


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

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<b>DATE</b>	November 13, 2024
<b>TITLE</b>	Recommendation to Support Federal Legislation
<b>DIVISION</b>	General Manager's Office
<b>FROM</b>	Erich Pfuehler, Chief of Government and Legislative Affairs
<b>APPROVED</b>	Sabrina Landreth, General Manager 

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**RECOMMENDATION**

The Board Legislative Committee concurs with the General Manager's recommendation to support the following legislation: S. Res. 858 and H.Res. 1534, H.R. 9652, H.R. 9702, and H.R. 9760.

**BACKGROUND**

As part of the 2023-2024 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 – 01 – 003. 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.

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

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

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

Sea Level Rise Preparedness: To address sea level rise with nature-based infrastructure and initiate mitigation strategies regarding climate change.

Welcoming Visitor Use Facilities: To be sure all visitors are welcomed to the 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 vegetation management which is ecologically sound.

## ANALYSIS

The legislation proposed for support, as listed below, has been identified based on its alignment with at least one of the seven advocacy goals of the Park District and support the overarching principles of advocacy approved by Resolution NO.: 2024 – 01 – 003. 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 bill hearings in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., and engaging with the author/sponsor and relevant elected official's offices directly. Of the four legislative acts recommended for support, two address Wildfire Resilience, one addresses Climate Friendly Transportation, and one addresses Community Health.

This includes funding for active transportation, increasing the Federal Emergency Management Agency's ability to provide proactive pre-disaster support to communities, expanding access to outdoor recreation and identifying the impact of valued partners. All of these components align with the Park District's advocacy goals and overarching principles.

S.Res. 858 (King I-ME) and H.Res. 1534 (Thompson D-CA) A resolution recognizing the 15th anniversary of Outdoor Afro aligns with the advocacy goal of community health. Outdoor Afro started as a blog about nature in 2009. It has grown into a cutting-edge nationwide network with volunteer leaders in 33 States. Leaders guide hundreds of outdoor events each year based on a simple mission to celebrate and inspire African-American connections to nature through recreational activities like camping, hiking, birding, fishing, gardening, skiing and more. In the past 15 years, Outdoor Afro has cultivated and trained more than 1000 outdoor leaders, leading thousands of outdoor events and reaching well over 150,000 participants. Outdoor Afro has more recently launched Making Waves, a program to strengthen relationships with water through water safety and swimming lessons. Making Waves has funded nearly 1,950 "Swimmership" scholarships and aims to reach 1,500 swimmers in 2024. Outdoor Afro has engaged millions of people through digital outreach. It is changing visual representations of who can connect with and lead in the outdoors through digital outreach. Outdoor Afro's growing network comprises civically engaged men and women, many of whom plan outdoor activities on behalf of children and senior community members, restoring Black-American leadership in nature.

This resolution:

- Supports the recognition of the 15th anniversary of Outdoor Afro; and
- Commends the leadership of Outdoor Afro for changing the face of conservation by leading the way for inclusion in outdoor recreation and nature for all.

The Senate resolution is supported by Senator Alex Padilla. The House resolution is also supported by Reps. John Garamendi and Barbara Lee.

H.R. 9652 (DeSaulnier D-CA) Jobs for a Carbon Free Transportation System Act aligns with the advocacy goal of climate friendly transportation. The legislation requires the Department of Transportation to establish a grant program to carry out projects which develop low carbon corridors. "Local governments" are eligible to receive grant awards. Funds can be used for alternative modes of transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Projects carried out with a grant under the program are subject to labor protections and "produced in the United States" standards.

This legislation could be included as a provision in the next Federal Highway Administration Surface Transportation Reauthorization. The current authorization was included as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021. Authorization is through fiscal year 2026.

H.R. 9702 (Neguse D-CO) Wildfire Coordination Act aligns with the advocacy goal of wildfire resilience. This legislation establishes a permanent advisory committee to be known as the Wildfire

Science and Technology Advisory Board. The Committee will coordinate wildfire research and disseminate information to stakeholders. The Committee includes representation from multiple Federal agencies and up to 18 appointees of the Secretary of Interior. For the 18 appointees, local government representatives are included. There is also a catch all provision siting “such other members as the Secretary of Interior deems appropriate.” Terms on the Committee are for two years. The committee ultimately will make recommendations about future wildfire research priorities and operational needs.

This legislation could be included as a provision in the next Omnibus Public Lands bill. The last such bill was the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act of 2019. A support position for H.R. 9702 would be extended to a related or companion bill introduced in the Senate.

H.R. 9760 (Huffman D-CA) Community Protection and Wildfire Resilience Act aligns with the advocacy goal of wildlife resilience. The legislation calls on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to establish a new grant program to carry out projects described in “community protection and wildfire resilience” plans. The legislation authorizes \$1 billion for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028. Units of general local or regional governments are eligible to receive grants. Strategies to implement Community Protection and Wildfire Resilience include:

- Early detection technology, evacuation planning and access for first responders.
- Addressing vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with disabilities.
- Hardening critical infrastructure and homes.
- Applying community-scale defensible space across contiguous areas.
- Implementing strategic land use planning.
- Coordinating with existing wildfire plans like a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

This legislation could be included as a provision in the next revision of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relieve and Emergency Assistance Act (Pub. L. 93-288, 88 Stat. 143 (1974), codified in 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5206 (2007)). The Stafford Act was amended in in the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007. A support position for H.R. 9760 would be extended to a related or companion bill introduced in the U.S. Senate.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

None.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Federal Legislation to Support PowerPoint Presentation.