

Date of Hearing: June 16, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

Diane Papan, Chair

SB 1268 (Gonzalez) – As Amended April 23, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: Outdoor public recreation spaces: equitable access

SUMMARY: Establishes the Outdoors for All initiative, administered by the Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), coordinated by a Deputy Secretary for Access, and provides for updates to the Outdoors for All Strategy. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the Outdoors for All initiative, administered by CNRA in consultation with the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) and other relevant state entities.
- 2) Requires CNRA, as part of the initiative, to implement the priorities identified in the Outdoors for All Strategy published on November 15, 2023, including:
 - a) Establish outdoor public recreation spaces for people and nature to thrive;
 - b) Foster belonging;
 - c) Connect people and the outdoors;
 - d) Co-create with communities;
 - e) Build equitable career pathways and a representative workforce; and
 - f) Align funding from federal, state, regional, and private sources to achieve the initiative's goals.
- 3) Requires CNRA to maintain the position of Deputy Secretary for Access within the agency to coordinate the initiative's implementation.
- 4) Requires CNRA to update the Outdoors for All Strategy on or before December 31, 2028, and every five years thereafter to:
 - a) Advance the objectives of the Equitable Outdoor Access Act [Division 1.5 of the Public Resources Code (PRC)];
 - b) Align with relevant goals of the state, including the state's outdoor equity goals and the 30x30 conservation goal; and
 - c) Ensure conservation strategies enhance public access and benefits for disadvantaged and low-income communities.
- 5) Provides that when CNRA updates the Outdoors for All Strategy, CNRA must:

- a) Consult with diverse stakeholders, including community-based organizations, local governments, and environmental justice advocates, to ensure inclusive decision-making and prevent loopholes;
 - b) Host at least three public meetings, which may be in-person, virtual, or hybrid;
 - c) Provide at least one 30-day public comment period; and
 - d) Post the final update on its website in a publicly accessible location.
- 6) Requires CNRA to submit a report to the Legislature on the implementation of the initiative on or before January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter.
 - 7) Defines “outdoor public recreation spaces” for the purposes of this bill as parks, open spaces, trails, beaches, forests, and other natural areas.
 - 8) Makes various findings and declarations about the value of outdoor public recreation spaces to Californians and the importance of expanding access to outdoor public recreation spaces.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Equitable Outdoor Access Act and sets forth the state’s commitment to ensure all Californians can benefit from, and have meaningful and sustainable access to, the state’s rich cultural and natural resources (PRC § 1000 *et seq.*).
- 2) Declares that it is the policy of the state to:
 - a) Ensure that all Californians have equitable opportunities to safe and affordable access to nature and the benefits of nature;
 - b) Maximize public access to public lands, including the state’s cultural and natural resources, in a sustainable manner, where appropriate, with a special emphasis on creating and promoting opportunities for people and communities that face disproportionate barriers to access, including, but not limited to, communities of color, indigenous communities, and economically disadvantaged communities; and
 - c) Prevent and minimize the intentional and unwarranted limitation of sustainable public access to public lands, where appropriate, including, but not limited to, local, regional, state, and federal parks, rivers, lakes, beaches, forests, mountain ranges, deserts, and other natural landscapes [PRC § 1002 (a)].
- 3) Requires CNRA and all other relevant state agencies to consider and incorporate, as appropriate, the policy in Existing Law #2 when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, or grant criteria, or making expenditures, to the extent the policies, regulations, grant criteria, or expenditures are not in conflict with an appropriation [PRC § 1002 (b)].
- 4) Codifies the state’s 30x30 goal to conserve 30% of California’s lands and coastal waters by 2030 (PRC § 71450).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS:1) **Purpose of this bill.** According to the author:

California is one of the world’s premier destinations for outdoor recreation, home to hundreds of national and state parks along with countless regional, county and city parks, and open spaces. Outdoor recreation has clear benefits not only for California’s economy, but also for public health – research shows that people who visit outdoor spaces for 30 minutes or more during a week have lower rates of depression and high blood pressure, and higher rates of community connection. However, despite California’s nation-leading outdoor recreation industry, many Californians lack access to the benefits of outdoor spaces. A history of exclusionary zoning, discriminatory policies, and underinvestment has resulted in fewer parks and less outdoor access for urban communities, communities of color, and lower-income communities. Barriers including limited facilities for people with disabilities, the cost of equipment, transportation, and fees, and racial and ethnic discrimination exacerbate these historical inequalities. As the federal government repeatedly attacks public lands, deploys federal immigration agents to stage raids in public parks, and rolls back equity programs, it is more important than ever to strengthen the state’s commitment to outdoor equity and conservation. The Outdoors for All initiative provides enormous benefits to Californians and the state’s environment but is not currently codified in state law – meaning it could be easily altered or undone by a different state administration. [This bill] will codify this important, successful initiative and ensure that the state will maintain momentum on our outdoor equity goals regardless of actions at the federal level or changes in state leadership.

2) **Background.** Spending time in nature benefits mental¹ and physical health,² but outdoor access is not equitably distributed across all communities.³ A history of discriminatory policies and exclusionary zoning have led to long-term disinvestment, fewer parks and outdoor spaces, and less coastal access for many communities. The practice of redlining led to neighborhoods with far fewer trees and parks and more paved surfaces for lower-income residents and communities of color. The Outdoors for All initiative is intended to expand access to parks and nature for communities with little outdoor space.

CNRA’s 2023 “Outdoors for All: Providing Equitable Access to Parks and Nature” report has several strategies regarding urban and/or park-poor communities including:

Develop, improve, and maintain local and regional outdoor spaces, which includes: (1) prioritize funding programs for park and open space development in park-poor communities such as the Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program, and the Urban Waterways Program; (2) create priorities for park-poor communities within existing funding sources for open space acquisition, development,

¹ Claire Wicks, Jo Barton, Sheina Orbell, and Leanne Andrews, “Psychological Benefits of Outdoor Physical Activity in Natural Versus Urban Environments: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Experimental Studies,” *Applied Psychology: Health and Wellbeing* 14, no. 3 (2022), 1037-1061.

² Valerie Gladwell, Daniel Brown, Carly Wood, Gavin Sandercock, and Jo Barton, “The Great Outdoors: How a Green Exercise Environment Can Benefit All,” *Extreme Physiology & Medicine* 2, no. 3 (2013).

³ Richelle Winkler et al., “Unequal Access to Social, Environmental, and Health Amenities in US Urban Parks,” *Nature Cities* 1 (2024), 861-870.

enhancement, and/or maintenance; (3) assist local and regional entities to bring federal investments to California for outdoor space renovation and acquisition, especially in underserved communities; and (4) collaborate with tribal, local, and regional disability organizations, aging and elder councils to ensure nearby outdoor spaces have features to meet the specific needs of people with disabilities and older adults.

30x30. In October 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-82-20, which establishes a state goal of conserving 30% of California’s lands and coastal waters by 2030. 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. As of June 2025, the state has conserved 26.1% of lands and 21.9% of coastal waters for 30x30.

The “30x30 Annual Progress Report” (July 2025) recognizes that the Outdoors for All initiative is a companion strategy to 30x30:

Being outdoors strengthens our connection to and appreciation for the natural world and each other. It increases physical activity, improves health, and lowers stress levels. Unfortunately, natural spaces are inaccessible to many due to a lack of transportation, limited nearby public outdoor areas, and systematic exclusion. Expanding nature access is a crucial step in righting historical wrongs and improving people’s lives while creating stewards.

Not all areas conserved for biodiversity will be open to the public, especially those with sensitive species or undergoing restoration. Nevertheless, we know that ecosystem protection paired with well-managed public access bridges the gap between people and nature, improving lives and communities. State efforts to increase outdoor recreation opportunities are guided by the [CNRA] Outdoors for All Strategy.

Fair treatment and meaningful involvement. In the Equitable Outdoor Access Act, the Legislature stated its intent to provide for the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, and to solicit, account for, and respond to the voices, needs, and priorities of communities of color, indigenous communities, and economically disadvantaged communities [PRC § 1002 (c)]. The Outdoors for All initiative has supported these commitments, developing the Outdoors for All Strategy through workshops, meetings, listening sessions, and consultations with thousands of community advocates, tribes, and federal and regional partners. One of the six priorities of the Outdoors for All initiative is to co-create with communities, recognizing that parks and other outdoor places are a public good that should serve the diverse needs of all Californians.

However, without these priorities and activities codified in statute, changes in the Executive Branch can result in major changes in the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of communities. As an example, under President Trump, the federal government has used parks for immigration enforcement,⁴ sanitized interpretive information at national parks,⁵ and

⁴ Tara Copp and Christopher Weber, “Troops and Federal Agents Briefly Descend on Los Angeles’ MacArthur Park in Largely Immigrant Neighborhood,” *PBS News*, July 7, 2025.

charged park entrance fees based on citizenship status.⁶ This represents a substantial departure from federal policy under President Biden,⁷ illustrating the potential lack of continuity with uncodified initiatives. This bill would require CNRA to implement the Outdoors for All initiative and to align the Outdoors for All Strategy with the state's outdoor equity and 30x30 goals.

Deputy Secretary for Access. In 2021, Governor Newsom appointed the first CNRA Deputy Secretary for Access, to spearhead the Outdoors for All initiative across all CNRA departments, commissions, and conservancies, as well as through an interagency working group and partnerships with federal, tribal, and local governments. Having a single leader accountable for Outdoors for All across CNRA has supported the development of outdoor access by providing a consistent guiding vision and a unified point of contact for diverse stakeholders across the state. This bill would codify the role of the CNRA Deputy Secretary for Access.

- 3) **Arguments in support.** Writing in support, the California Association of Recreation and Parks Districts writes, “California is home to thousands of local parks, yet access to outdoor recreation remains deeply unequal. Decades of underinvestment have left many communities with limited park space and fewer opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. These disparities are compounded by additional barriers, including inadequate accessibility for people with disabilities, exclusionary zoning and discriminatory policies, the cost of equipment and fees, transportation challenges, and experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination.” Los Padres ForestWatch, a co-sponsor of this bill, adds, “[This bill] directly addresses the gaps in outdoor access by establishing clear, mandatory goals for equitable access, barrier reduction, and prioritization of disadvantaged and low-income communities.”
- 4) **Double referral.** This bill has also been referred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.
- 5) **Related legislation.** AB 946 (Bryan) of the current legislative session encourages the Governor's office, state agencies, and the legislature, when distributing resources, to aspire to recognize the coequal goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal and the Outdoors for All initiative, and, to the extent practical, maximize investment in historically underserved urban communities consistent with those initiatives. AB 946 is pending in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

AB 2285 (Rendon) of 2024 was substantially similar to AB 946. AB 2285 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2440 (Reyes), Chapter 716, Statutes of 2024, requires CNRA, in implementing the strategies to achieve the 30x30 goal, to promote and support partnering state agencies and departments, including State Parks, in the acquisition and responsible stewardship of state land.

⁵ Kanishka Singh, “Trump Administration Says All Interpretive Signage in National Parks Under Review,” *Reuters*, September 16, 2025.

⁶ Karen Garcia, “National Park Staff are Asking About the Citizenship Status of Visitors,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 2026.

⁷ “Interior Department Releases Action Plan, Outlines Steps to Advance Equity,” *U.S. Department of the Interior*, April 14, 2022.

AB 30 (Kalra), Chapter 939, Statutes of 2022, established the Equitable Outdoor Access Act.

AB 2278 (Kalra), Chapter 349, Statutes of 2022, requires CNRA to annually report to the Legislature the progress made toward accomplishing the 30x30 goal.

AB 3030 (Kalra) of 2020 would have established new land, water, and ocean protection goals, including to protect 30% of the state's land areas and water by 2030. AB 3030 was held in Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Audubon California (co-sponsor)
GreenLatinos (co-sponsor)
Los Padres ForestWatch (co-sponsor)
Active San Gabriel Valley
All About Owls
Allensworth Progressive Association
Alta Peak Chapter, California Native Plant Society
Amigos De Los Rios
Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement
Audubon California
Azul
Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
CactusToCloud Institute
California Academy of Sciences
California Association of Local Conservation Corps
California Association of Recreation & Park Districts
California Environmental Voters
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership
California Outdoors Recreation Partnership (CORP)
California Park & Recreation Society
California State Parks Foundation
Californians for Western Wilderness
Calwild
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Progressive Reform
Central Valley Partnership
Children & Nature Network
City of Huron
Clockshop
COFEM
Conservation Corps of Long Beach
Conservation Lands Foundation
Day One
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Information Protection Center
Environmental Protection Information Center

Fish On
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
Friends of the Dunes
Friends of the Lost Coast
Habitat 2020
Justice Outside
Kaboom!
Latino Outdoors
League of California Cities
Los Angeles County
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
Los Angeles United Methodist Urban Foundation
Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust
Midpeninsula Open Space Trust
Mono Lake Committee
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
Nature for All
Outdoor Outreach
Outward Bound Adventures
Pogo Park
Prevention Institute
Resource Renewal Institute
River Partners
Salted Roots
Save Mount Diablo
Save the Redwoods League
Sea and Sage Audubon Society
Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Sierra Business Council
Sierra Club
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Siskiyou Crest Coalition
Sonoma Ecology Center
South Yuba River Citizens League
Surfrider Foundation
The Leap Institute
Trust for Public Land; the
Wildlands Network
Yes Nature to Neighborhoods

Opposition

None on file

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