (PRC § 5001.2).
- 2) States that the purpose of state parks shall be to preserve outstanding natural, scenic, and cultural values, indigenous aquatic and terrestrial fauna and flora, and the most significant examples of ecological regions of California. Requires that each state park be managed as a composite whole in order to restore, protect, and maintain its native environmental complexes to the extent compatible with the primary purpose for which the park was

established. Provides that improvements undertaken within state parks shall be for the purpose of making the areas available for public enjoyment and education in a manner consistent with the preservation of natural, scenic, cultural, and ecological values for present and future generations (PRC § 5019.53).

- 3) Grants State Parks the authority to enter into a statewide agreement with a “park support organization” to facilitate the implementation of reforms recommended by the Parks Forward Commission and to develop and secure expertise, services, resources, and projects that are not readily available to the state park system for specific purposes (PRC §§ 520 *et seq.*). And, among other things:
 - a) Permits the Director of State Parks and Director of Finance, or their designees, to serve as a nonvoting members of the park support organization’s board of directors.
 - b) Affirms that the park support organization is not a state agency or state body.
 - c) Requires State Parks and the park support organization to develop an annual list of strategic initiatives and projects that are statewide priorities for the state park system, referred to as the priority list.
 - d) Requires the agreement to include, at a minimum: clear goals and objectives; commitments of oversight, staffing, and coordination needed to accomplish the goals and objectives; and the process for developing the priority list.
 - e) Permits State Parks to develop supplementary agreements with the park support organization.
 - f) Allows the Director of State Parks to receive donations of projects, services, and funds from the park support organization.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of this bill.** According to the author, “[This bill] aims to establish an office of outdoor recreation for the state of California, which would support state investments into equitable access, recreation infrastructure, outdoor jobs, and to help sustain and grow California’s outdoor economy. California has an abundance of beautiful natural resources, the highest outdoor recreation [gross domestic product] in the U.S., and the most national parks per state, but is neck-and-neck in visitations with Utah, which was the first state to create an Office of Outdoor Recreation in 2013. [This bill] promotes the strengthening and accessible access of California’s outdoor resources, allowing the population to benefit further from the mental, physical, and economic benefits associated with the outdoors.”
- 2) **Background.** According to the Task Force’s Joint Strategy, outdoor recreation connects people with nature while improving their overall health and quality of life. Following years of steady increases in the number of outdoor recreationists, COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns resulted in a surge of outdoor recreational use of public lands and waters. The increased demand for outdoor recreation benefits local economies that depend on recreation for jobs, economic output, sense of place, and quality of life. However, the increased number of

outdoor recreationists necessitates more resources for user support, natural resource management, and wildfire risk reduction. The Joint Strategy estimates that nearly half of the land in California is open for recreation (47 million acres), with most of the land managed by federal agencies (43.7 million acres) and about 2 million acres is managed by state agencies.

In March 2026, the Bureau of Economic Analysis released statistics measuring the outdoor recreation economy in 2024. Data show that the outdoor recreation economy accounts for 2.4% of the nation's gross domestic product (\$696.7 billion). California ranked first in the nation for outdoor recreation value added (\$87.9 billion), outdoor recreation jobs (589,354 jobs), and compensation (\$42.0 billion). Activities that generate the most value added in the state are boating/fishing, RVing, and motorcycling/ATVing, according to the 2024 analysis.

Rankings for California:

Value Added by Select Outdoor Recreation Activity [Thousands of dollars]				
Activity	2022	2023	2024	State rank 2024
Boating / fishing	3,054,937	3,272,910	3,317,988	2
RVing	2,542,612	2,202,461	2,094,731	3
Motorcycling / ATVing	1,284,820	1,433,792	1,452,772	1
Climbing / hiking / tent camping	849,086	877,654	937,935	1
Bicycling	633,114	822,989	927,619	1
Hunting / shooting / trapping	647,931	705,221	817,496	3
Snow activities	660,539	749,777	730,464	2
Equestrian	473,560	511,963	508,747	2
Recreational flying	223,756	231,786	227,832	2

Outdoors for All. The California Outdoors for All initiative is focused on equitably expanding outdoor access to all Californians through focused investments in open space infrastructure, outdoor programming, and improvements to state systems. These efforts seek to undo deeply ingrained inequities and preserve the cherished natural, cultural, and tribal resources as the fight against climate change intensifies. Additionally, the Outdoors for All initiative advances two other state priorities, Nature-Based Solutions and 30x30, by investing in California's public lands and natural resources. The Outdoors for All strategy was released in November 2023 and includes six priorities: establish spaces for people and nature to thrive, foster belonging, connect people and the outdoors, co-create with communities, build equitable career pathways and a representative workforce, and align funding to achieve Outdoors for All.

GOBiz State Economic Blueprint. Released in early 2025, the California Jobs First Economic Blueprint lays out a statewide economic vision anchored in ten strategic industry sectors and informed by 13 region-specific plans. Under the Blueprint, each sector was categorized based on the state's evaluation of the support the sector would need. The Blueprint categorizes the "tourism and outdoor recreation" sector under the "strengthen" category, indicating that California has an established competitive position and/or significant employment, but is experiencing leveling growth or wages. "Tourism and outdoor recreation" is identified as a regional strategic sector in nine of the 13 regions, though goals for and management of the sector differ by region. For example, the Bay Area region indicates that "The broad arts, entertainment, and recreation sector is projected to grow significantly," while the Sierra region report notes that there is a need to adapt outdoor activities based on conditions such as

snow or smoke conditions and raises the concern that over-reliance on outdoor recreation creates economic vulnerability, especially during seasonal fluctuations.

California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience. The Joint Strategy “attempts to elevate California Native governments, communities, peoples, and priorities into the collective thinking about sustainable outdoor recreation, inclusive access to the outdoors, and wildfire resilience.” The stated goals of the Joint Strategy are to:

- Integrate the provision of high-quality, sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities with forest health and resilience and wildfire and climate mitigation efforts so that all people can connect to the benefits and wonders of the natural world;
- Plan for and provide a diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities to foster inclusive and equitable access for all Californians;
- Provide health information, training, and alternative recreation opportunities that promote the health and well-being of all peoples, with consideration of people's needs before, during, and after wildfires and other natural disasters; and
- Foster and support robust and diversified economies that enhance sustainable outdoor recreation while investing in the resilience necessary to withstand the impact of climate change, wildfires, and other disasters.

Each goal is accompanied by numerous key actions such as designing and building outdoor recreation infrastructure that is resilient to climate change and wildfire; exploring the creation of an online outdoor recreation opportunities resource for visitors to research local, regional, and state recreation opportunities based on interest and location; conducting a multi-agency social science survey to gauge the current needs of outdoor recreation users; and building sustainable outdoor-recreation-based economies.

Offices of Outdoor Recreation. According to the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, a business coalition to advance outdoor recreation, 24 states have an office or division of outdoor recreation, which serves as a central champion for the outdoor recreation economy and its associated benefits. Nearly all of those states have joined the Confluence of States, a bipartisan organization with the goals of growing the outdoor recreation industry, conservation and stewardship, education and workforce training, public health and wellness, and promoting safety and inclusion. The Confluence of States provides education and resources for these offices and states interested in standing up their own office, including a guidebook to develop offices of outdoor recreation.

Parks California. This bill is modeled off of the statutory language that established Parks California. According to the Parks California website, “Parks California is a nonprofit organization and California State Parks’ official statutory partner that is dedicated to expanding programs, amenities, and resources so that all people have the opportunity to build lifelong, meaningful connections with nature.” The formation of Parks California was a response to a 2015 report by the Parks Forward Commission, which indicated that there were economic and social barriers for many people to experience California’s state parks and that there was a need to provide new resources and education opportunities for the state’s diverse population. SB 1111 (Pavley, Chapter 540, Statutes of 2016), authorized State Parks to enter into “a statewide agreement with a park support organization to facilitate the implementation

of reforms recommended by the Parks Forward Commission and to develop and secure expertise, services, resources, and projects that are not readily available to the state park system.”

- 3) **Proposed committee amendments.** To provide better clarity and organization, the Committee may wish for the author to take the following amendments:

Proposed PRC § 526

For purposes of this article, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) “Agency” means the Natural Resources Agency.

(b) “Outdoor access” means the ability, right, or opportunity for *all* people to *safely and equitably* enter and use outdoor recreation spaces, ranging from public parks to private land, for outdoor recreational activities ~~such as hiking, biking, camping, backpacking, skiing, snowboarding, rock climbing, mountaineering, kayaking, hunting, fishing, and off-roading.~~

~~(c) “Outdoor business” means a commercial enterprise focused on products, services, or experiences that take place in natural or outdoor environments.~~

(d) “Outdoor economy” means the gross output, compensation, employment, and value-added gross domestic product (GDP) generated by activities that occur outdoors, including conventional core activities, including fishing, hiking, and hunting, other activities, including gardening, and supporting activities, including tourism.

~~(e) “Outdoor industry” means commercial enterprises, manufacturers, retailers, service providers, and nonprofit organizations that facilitate, promote, or equip activities centered on nature-based adventure through human-powered recreation or motorized activities with an appreciation for conservation. Outdoor industry encompasses gear design, tourism, hospitality, and guided experiences, including fishing and hunting, and contributes significantly to the economy, including a record \$1.2 trillion in total national output and \$81.5 billion in California in 2023.~~

(f) “Outdoor recreation” means all recreational activities *responsibly* undertaken for pleasure that occur outdoors, including human-powered and motorized activities if the activity takes place in a natural environment *with a respect for conservation, wildlife, habitat, and off-limit areas. Outdoor recreation includes such as hiking, biking, surfing, camping, backpacking, skiing, snowboarding, rock climbing, mountaineering, kayaking, hunting, fishing, off-roading, and adaptive outdoor sports with responsible recreation principles and conservation at the forefront.*

(g) “Priority list” means the annual list of strategic initiatives and projects developed by the agency and the support organization pursuant to Section 527.2.

(h) ~~“Public recreation access and outdoor economy support~~ **Support** organization” means a nonprofit organization that meets the following requirements:

(1) Is exempt from taxation pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(2) Is established for the principal purposes of increasing outdoor access and promoting expanded recreation opportunities on, and within, California’s diverse landscapes to support mental, physical, and economic health objectives in the state.

(3) Complies with the Supervision of Trustees and Fundraisers for Charitable Purposes Act (Article 7 (commencing with Section 12580) of Chapter 6 of Part 2 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code).

(i) ~~“Support organization” means a public recreation access and outdoor economy support organization.~~

Proposed PRC § 527

(a) The agency may enter into a statewide agreement with a support organization to facilitate and implement, among other objectives, the findings and recommendations of the department’s Outdoors for All initiative, the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development’s Jobs First report, ~~and~~ California’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force’s Joint Strategy for Sustainable Recreation and Wildfire Resilience, ***and efforts through the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Hunting and Fishing Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3) Initiative*** to develop greater capacity to expand, enhance, and complement projects and programs proposed by the agency through the following methods:

(1) Developing and ***strengthening the outdoor economy to better support the workforce, mitigate seasonal fluctuations, attract new opportunities and experiences, and generate funds to support the sustainable operation of outdoor recreation amenities and activities.*** ~~engaging new sources of public and private funding for the vast network of outdoor businesses and outdoor industry outlets owned, administered, or supported by the agency, including philanthropic sources and enterprise and revenue generating activities, where appropriate.~~

(2) Supporting marketing and communications activities that promote the programs, amenities, and resources of the agency, its departments, and its partners.

(3) Supporting programs, policies, ~~projects, and completion of projects~~ ***and projects*** that facilitate increased ***responsible*** outdoor recreation, outdoor access, and ~~visitations~~ ***visitation*** to visitor-serving amenities and facilities, including, but not limited to, the establishment of new trail corridors that connect people to nature and ~~communities and communities~~, the establishment of bicycle greenway routes or systems, ***and the maintenance, operation, stewardship, and mitigation of new and existing amenities and facilities.***

(4) Supporting and providing recommendations to a designated State Director, should the state join the Confluence of States.

(4) Enhancing outdoor recreation ***and conservation*** educational opportunities, particularly for younger and more diverse audiences.

(5) Promoting the health and well-being of the state’s residents.

(6) Promoting ***or develop*** strategic research, data collection, and economic modeling for, among other things, tracking outdoor recreation trends and outdoor participation rates in California.

(7) Providing ~~communities of interest, including regional outdoor recreation collaboratives,~~ ***with*** technical assistance to better inform, educate, and capitalize on intrinsic and economic values of public recreation access.

(8) Reinforcing and building upon the ***inclusivity of the*** definition of “outdoor recreation” ~~as all inclusive to include, among other activities, off highway vehicle and consumptive~~

activities, including hunting and fishing. *with respect for trail boundaries and off-limit areas for wildlife, habitat, and conservation.*

(9) Prioritizing a coexistence between outdoor recreationists, wildlife, biodiversity, and habitat with a purpose to protect and preserve wildlife habitats and inspire conservationists for generations to come.

(10) Initiating collaboration with existing tribal entities and maintaining respect for their wishes for the land and waters on which we recreate.

(b) (1) To complement these efforts, the agency and support organization shall collaborate with the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development on a suite of interventions designed to promote the outdoors, including, but not limited to, the implementation of the following:

(A) Regional industry sector activation plans for the recreation and tourism sector.

(B) Regional economic development strategies.

(C) Regional tourism strategies that **support, but** do not duplicate, efforts underway by Visit California.

(2) The collaboration pursuant to paragraph (1) shall organize and prioritize recommendations rooted in the work of the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation and Wildfire Resilience.

(3) The collaboration pursuant to paragraph (1) shall establish a single point of contact as a federal lands liaison to communicate and respond to federal policies and practices of impact to federal lands within California and stakeholder interests.

(c) If the agency enters into an agreement with a support organization, the support organization, in consultation with the agency, shall do the following:

(1) Communicate and coordinate with government entities, partners, friends, and volunteers to ensure that activities undertaken pursuant to the agreement complement, support, facilitate, and amplify ongoing partnerships, programs, and projects in support of increasing access to the outdoors.

(2) Engage with public agencies and organizations that manage, operate, and support protected lands in the state.

Proposed PRC § 527.1

(a) The director, the Director of Finance, the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, and the Director of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, or their respective designees **or proxy**, may serve as ex officio, nonvoting members of the support organization's board of directors to provide for effective communication and coordination of efforts between the agency and the support organization. ***The Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency may designate additional ex officio members, as appropriate, from departments within the California Natural Resources Agency.***

(b) ~~A public recreation access and outdoor economy support~~ **A support** organization is not a state agency or a state body.

- 4) **Arguments in support.** Given the mental, physical, and economic health benefits associated with being outdoors, a coalition of outdoor and recreation focused entities write that this bill fills a gap that Parks California fills only for state parks, and it does so with both the

Outdoors for All equity mission and the Jobs First economic development mission explicitly named as its core directive. Although this bill is focused primarily on outdoor recreation, they believe this bill will increase funding for greenways, new visitor amenities, a future statewide interpreter program, and current backlog maintenance of trails, which will inspire conservationists for generations to come. They also note that the support organization established under this bill will support coordination across federal, state, and local jurisdictions, rather than just within state parks, which is “essential to our coherent outdoor recreation and economic development strategy.”

- 5) **Related legislation.** AB 2285 (Rendon) of 2024 would have required the recognition of the coequal goals and benefits of 30x30 and Outdoors for All, when distributing resources. AB 2285 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 30 (Klara), Chapter 939, Statutes of 2022, declared that it was the policy of the state to ensure that all Californians have equitable opportunities to safe and affordable access to nature and access to the benefits of nature and to maximize public access to public lands in a sustainable manner.

AB 1918 (Garcia) of 2018 would have established the Office of Sustainable Outdoor Recreation in CNRA and required the office to undertake certain activities, including supporting the outdoor recreation economy of the state by engaging in specified activities. AB 1918 was vetoed by Governor Brown. The veto message read:

The activities identified in this bill are important, but a new bureaucracy is not needed to accomplish the goal. Over the last few years [State Parks] has worked towards enhancing recreational opportunities throughout the state. In fact, Parks California, a support organization to [State Parks] was recently created to promote outdoor recreation and is engaging in activities similar to those called for in this bill.

SB 1111 (Pavley), Chapter 540, Statutes of 2016), authorizes State Parks to enter into a statewide agreement with a park support organization, to facilitate the implementation of reforms recommended by the Parks Forward Commission and to develop and secure expertise, services, resources, and projects that are not readily available to the state park system for specified purposes.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Outdoor Recreation Partnership (sponsor)

Access Fund

Altra

Bewilder

California Mountain Biking Coalition

California Park & Recreation Society

California Trails Foundation

California Waterfowl

Catalina Island Conservancy

City of Eureka

Cliffhanger Guides

Concerned Off-road Bicyclists Association
Eastern Sierra Conservation Corps
Environmental Protection Information Center
Explore Local Nature
Founded Outdoors
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
Friends of Joshua Tree
Great Redwood Trail Agency
Hipcamp, INC.
Hydrapak
Inclusion Outdoors
League of California Cities
Mammoth Lakes Recreation
Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation
Outdoor Afro
Outdoor Alliance
Outdoor Outreach
Peak Design
Placer Land Trust
Protect American River Canyons
REI Co-op
Resource Renewal Institute
Sacramento Valley Conservancy
Save Mount Diablo
Seirus Innovation
Sierra Business Council
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance
Smartwool
Sonoma County Regional Parks
Surfrider Foundation
Synergy Reps
Ten Strands
The North Face
The Summertree Institute
Timberland
Toad & Co.
TOPO Collective
Town of Mammoth Lakes
Trinity County Community Development Corporation
VF Corporation
Watershed Center
Winter Wildlands Alliance

Opposition

None on file

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