




**EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
BOARD LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

DATE	April 2, 2025
TITLE	Recommendation to Support State Legislation
DIVISION	General Manager's Office
FROM	Erich Pfuehler, Division Lead of Government and Legislative Affairs
APPROVED	Sabrina Landreth, General Manager 

RECOMMENDATION

The Board Legislative Committee concurs with the General Manager's recommendation to support the following legislation: AB 454, AB 616, AB 846, AB 1139, ACR 36, SB 427, SB 653 and SB 795.

BACKGROUND

As part of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session, the East Bay Regional Park District (Park District) Board of Directors will take formal positions on bills as they are introduced and considered by their respective Legislatures. To guide bill analysis, the Park District's Board of Directors established seven key advocacy goals through Resolution NO.: 2024 – 12 – 288. These advocacy goals strive to align funding and policy advocacy with identified project and program needs and priorities. Guided by the Park District mission, elected Board of Directors and General Manager, Government and Legislative Affairs staff work to align advocacy goals with Park District need. Overarching principles include equitable service delivery, advancing climate resiliency adaptation and mitigation, guiding work with an environmental ethic, supporting inclusive interpretation and educational opportunities, increasing conservation through land acquisition and ensuring the fiscal health of the Park District. The specific goals are as follows:

Climate – Friendly Transportation: To expand accessible active and public transportation to and within East Bay parks and trails.

Ecosystem Stewardship: To support ecosystem health through restoration, acquisition and habitat enhancement, and improved efficiencies in regulatory approvals.

Equitable Park Access: To ensure equitable access to parks so all East Bay communities can enjoy the physical and psychological benefits of nature.

Extreme Weather Preparedness: To address sea level rise, lake health and other climate-related challenges with nature-based infrastructure and proactive mitigation strategies.

Green Jobs: To guide the development of career pathways for all in the parks, recreation, outdoor and environmental fields.

Welcoming Visitor Use Facilities: To ensure all visitors feel welcomed to East Bay parks and trails by providing facilities which are safe, accessible, inclusive and sustainable.

Wildfire Resilience: To minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the East Bay by using proactive, ecologically sound vegetation management strategies.

ANALYSIS

The legislation proposed for support by the Park District, as listed below, has been identified based on its alignment with at least one of the seven advocacy goals of the Park District and in support of the overarching principles of advocacy approved by Resolution NO.: 2024 – 12 – 288. To engage on the identified bills, the proposed resolution will direct staff on specific actions related to Park District supported legislation, including writing letters of support, participating in committee or bill hearings in Sacramento, and engaging with the author/sponsor and relevant elected official's offices directly.

AB 454 (Kalra D-San Jose) California Migratory Bird Protection Act Extension aligns with the key advocacy goal of Ecosystem Stewardship by ensuring the continued protection of migratory birds in California. This bill seeks to extend the California Migratory Bird Protection Act indefinitely, thereby safeguarding migratory nongame birds and their habitats. Given the presence of several important migratory corridors within Park District lands and waterways, the California Migratory Bird Protection Act has played a significant role in supporting regional bird populations. Extending the Act indefinitely would continue to benefit these important migration routes. This bill is especially important in light of recent Federal efforts to weaken the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, one of the nation's oldest and most significant environmental laws. AB 454 presents an opportunity to secure bird protections at the state level, potentially setting a precedent for similar legislation for other conservation protections in California and in other states in the coming years. AB 454 is sponsored by the National Audubon Society.

AB 616 (Caloza D-Los Angeles) California State Library Parks Pass Program aligns with the key advocacy goal of Equitable Park Access by providing expanded access to California State Parks. This legislation would authorize the California Department of Parks and Recreation to voluntarily provide free vehicle day use annual passes to the California State Library aimed at supporting the Parks Pass Program. The bill adds a new section to the Public Resources Code authorizing the department the discretionary ability to issue these free passes, which were previously funded through the 2024 Budget Act. The California State Library Parks Pass Program is designed to provide communities with access to state parks, potentially increasing park visitation and providing educational or recreational opportunities for all California residents. The passes are available to all library-card holders and can be checked-out in-person or through a mobile library branch of participating locations. The Park District operates and manages three state parks including Del Valle Regional Park, McLaughlin Eastshore State Park and Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach. Del Valle and Crown Beach are listed as non-participating, which means existing Park District fee policy would remain in place. McLaughlin Eastshore is listed as participating in the Parks Pass Program as the Park District does not charge fees at that location.

AB 846 (Connolly D-San Rafael) Wildfire Preparedness Permitting aligns with the key advocacy goal of Wildfire Resilience. This bill aims to streamline wildfire preparedness activities for local agencies while protecting endangered species by creating a new process for efficiently obtaining permits. Under the bill, a city, county, special district or local agency can submit a wildfire preparedness plan to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for conducting activities in fire hazard severity zones, with the goal of minimizing wildlife and habitat impacts. A "wildfire preparedness plan" is defined as a strategy which protects communities from wildfire while maximizing wildlife protection, based on the best available scientific data and encouraging broad participation. The plan must detail proposed activities, timelines, affected species and environmental mitigation measures. CDFW is required to review the plan within 90 days and provide guidance on whether an incidental take permit is needed.

The department will also outline streamlined permit options, including pathways through the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP). If an incidental take permit is required, CDFW must approve or deny the permit within 45 days of receiving a complete application. Incidental take permits issued under this bill would be valid for at least five years and renewable, ensuring faster and

more efficient wildfire prevention efforts while maintaining environmental protections. This legislation would amend the Fish and Game Code by adding a new article to Chapter 1.5 of Division 3, supporting efficient wildfire mitigation plan preparation and approval. If codified, this bill would enable local agencies and land managers to advance vegetation management projects with approved permits more efficiently and effectively, benefiting both California communities and ecosystems.

AB 1139 (Rogers D-Santa Rosa) Public Access for Nonmotorized Recreation aligns with the key advocacy goal of Equitable Park Access. This legislation would amend the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to expand an existing environmental review exemption for public access in nonmotorized recreation areas. Currently, park districts governed by an independent board, as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5500, and the Great Redwood Trail Agency can approve changes in land use for nonmotorized activities without conducting a full environmental impact review, such as opening preexisting trails, roads, parking areas or converted rail lines to public access (Park District sponsored AB 2091, 2024). The bill extends this exemption to include county departments, allowing them to similarly approve public access changes without extensive environmental review, provided certain conditions are met. This bill would amend a section of the Public Resources Code, relating to environmental quality.

ACR 36 (Carrillo D-Palmdale) Special Districts Week proclaims the week of May 18, 2025 to May 24, 2025, to be Special Districts Week.

The Park District has supported this legislation in the past in including Resolution NO.: 2021 – 03 – 063.

SB 427 (Blakespear D-Encinitas) Habitat Conservation Fund Extension aligns with the key advocacy goal of Ecosystem Stewardship. Following direction by voters on June 5, 1990, the Habitat Conservation Fund has received an annual allocation of \$30,000,000 from the General Fund. This legislation would require the continued annual allocation of \$30,000,00 from the General Fund to the Habitat Conservation Fund indefinitely, with deductions for transfers from other specified accounts like tobacco tax funds, environmental license plate funds and wildlife preservation funds. The transferred funds will continue to be appropriated to various conservation entities: \$4.5 million to the Department of Parks and Recreation (for projects like matching grants to local agencies and wildlife corridor acquisitions), \$4 million to the State Coastal Conservancy, \$5 million to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and \$500,000 to the California Tahoe Conservancy. The Wildlife Conservation Board will receive the remaining balance. The bill also maintains existing guidelines for fund expenditure, such as spending approximately one-third of funds on habitat acquisition and two-thirds on habitat enhancement. It also continues to ensure roughly equal distribution of funds between northern and southern California. By removing the previous sunset provisions, the bill makes these funding and conservation mechanisms permanent, ensuring ongoing support for wildlife habitat protection in California. This bill would amend several sections of the Fish and Game Code, relating to fish and wildlife.

SB 653 (Cortese – D-San Jose) Environmentally Sensitive Vegetation Management aligns with the key advocacy goals of Wildfire Resilience and Ecosystem Stewardship. This bill proposes managing vegetation with a focus on minimizing environmental impact, particularly in the context of wildfire prevention. The bill does not establish specific definitions or detailed requirements, but instead signals the Legislature's commitment to creating a framework for more environmentally conscious methods of managing vegetation in wildfire-prone areas. The bill is intentionally broad at this stage, serving as a preliminary step toward developing more comprehensive wildfire prevention strategies that take into account ecological sensitivities.

SB 795 (Richardson D-San Pedro) Incorporating 30x30 Goals in State Planning and Regulatory Processes aligns with the key advocacy goal of Ecosystem Stewardship. This bill requires all California state agencies, departments, boards, offices, commissions and conservancies to incorporate the state's 30x30 goal into their planning and regulatory processes. The 30x30 goal, originally established by Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Order No. N-82-20, aims to conserve 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 as a strategy to address biodiversity and climate challenges. Specifically, the bill mandates that when state agencies develop, revise or establish new plans, policies or regulations, they must explicitly consider the 30x30 goal and ensure, to the extent possible, new guidelines are not in conflict with the conservation objective. This requirement builds upon existing law which requires the Natural Resources Agency to submit annual progress reports to the Legislature about achieving the 30x30 goal. It also represents a formal legislative effort to integrate conservation principles across state government planning and decision-making processes. SB 795 would amend a section of the Public Resources Code, relating to environmental protection.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. State Legislation for Support - April 2, 2025 Board Legislative Committee