

Date of Hearing: April 28, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
Lorena Gonzalez, Chair  
AB 72 (Petrie-Norris) – As Introduced December 7, 2020

Policy Committee: Natural Resources Vote: 11 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill establishes the Coastal Adaptation Permitting Act of 2021. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires the Natural Resources Agency (NRA) to explore, and authorizes it to implement, options within its jurisdiction to establish a more coordinated and efficient regulatory review and permitting process for coastal adaptation projects.
- 2) By July 1, 2023, requires the NRA to report to the Legislature on suggestions and recommendations for improving and expediting the regulatory review and permitting process for coastal adaptation projects.
- 3) Defines “coastal adaptation projects” as activities intended or designated to address, mitigate or prevent the adverse social and economic effects of sea level rise.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) NRA costs, likely in the range of \$250,000 to \$500,000, to review regulatory and permitting processes within its jurisdiction for coastal adaptation projects, and report to the Legislature (General Fund). This bill does not require implementation which would require additional resources.
- 2) Future unknown state cost pressures for various state agencies if new regulatory review and permitting processes are adopted that are intended to improve coordination and efficiency for coastal adaptation projects (various funds).

Without knowing what the NRA recommendations will be, or if they will ultimately be implemented, it is not feasible to estimate the cost pressures of this bill. However, it is likely that creating a more efficient process will increase the need for staff to assist in reviewing projects without compromising important environmental laws such as the Coastal Act, the California Endangered Species Act and the California Environmental Quality Act.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Purpose.** The purpose of this bill is to address the threat of sea level rise with the urgency required by directing the NRA to evaluate and authorizing the agency to implement a more coordinated and efficient regulatory review process for coastal adaptation projects.

It is unclear if the NRA would have the statutory authority to implement changes to regulatory review processes at other state agencies, however, this bill also requires the NRA to report to the Legislature its recommendations, which will allow the Legislature to pursue the statutory changes if it desires.

- 2) **Similar Recommendation for the Coastal Commission.** Last November, the NRA released a report developed in collaboration with the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Food and Agriculture and the State Water Resources Control Board entitled “Cutting Green Tape: Regulatory Efficiencies for a Resilient Environment.” The report is part of a larger initiative to increase the pace and scale of environmental restoration in California.

The report indicated complex and overlapping permitting requirements can result in fewer and smaller actions, slower pace and higher costs for projects. The effort focused on improving regulatory processes and policies. The report identified 12 recommendations including improving efficiencies for smaller projects, larger projects, projects in the coastal zone and projects to enhance streamflow and recharge groundwater.

Recommendation 11 is focused on improving efficiencies in the coastal zone by authorizing the Coastal Commission to explore and implement efficiencies within its authority to advance restoration projects that are consistent with, or complementary to, existing and planned efficiencies authorized by other state entities.