

CALIFORNIA OCEAN DAY

2024 PRIORITIES



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KEY ISSUES & ASKS OF STATE LEGISLATORS



Restore the State's Coastal Resilience Budget

ASK YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SIGN ONTO A DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER TO SUPPORT RESTORATION OF FUNDING TO THE COASTAL RESILIENCE BUDGET?

In January, the Newsom administration released a 2024-2025 budget proposal that cut coastal resilience funding by 49%. For comparison, the [climate budget overall was cut about 7%](#). With sea levels expected to continue to rise close to another foot by 2050, California's coastal communities cannot afford to remain unprepared for worsening erosion and flood risks. We recommend the Legislature seek to sustain funding for [four types](#) of coastal resilience projects throughout budget negotiations so that California can safeguard our special beaches, intertidal areas, and access to the ocean.

End the Coastal Environmental Justice Emergency at Our Border

ASK YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SIGN [OUR ACTION ALERT](#)?

The Pacific coast near the U.S./Mexico border is steeped in rich multi-cultural identities, contains immense biodiversity, and contributes high economic value to both countries. Yet every day, millions of gallons of untreated sewage, industrial chemicals, and trash flow through the Tijuana River Watershed and into coastal and inland communities. Beaches near the border in San Diego County have been closed every day for two and a half years (and counting) and science is showing that the community is now suffering the impacts of breathing in toxic pollution from the air. This worsening crisis has gotten so bad that the Tijuana River was recently named one of the [most endangered rivers in the United States](#) by American Rivers. We must work together to address this ongoing public health and [environmental justice emergency](#) along California's coastline.

Support the Climate Bond

TELL YOUR LEGISLATORS: WE PRIORITIZE A ROBUST, EQUITABLE CLIMATE BOND FOR THIS NOVEMBER'S BALLOT

Two years ago, California's leaders committed \$54 billion in new state funding alongside a suite of climate policies. However, last year's state budget cut and delayed this funding. And in January, Governor Newsom proposed even more cuts and delays to address the state budget deficit. While we urge lawmakers to resist these cuts and keep prior commitments, a climate bond offers a complementary, urgently-needed opportunity to fund climate action. More than 160 organizations across California are calling on the Governor and legislative leaders to back \$10 billion in priority climate investments that include environmental justice priorities and coastal resilience. We must protect Californians from extreme heat, dangerous weather events, catastrophic wildfires and sea level rise.

Revive the Coastal Dead Zones

ASK YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SIGN ONTO A DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER TO SUPPORT OCEAN ACIDIFICATION AND HYPOXIA PLAN?

Land-based nutrients discharged to the ocean from coastal sewage treatment plants are causing shell-dissolving ocean acidification and the loss of oxygen, creating ocean acidification hot spots of California's coast. During late summer months, magnified by daily coastal sewage treatment plants discharges, OAH hot spots form and cause marine habitat compression on average of 20% but up to 60% (vertically) for over 1,000 square miles of the Southern California Bight; even at distances of up to 50 miles offshore. Ocean acidification is gradually shifting the California coastline toward a more acidic, corrosive state, while hypoxia – or low dissolved oxygen levels – is making the ocean less habitable for organisms ranging from sea snails to crabs to fish.

Stand Up for the Coastal Act

ASK YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SIGN ONTO A DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER TO DEFEND THE COASTAL ACT?

In 1972, California voters approved Proposition 20 because they were alarmed that unchecked industrial and luxury-residential development was cutting off public access to the shore of the State of California. Prop 20 became The California Coastal Act which oversees the use of and development along California's 1,100 miles of coastline. This hard-fought voter initiative empowers the California Coastal Commission to protect California's sensitive coastal ecosystems and maximize public access on and along the California coast, and is the reason that development along our shoreline looks starkly different than in places through [out the nation and world where development has effectively privatized the coast](#). AB 2560 [undermines the Coastal Act](#) by proposing exemptions for housing that complies with Density Bonus Law. This is misguided because Density Bonus Law and the Coastal Act can be harmonized through the Local Coastal Program process. As sea levels rise and force coastal squeeze of beach space, it is more important than ever to defend the Coastal Act.

Celebrate Marine Protected Areas

TELL YOUR LEGISLATORS: WE SUPPORT STRENGTHENED MPAS

Twenty-five years ago, the California legislature passed the Marine Life Protection Act to protect and conserve our state's unparalleled ocean biodiversity and wildlife. California finalized its landmark [Marine Protected Area \(MPA\) network](#) in 2012 covering nearly 17 percent of state waters. MPAs protect a range of ocean and coastal habitats from tidepools to kelp forests, and from sandy beaches to submarine canyons. California's MPAs are managed by state, federal, and local agencies working cooperatively with scientific and educational institutions, Tribal governments and Tribal organizations, and community and conservation organizations. Now this scientifically-based network is already [showing incredible results for population and biodiversity](#). Last year, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife launched a '[Decadal Management Review](#)'. We continue to celebrate the MPA Network and we support strengthening it to increase benefits to California's ecosystems, to local communities through improved recreational experiences, and to enhance marine research and education.

BILLS WE'RE SUPPORTING:

WATER QUALITY



Pass SB 1178 (Padilla) To Make Polluters Pay for their Waste

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT SB 1178?

Background

California struggles with severe water pollution, notably in the Tijuana River watershed, spanning the US-Mexico border. This area faces pollution from various sources, including raw sewage. The resulting contamination poses significant health risks to communities, with thousands of illnesses linked to poor water quality. In an effort to reduce this toxic water pollution, a binational wastewater treatment facility was established in San Diego by US and Mexican authorities. That facility was, however, quickly overwhelmed by the explosion of the volume of wastewater flowing into the Tijuana River. The treatment facility has been rendered inoperable exposing local communities throughout San Diego to toxic sewage flows and dangerous pathogens.

Problem

The vast increases in sewage flows into South San Diego follows years of explosive economic growth in Tijuana where many large multi-national corporations have set up manufacturing to take advantage of cheap labor costs and lax environmental protections. Those manufacturers are producing product in Mexico to sell in California. Those same multi-national corporations have significant operations and sales in California. They are licensed to do business here and pay California taxes.

Solution

Efforts have been in place to reduce sewage flows to the Tijuana River Valley for a long time. SB 1178 specifically aims to deter large, industrial polluters from adding to the problem or at least to mitigate the impacts of their discharges. SB 1178 would require large corporations doing business in California to publicly disclose their waste water discharges which can result in contamination of California watersheds. The measure directs the State Water Board to quantify the costs of mitigating that contamination and the company can opt to remedy the containment itself or pay a fee to the State to do it.

BILL ANALYSIS

Pass AB 1798 (Papan) To Control Pollution and Protect Salmon

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 1798?

Background

For over 20 years, researchers have seen a connection between storm-water and salmon deaths. Known as the “urban runoff mortality syndrome” studies have shown that an incredible number of salmon die within a few hours after exposure to storm-water from urban watersheds near roadways. In 2020 researchers out of the University of Washington released a report that identified the toxic chemical responsible for the fish kills as 6PPD. Tire particles are some of the most common sources of microplastics found in California’s storm-water discharges to waterways, which to date has gone unmanaged in storm-water permits.

Problem

The main pollution pathway for 6PPD is through storm-water. 6PPD has been measured in California streams at concentrations above those shown to kill at least half of coho salmon in laboratory experiments. Native salmon species represent the foundation for California’s \$500 million fishing industry. Thousands of fishers rely on salmon for their income and livelihoods. Recently, State officials canceled California’s 2023 salmon fishing season due to the incredibly low number of coho and Chinook salmon that are surviving to adulthood and returning from the sea. The loss of coho salmon in California is having a domino effect across the entire ecosystem. Further, the decline of native salmon is disproportionately impacting California’s Indigenous tribes. For instance, the Yurok Tribe typically celebrates their Salmon Festival to honor the sacred species.

Solution

The S.A.L.M.O.N Act aims to develop a programmatic environmental review process in order to prevent 6PPD from entering salmon and steelhead trout bearing surface waters of the state. This measure will direct Caltrans to study the feasibility and most cost-effective biofiltration and bioretention systems in order to install such systems throughout the state to prevent the devastating impacts caused by storm-water runoff containing 6PPD.

BILL ANALYSIS

BILLS WE'RE SUPPORTING:

EQUITABLE ACCESS



Pass AB 2038 (Quirk-Silva) To Provide Equitable Access to State Waters

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 2038 AND AB 2939 AND CONSIDER BEING A CO-AUTHOR ON THESE BILLS?

Background

Despite significant strides by the State to prioritize equitable outdoor access through historic investments and initiatives, barriers persist for many Californians preventing them from enjoying parks and beaches, including communities of color, disabled people, low-income youth, and other marginalized groups. Nonprofits and tribal outdoor equity programs help further the state's goals by serving as trusted guides for groups from underserved communities to experience the outdoors.

Problem

Outdoor equity programs face regulatory barriers not imposed on the general public, including high fees and limits on activities. This contributes to a double standard in who gets to enjoy and benefit from park and beach access: If you are a kid whose family has a car, parents with the free time and money to pay entrance fees, the appropriate equipment and the right information, you are free to enjoy any state park or beach anytime it is open to the public. However, if you lack these things, and you need the support of a nonprofit or tribal-run outdoor education program to help you connect to public lands and waters, you are impacted by operational restrictions that limit your visits to certain days of the year, parks and beaches, and times to visit. These kids are much more likely to be low-income, a person of color, impacted by disparities, and from a vulnerable community.

Solution

AB 2038 and AB 2939 would amend the Public Resources Code to treat small non-profit and tribal programs at state and local parks and beaches the same as the general public. AB 2038 relates to State Parks and AB 2939 relates to parks and beaches managed by cities and counties. As long as a non-profit or tribal entity, with a group size under 30 people, abides by the same rules as the public, they would have the same ability to access the state's lands and waters without the need for additional permitting. By eliminating restrictions and reducing the administrative requirements facing small outdoor equity programs, this bill would allow these groups to focus their time and resources on benefiting communities through programs at the most appropriate park and beach locations. By easing the administrative burden on state and local land managers, and incentivizing the engagement of community organizations, these bills would have a net positive fiscal impact.

[BILL ANALYSIS](#)

BILLS WE'RE SUPPORTING:

CLIMATE CHANGE



Pass AB 1992 (Horvath) For Blue Carbon Demonstration Projects

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 1992?

Background

A blue carbon project is defined as the creation or restoration of coastal wetland, intertidal, or marine habitats or ecosystems, including, but not limited to, kelp forests, seagrasses, and wetlands, that capture carbon. Blue carbon habitats can sequester more carbon per acre than many types of terrestrial habitats. When these ecosystems are degraded or damaged directly or indirectly by human activities, their ability to sequester carbon is adversely affected or lost completely. Research shows that blue carbon ecosystems, such as sea grasses and salt marshes are more efficient at capturing and storing atmospheric carbon than most terrestrial forests. In fact, some blue carbon ecosystems can sequester five times more carbon than tropical rainforests and store 50 times more in their soil.

Problem

Sadly, California has lost over 90 percent of its historical wetlands and the associated benefits they provide. Blue carbon ecosystems have lost an estimated 35 percent of their global cover since 1970. Current estimates suggest the loss of these important marine ecosystems is occurring at a rate of 2-7 percent per year—a higher rate than even rainforests. Research indicates that if blue carbon ecosystems continue to decline at the current rate, 30 to 40 percent of tidal marshes and seagrasses and approximately 100 percent of mangroves could be gone in the next century.

Solution

AB 1992 would authorize the Coastal Commission to approve and incentivize blue carbon demonstration projects. It would also require various agencies to consult with one another to develop quality projects, and set strong monitoring standards to show sequestration capabilities. Because oceans cover 70 percent of the planet, and because more than 80 percent of the global carbon cycle is circulated through the ocean, ocean ecosystem restoration has the greatest blue carbon development potential. Preserving, restoring and expanding these habitat types are a cost-effective way to slow the rate of climate change, while also protecting the coast, commercial fisheries and public health.

BILL ANALYSIS

Pass AB 80 (Addis) To Monitor Offshore Wind Development

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 80?

Background

Last year, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management held an offshore wind energy lease sale for five call areas on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) off central and northern California -- three off the San Luis Obispo County coast and two off Humboldt County. The winning bidders cumulatively paid the federal government over \$750 million for the right to build floating, but tethered, offshore wind energy wind farms off the California coast. The California Energy Commission (CEC) is required to work with various state entities to develop a strategic plan for offshore wind energy and must make recommendations about how to avoid, minimize and mitigate offshore wind activities.

Problem

Responsible development of offshore wind energy includes a robust scientific research and monitoring plan, as well as filling data gaps about the effects of offshore wind development, to understand how habitat and marine life may be impacted by offshore wind energy infrastructure and development activities. Currently, there is no one state entity required to be responsible for this work. An Offshore Wind Science Entity must convene key stakeholders to develop an integrated science plan that reflects research and data collection needs for responsible offshore wind.

Solution

AB 80 requires the Ocean Protection Council to convene and oversee the important scientific work necessary for decision-makers to understand how ecosystems and marine life may be impacted by offshore wind infrastructure and development. OPC is ideally suited for this work. STATUS: AB 80 is a two-year bill and is in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The bill is bipartisanly supported and passed unanimously through committees and the Assembly floor. Assemblymember Addis and the bill sponsors (Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, Monterey Bay Aquarium, and the Natural Resources Defense Council) are working with the Administration

[BILL ANALYSIS](#)

Pass AB 2537 (Addis) To Support Communities Near Offshore Wind Projects

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 2537?

Background

California has set ambitious clean energy goals, aiming for 100% renewable and zero-carbon energy resources by 2045. Offshore wind plays a crucial role in this strategy, with state targets of 5 gigawatts (GW) by 2030 and 25 GW by 2045, aligned with President Biden's goal of 30 GW by 2030. The CEC's Offshore Wind Strategic Plan emphasizes community capacity building, particularly for communities and tribes near offshore wind impacts, to ensure their involvement in the decision-making process.

Problem

Frontline communities that are located closest to offshore wind development bear the brunt of the economic and societal costs of the development. However, despite the fact that these communities are often the most impacted, they are also the least equipped to reap the benefits of such large-scale energy projects. Unfortunately, funding limitations create barriers for tribes and local communities to engage in a meaningful way. However, with the appropriate resources, these communities can be integral to decision-making through local engagement, public workshops, and technical assistance. It is critically important that these communities have the capacity to attend workshops and meetings, respond to technical requests, and participate in renewable energy infrastructure's decision making processes.

Solution

AB 2537 will establish the Local and Tribal Communities Offshore Wind Capacity Building Fund to enhance the ability of local communities and tribes to actively participate in the offshore wind development process, including project planning and development. AB 2537 will also update the renewable energy central procurement mechanism to include allocations to the Program as a solicitation criteria to be considered as part of the procurement process. Together, these changes will ensure that frontline communities are able to engage in offshore wind development in a meaningful way. [AB 2537 Bill Analysis](#) . [AB 525 Draft Strategic Plan Overview \(Pg 33\)](#)

BILLS WE'RE SUPPORTING:

OCEAN ECOSYSTEMS



Pass AB 1407 (Addis) To Restore Kelp

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 1407?

Background

Kelp forests and marine ecosystems in California are vital for biodiversity, the economy, and cultural heritage. They sequester significant amounts of carbon, mitigate climate change effects like ocean acidification, and support various industries. Leveraging these natural solutions can help California achieve its goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 while preserving its marine biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Problem

California's marine ecosystems are threatened. Pollution and climate change-induced habitat loss affect key habitats like kelp forests, eelgrass meadows, and oyster beds. These losses jeopardize biodiversity and disrupt coastal ecosystems. Despite commitments to restoration, regulatory barriers, lack of coordination, and insufficient funding make restoration difficult. Urgent action is needed to address these pressing threats and safeguard California's marine heritage.

Solution

While California has not begun to advance large-scale marine ecosystem restoration, it has been successfully achieved in other parts of the United States and around the world to meet the pace and scale of decline for critical biogenic habitats like kelp, oysters, and seagrass. Large-scale ecosystem restoration delivers multiple societal benefits including jobs, economic impact, and cultural connectivity. AB 1407 begins recovering California's coastal ecosystems by establishing a clear, acreage-based definition for 'large-scale' restoration; developing clear restoration targets for acres of kelp forests, eelgrass meadows, and native oyster beds, and creates a pathway to achieve and monitor progress towards goals; creating a working group to better facilitate interagency coordination to address hurdles that slow restoration efforts; and forming an Ocean Restoration and Recovery Fund to support the development and execution of large-scale marine resource restoration and enhancement projects.

[ONE PAGER](#)
[BILL ANALYSIS](#)

Pass AB 2298 (Hart) To Prevent Boat Strikes on Whales

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 2298?

Background

Every year, the world's largest container ships make thousands of trips along the California coast, emitting a staggering 200 tons of nitrogen oxide (NOx) per day. These toxic emissions are a major contributor to smog and acid rain, and adversely impact air quality for coastal communities. The waters off California are also feeding grounds for significant populations of endangered whales. Sea traffic from shipping, industrial operations, and recreational boating adds to the complex marine environment that whales must navigate.

Problem

Ship strikes are the leading cause of death for blue, humpback, and fin whales off California's coast. Furthermore, shipping noise can disrupt their navigation, feeding patterns, and social interactions.

Solution

AB 2298 will require the State to coordinate with important stakeholders, such as federal and local agencies, nonprofits, and the marine industry, to establish a statewide voluntary vessel speed reduction program. By encouraging ships to slow down in critical marine zones, AB 2298 will protect endangered whales from ship strikes, reduce disruptive noise that hampers whale communication, and lower carbon emissions along California's coast. In 2014, a voluntary vessel speed reduction program called *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* was formed by the Santa Barbara County and Ventura County Air Pollution Control Districts, which grew to include the Bay Area Air District in 2017. The program encourages ocean-going vessels to voluntarily travel 10 knots or less in designated areas by providing small incentives and publicity to program participants. To date, *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* has achieved over 1.1 million slow speed miles, reduced more than 4,400 tons of smog-forming emissions, and prevented whale strikes by almost 50%. The success of the program was a result of the strong and dedicated partnership between shipping companies, local governments, marine sanctuaries, and environmental organizations - all working together to protect public health and marine mammals.

[Approps Bill Analysis](#) . [Blog](#) . [Related Science](#) . [Opinion piece](#)

Pass AB 2196 (Connolly) To Protect Beavers for Upstream Restoration

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 2196?

Background

The North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) resides in many kinds of habitats, including saline coastal ecosystems. Salmon and beaver lived together for centuries before European influence changed the landscape of the West. Beavers and salmon have co-evolved over thousands of years, and beavers can help salmon recover. Beaver dams create wetlands that provide habitat and forage for many species, including salmon. Beaver ponds also store cool water in summer, creating habitat for native fish species like steelhead, juvenile Coho, and spring Chinook. Beavers also provide other benefits to watersheds and improve water quality. There is momentum in California to restore beavers to their historic habitats. This program includes the California Department of Fish and Wildlife developing a new beaver management plan, conducting [beaver relocation pilots with tribes](#) and others, updating [the depredation policy](#) to reduce lethal take and promote coexistence, and [\\$2 million in state funding](#) for non-lethal beaver damage management through a new Beaver Help Desk with [a partnership with Occidental Arts & Ecology Center](#).

Problem

Because the state's Beaver Restoration Program was created through a budget proposal, the objectives of the CDFW program are not codified to ensure this important work remains a priority in the future, particularly beyond the current Administration, which has prioritized such projects and wildlife goals.

Solution

By codifying the new Beaver Restoration Program at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, AB 2196 helps fortify the momentum underway so that it is resilient to changing administrations and their priorities. We want to see beaver restoration long into the future.

[Bill Analysis](#) | [More Info \(EAC\)](#) | [Bring the Beaver Back Campaign \(OAEC\)](#) | [Joint Support Letter](#) | [Bay Nature](#)

BILLS WE'RE SUPPORTING:

PLASTIC POLLUTION PREVENTION



Pass SB 1053 (Blakespear) and AB 2236 (Bauer Kahn) To Ban Plastic Bags

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU BE A CO AUTHOR on SB 1053 and AB 2236?

Background

California passed the nation's first statewide bag ban ten years ago. Since then, we've seen an overall decline in plastic bags in the environment, but the thicker plastic bags are still causing problems.

Problem

The original statewide plastic bag ban included an exemption for thicker plastic bags made of high-density polyethylene, or HDPE. These thicker plastic bags are not recyclable, harm wildlife and our environment, clog sewage drains, contaminate our drinking water, and break down into toxic microplastics that accumulate in our oceans and landfills.

Solution

SB 1053 and AB 2236 closes a major loophole to California's initial ban to ensure consumers use either reusable or paper bags. The legislation tightens standards for reusable bags and requires stores to provide paper bags made from a required minimum of recycled content and let consumers use reusable bags.

[Assembly Approps Bill Analysis](#) | [Surfrider Foundation's Campaign Page & Action Alert](#) | [Californians Against Waste](#) | [PIRG Plastic Bag Ban Report](#)

Pass AB 2468 (Bennett) To Phase Out Single Use Beverage Bottles

ASK OF YOUR LEGISLATORS: WILL YOU SUPPORT AB 2468?

Background

Single-use plastics have an irrefutable negative impact on pollution, necessitating urgent attention by the Legislature. Plastic pollution affects both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, endangers wildlife, drives greenhouse gas emissions that exacerbate climate change, poses risks to human health, and deepens environmental injustice. Addressing single-use plastic bottles in phasing out procurement practices is a straightforward first step that will make a significant impact.

Problem

Single-use plastic beverage bottles are consistently in the top ten items collected during beach cleanups. Once plastics enter the environment, plastics continue to break down into smaller and smaller particles, or microplastics. Because they are so small, microplastics can travel in the air and water, and can be easily absorbed by living things and accumulate up the food chain. Not only are microplastics harming our environment, it's harming us. [Studies](#) have found microplastics in our blood and that humans may be consuming and inhaling up to 121,000 microplastic particles each year. Some of these chemicals have been linked to health problems such as metabolic disorders, cancers, and reduced lung capacity.

Solution

AB 2648 reduces single-use beverage bottle consumption by prohibiting a state agency from entering into, modifying, amending, or renewing a contract to purchase single-use plastic bottles for internal use or resale. AB 2648 also encourages state agencies to install and maintain water refill stations. The State of California has enormous purchasing power and phasing out the purchase of bottled beverages will make significant impacts.

[Approps Bill Analysis](#) | [Surfrider Foundation's Campaign Page & Action Alert](#)