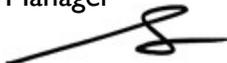




**EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

DATE March 13, 2024
TITLE Recommendation to Support State Legislation: AB 437, AB 637, AB 1798, AB 1889, AB 2124, AB 2285, AB 2330, AB 2440, AB 2509, AB 2682, AB 2869, ACA 16, SB 925, SB 1029, SB 1159, SB 1402
DIVISION General Manager's Office
FROM Erich Pfuehler, Chief of Government and Legislative Affairs
Dr. Ana M. Alvarez, Deputy General Manager
APPROVED Sabrina Landreth, General Manager 

RECOMMENDATION

The General Manager recommends the Board Legislative Committee approves extending support of the following state legislation:

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 by the Park District, as listed below, has been identified based on its alignment with at least one of the seven key advocacy goals of the Park District and support for overarching principles of advocacy as approved by resolution no.: 2024 – 01 – 03. 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 or relevant elected official's offices directly.

Of the 17 legislative acts recommended for support, 18% would address the advocacy goal of climate-friendly transportation. This includes bills focused on clean energy vehicles and active transportation infrastructure investments. Additionally, 24% promote community health through a focus on equitable open water swim lessons and green infrastructure investments in urban areas. Ecosystem stewardship is advanced by 35% of the bills, focusing on the health of native species and advancing thoughtful integrated pest management techniques. An additional 6% focus on green jobs with the creation of the state's first Chief Equity Officer, who will guide agencies, including the California Natural Resources Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation and California Coastal Conservancy, in advancing best practices in equity across the state. Lastly, 18% advance wildfire resilience work through grant program investments and streaming of restoration work.

AB 437 (Jackson D-Riverside) State Government Chief Equity Officer aligns with the advocacy goal of green jobs. This legislation would establish the position of Chief Equity Officer appointed by and serving at the request of the Governor. The position would support actions to improve equity and inclusion across state agencies and departments. This position is similar to the Park District's Equity Officer and could support shared best practices across the state.

AB 637 (Jackson D-Riverside) Zero Emissions Vehicle Rental Program aligns with the advocacy goal of climate-friendly transportation. If the State Air Resources Board requires a fleet owner to acquire zero-emission vehicles as part of its fleet, this legislation would authorize the rental of zero-emission vehicle or vehicles in response to state fleet requirements. The benefit of this is to allow public agencies to test vehicles for the specific and unique service needs. For example, the Park District would have the opportunity to rent electric vehicles, including yard tractors, for use in regular duties before making a larger investment. This legislation has the potential to result in cost savings as the trial period for vehicles can guide informed decision making for public dollars.

AB 1798 (Papan D-San Mateo) Stormwater Runoff for the Protection of Salmon and Steelhead Trout aligns with the advocacy goal of ecosystem stewardship. This legislation would develop a formal review process to prevent toxic substances from entering surface waters. To support mitigation of toxins, it would advance a pilot project for bioretention and biofiltration aimed at exploring how to prevent contamination of surface waters. This legislation compliments legislation previously supported by the Park District, AB 809 (Bennett D-Oxnard) California Salmonid Monitoring Program Fund, which was chaptered in 2023. Protection of salmon and steelhead trout is important to the Park District as Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park, Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve and Wildcat Canyon Regional Park serve as home to these important species.

AB 1889 (Friedman D-Burbank) Wildlife Connectivity Elements in General Plans aligns with the advocacy goal of ecosystem stewardship. This legislation would require cities and counties to include wildlife connectivity elements into their general plans. Specifically, cities and counties would be required to adopt goals, policies, and objectives related to the awareness and protection of species within their jurisdiction. The intent of this legislation is to support a better understanding of habitat and biodiversity needs in a changing climate. As Alameda and Contra Costa County, including East Bay cities, begin analyzing and documenting wildlife connectivity in the region, this information

will support and benefit the work of the Park District. There will likely be opportunity to collaborate in the approach.

AB 2124 (Davies R-Laguna Niguel) Outdoor Swim Lessons aligns with the advocacy goal of community health. This legislation proposes the establishment of a program aimed at increasing access to swimming lessons for children and their families. Such lessons would take place in outdoor locations, such as parks and other public areas, and align with the Department of Parks and Recreation's outdoor education goals. Specifically, this program would focus on underserved and at-risk populations. This program would benefit and compliment the efforts of the Park District's Public Safety Lifeguard Services teams in supporting safe outdoor swimming opportunities for all.

AB 2285 (Rendon D-Lakewood) 30x30 Urban Nature-Based Investments aligns with the advocacy goal of community health. In support of efforts to invest in and advance the goals of 30x30, this legislation would encourage the state to provide sufficient funding allocations to urban areas for nature-based projects on degraded lands. Within the *Pathways to 30x30* document the state expresses three key goals including supporting environmental conservation, protection of biodiversity and expansion of outdoor access. This legislation would better ensure these actions occur within urban areas where nature-based investments can significantly enhance quality of life for community members.

AB 2330 (Holden D-Pasadena) Streamlining of Routine Vegetation Management aligns with the advocacy goal of wildfire resilience. This legislation proposes a revised review timeline for the taking of endangered, threatened or candidate species within high fire severity zones adjacent to wildland-urban interface fire areas. Specifically, this legislation would require review by the Department of Fish and Wildlife within 90 days of receiving an application to advance wildfire mitigation work within a qualifying zone. If such a review does not occur, it would then permit 30 days for the State Fire Marshal to review the proposal. The intention is to streamline applications for critically needed vegetation management work. As the Park District operates within the wildland-urban interface and the majority of lands are within state designated high fire severity zones, this streamline of review could benefit the project timeline of the agency's vegetation management work, result in cost savings and improve service delivery.

AB 2440 (Reyes D-San Bernadino) Advancing 30x30 State Investments aligns with the advocacy goal of ecosystem stewardship. This legislation would require reporting about the ways in which state funding has invested in furthering the goals of 30x30. Information in these reports would include how investments were guided toward conservation, protection of biodiversity and expanding equitable access to open space. Such reports could benefit the Park District as it would highlight state priorities related to land and water conservation, science and research, as well as work to manage, monitor and restore conserved lands and waters. The Park District would be able to leverage this information for future policy, legislation and grant work.

AB 2509 (Kalra D-San Jose) Integrated Pest Management aligns with the advocacy goal of ecosystem stewardship. This bill would require the Invasive Species Council of California to prioritize the principles of integrated pest management in all of its activities. Within this bill, integrated pest management is defined as a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools in a way which minimizes economic, health and environmental risks. This definition aligns with the work of the Park District. It would support shared resources and best practices across the state.

AB 2682 (Kalra D-San Jose) Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority aligns with the advocacy goal of community health. This legislation seeks to support the administrative functions of the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (SCVOSA) through refined public resources code language. Specifically, this legislation would increase the thresholds related to formal bidding and

contracts to improve and expedite service delivery. The SCVOSA is a strong partner of the Park District. Their work to conserve and protect Coyote Valley contributes to the health of the greater Diablo range ecosystem in connect with the Park District's lands.

AB 2869 (Friedman D-Burbank) Trail Access Projects aligns with the advocacy goal of climate-friendly transportation. This bill would require the Department of Transportation to mitigate the impact of infrastructure projects which interfere with or eliminate trail access to parks and recreational areas. Specifically, this mitigation would be achieved by establishing alternative safe access to parks and recreational areas for any routes impacted. This legislation would benefit the work of the Park District where regional trails abut state roads which may require improvements in response to sea level rise projections or other impacts. An example of this is the San Francisco Bay Trail along Doolittle Drive at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline.

ACA 16 (Bryan D-Los Angeles) The Right to Clean Air, Water and a Healthy Environment aligns with the advocacy goal of community health. This legislation proposes the California Constitution officially declare the right of residents to clean air and water, and a healthy environment. Such a declaration would further codify the importance of the Park District's work in supporting healthy communities across the state.

SB 925 (Wiener D-San Francisco) Regional Transportation Measure aligns with the advocacy goal of climate-friendly transportation. This legislation proposes a revenue measure be advanced for San Francisco Bay Area voters to consider additional funding of transportation related investments. It is likely such a measure will include active transportation investments for which the Park District could qualify.

SB 1029 (Min D-Irvine) Advance Payments for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program aligns with the advocacy goal of wildfire resilience. As proposed, this legislation would allow for advanced payments to entities who qualify for Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grants. The Park District has previously received funding from this program for work in Tilden Regional Park. A unique aspect of this program is its requirement for partners to advance the project work collaboratively. An advance payment mechanism would expand opportunities for future project partners.

SB 1159 (Dodd D-Napa) Expediting Roadside Wildfire Risk Reduction aligns with the advocacy goal of wildfire resilience. This legislation would require the California Natural Resources Agency Secretary to consider providing a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption for roadside projects undertaken for the purpose of wildfire risk reduction. This legislation would benefit the work of the Park District to advance critically needed mitigation on grassland and forest areas.

SB 1402 (Min D-Irvine) Activating 30x30 Goals in State Strategic Plans aligns with the advocacy goal of ecosystem stewardship. This bill would require all state agencies, departments, boards, offices, commissions and conferences to take 30x30 goals into consideration when adopting, revising or establishing plans, policies and regulations. This action would formalize the goals of the report within state level strategic planning documents. By doing so, this action would activate the goals to protect biodiversity, conserve lands and expand equitable access to the outdoors in multiple state programs.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENTS

2024 State Legislation PowerPoint.