

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 30 (Kalra)
As Amended
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Declares that it is the established policy of the state that all Californians have safe and affordable access to nature and access to the benefits of nature.

Major Provisions

- 1) Declares the following to be the established policy of the state:
 - a) That all Californians have safe and affordable access to nature and access to the benefits of nature.
 - b) That outdoor access to nature, and access to the benefits of nature are essential parts of the public health and well-being, identity, culture, and economic prosperity of the people of the State of California.
- 2) Requires, when implementing this policy, that the state prioritize the voices, needs, and priorities of communities of color, indigenous communities, and economically disadvantaged communities.
- 3) Requires all relevant state agencies, including the Natural Resources Agency, state departments, including the Department of Transportation, and their respective departments, boards, and commissions, to incorporate this state policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, and grant criteria, or making expenditures, pertinent to the uses of outdoor access to nature.
- 4) Makes findings and declarations related to the importance of nature and access to nature.

COMMENTS

Access. "Access" embodies both physical (e.g., distance to a park) and social (e.g., safety) aspects and varies widely throughout California. According to the Trust for Public Land (TPL), two California cities rank among the top 10 in the nation with parks access [Irvine and San Francisco] while many California cities also rank among the bottom third. TPL's 2020 ParkScore® index found that one in three Californians do not live within a 10 minute walk to a quality park. According to a recent Hispanic Access Foundation report, fifty-five percent of Latinos in California lack access to open space, and significantly fewer acres of green space are present in many Black and Latino neighborhoods when compared to predominantly white neighborhoods.

Historical and continuing inequities, intersecting roadways, less acreage, lack of access to transportation, lack of safety, and physical condition/maintenance of spaces are just some of the barriers to parks and open space access. The COVID-19 pandemic also appears to have exacerbated existing inequities in access to parks and open spaces with lower income and underserved communities experiencing an even greater lack of access.

Benefits. Parks and open/green spaces provide numerous benefits to the community, environment, and economy. Use of parks and open spaces is correlated with a number of mental and physical health benefits, including, but not limited to, decreased risk of stress, anxiety, and depression, lessened symptoms of ADD/ADHD, as well as reduced risk of psychiatric illness for those with childhood exposure to open/green space.

The American Public Health Association's policy statement on Improving Health and Wellness through Access to Nature states: "People of all ages and abilities enjoy higher levels of health and well-being when they have nature nearby in parks, gardens, greenways, naturalized schoolyards and playgrounds, and natural landscaping around homes and workplaces. Access to nature has been related to lower levels of mortality and illness, higher levels of outdoor physical activity, restoration from stress, a greater sense of well-being, and greater social capital."

Parks and open spaces also provide environmental benefits as they can remove pollution and filter air, provide shade to reduce the urban heat island effect, attenuate noise, absorb water as an alternative to stormwater control systems, and replenish local groundwater reservoirs.

Parks and open space are also highly valued as economic drivers, as they have been found to increase property values and subsequent tax revenues by as much as twenty percent, draw new businesses and visitors to cities, and are reported to be among the top amenities sought after for people choosing a place to live.

Relevant Executive Orders. Executive Order N-82-20, issued by Governor Newsom in October 2020, establishes the goal of protecting thirty percent of California's lands and waters by 2030. To further this goal, the Executive Order directed the California Natural Resources Agency and other relevant state agencies, in consultation with the California Biodiversity Collaborative, to develop and report strategies to the Governor no later than February 1, 2022. The executive order requires that these strategies protect and restore biodiversity and enable enduring conservation measures on a broad range of landscapes, among other things.

President Biden's issued an Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad (January 27, 2021), that included tasking the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, and the heads of other relevant agencies, to submit a report recommending steps that the United States should take, working with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, agricultural and forest landowners, fishermen, and other key stakeholders, to achieve the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030.

According to the Author

Being able to access the many benefits of nature is necessary for the mental and physical health, and overall well-being of people, but studies have shown that people of color are less likely to have access to nature and indigenous communities living in rural areas have likewise suffered disproportionately from environmental degradation and displacement. As the destruction of nature accelerates at unprecedented rates due to climate change, marginalized communities will continue to bear more of the negative consequences of the climate crisis.

Arguments in Support

Those in support argue that acknowledging that access to nature as established policy of the state is a necessary first step to close the nature gap for many nature-deprived communities and will

help advance and promote the state's goals to protect biodiversity and support the state's climate goals.

Arguments in Opposition

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, the fiscal impact of this bill is unknown.

VOTES

ASM WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE: 11-4-0

YES: Eduardo Garcia, Bennett, Friedman, Cristina Garcia, Kalra, Levine, Muratsuchi, Blanca Rubio, Salas, Villapudua, Ward

NO: Megan Dahle, Bigelow, Nguyen, Smith

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 12-3-1

YES: Holden, Bryan, Calderon, Luz Rivas, Gabriel, McCarty, Levine, Quirk, Robert Rivas, Akilah Weber, Stone, Mullin

NO: Bigelow, Davies, Fong

ABS, ABST OR NV: Megan Dahle

UPDATED

VERSION: January 24, 2022

CONSULTANT: Keith Cialino / W., P., & W. / (916) 319-2096

FN: 0002140