

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Juan Carrillo, Chair

AB 1548 (Pellerin) – As Amended April 15, 2026

SUBJECT: Conservation: the Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Authority.

SUMMARY: Creates the Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Authority (Authority) Act. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines the following terms:
 - a) “Board” to mean the governing board of the Authority.
 - b) “Local government” to mean a county, city, special district, or other local or regional governmental entity of the Monterey Bay region.
 - c) “Monterey Bay region” or “region” to mean the Counties of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz.
 - d) “Natural lands” to mean lands consisting of forests, grasslands, deserts, freshwater and riparian systems, wetlands, coastal and estuarine areas, watersheds, wildlands, or wildlife habitat, or lands used for recreational purposes such as parks, urban and community forests, trails, greenbelts, and other similar open-space land. For purposes of this paragraph, “parks” includes, but is not limited to, areas that provide public green space.
 - e) “Public member” to mean a board member described in 6), below.
 - f) “Working lands” to mean lands used for farming, grazing, or the production of forest products.
- 2) Establishes the Authority as a regional entity with jurisdiction extending throughout the Monterey Bay region.
- 3) Specifies that the jurisdiction of the Authority is not subject to local agency formation commission (LAFCO) Law.
- 4) Provides that Authority’s purpose is to raise and allocate public and private funds for purposes of restoring, enhancing, protecting, engaging in long-term stewardship, and improving access for the enjoyment of natural and working lands in the Monterey Bay region and along the region’s shoreline.
- 5) Specifies that it is the intent of the Legislature that the Authority complements existing and future efforts of communities, local governments, and state and federal entities that address the goals of this bill.
- 6) Requires the Authority to be governed by a board that consists of nine voting members as follows:

- a) One supervisor of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey. This member shall be appointed to the board by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey. On or before April 1, 2027, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey shall make the initial appointment.
- b) One supervisor of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz. This member shall be appointed to the board by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz. On or before April 1, 2027, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz shall make the initial appointment.
- c) One supervisor of the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Benito. This member shall be appointed to the board by the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Benito. On or before April 1, 2027, the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Benito shall make the initial appointment.
- d) One elected official of a city in the County of Monterey. This member shall be appointed to the board by the city selection committee for the County of Monterey created pursuant to existing law. On or before April 1, 2027, the city selection committee shall make its initial appointment.
- e) One elected official of a city in the County of Santa Cruz. This member shall be appointed to the board by the city selection committee for the County of Santa Cruz created pursuant to existing law. On or before April 1, 2027, the city selection committee shall make its initial appointment.
- f) One elected official of a city in the County of San Benito. This member shall be appointed to the board by the city selection committee for the County of San Benito created pursuant existing law. On or before April 1, 2027, the city selection committee shall make its initial appointment.
- g) Three members of the general public who reside or work within the jurisdiction of the Authority. These public members shall represent an area of expertise and be appointed, as follows:
 - i) One public member shall have significant experience working with California Native American tribes and underserved populations, including experience supporting tribal-led stewardship, cultural and ecological restoration, renewal of traditional land care practices, and efforts that expand safe and welcoming access to the outdoors for communities that have historically faced barriers to such access. On or before April 1, 2027, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey shall make the initial appointment for this public member.
 - ii) One public member shall have significant experience in working lands, including forestry management, timber harvesting, agricultural production or grazing, or both, community based, and professional experience that supports forestry, farming and ranching, such as soil health, water management, erosion control, watershed protection, agricultural conservation easements, long term land stewardship, and other efforts that strengthen both agricultural and forestry sector viability and climate resilience in the Monterey Bay region. On or before April 1, 2027, the Board of

- Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz shall make the initial appointment for this public member.
- iii) One public member shall have significant experience in biodiversity and habitat protection, including work that conserves or restores native habitats, protects wildlife movement corridors, improves wetlands and coastal resilience, or strengthens the health of rivers, streams, and headwaters. This may include experience with land stewardship, conservation easements, restoration ecology, or community-based projects that support both ecological integrity and local quality of life across the Monterey Bay region. On or before April 1, 2027, the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Benito shall make the initial appointment for this public member.
 - h) After its first meeting, the board shall appoint each succeeding public member upon expiration of that public member's term or other vacancy of that public member's position on the board. In appointing public members, the board shall seek to ensure reasonable geographic balance across the three counties within the Monterey Bay region.
 - 7) Specifies that a board member shall be appointed for a three-year term, except as provided in 8), below.
 - 8) Provides that, to establish staggered terms to ensure continuity of the board's governance, the initial board members described in c) and e) of 6), above, shall be appointed to an initial two-year term, and all remaining initial board members shall be appointed to a three-year term.
 - 9) Authorizes a board member to serve multiple terms.
 - 10) Requires a vacancy on the board to be filled by the appropriate appointing authority within 90 days from the date that the vacancy occurs.
 - 11) Provides that all members of the board shall serve at the pleasure of their appointing authority.
 - 12) Specifies that members of the board are subject to the Political Reform Act of 1974.
 - 13) Requires a member of the board to exercise that member's independent judgment on behalf of the interests of residents, property owners, and the public as a whole in furthering the intent and purposes of this bill.
 - 14) Authorizes the board to provide that members of the board may receive an amount not to exceed \$100 per day for each attendance at a meeting of the board. The maximum compensation allowable to a board member on any given day shall be \$100. Board members shall not receive compensation for more than two meetings of the board in a calendar month.
 - 15) Requires the board's first meeting to occur at a time and place in the Monterey Bay region determined by the initial board member representing the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey after all nine initial board members are appointed. The initial board member of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey shall act as the acting chair at the board's first meeting.

- 16) Specifies that the board shall select a chair and vice chair of the board at its first meeting and annually thereafter as follows:
 - a) The chair shall annually rotate, in alphabetical order by county, among the three county supervisor representatives.
 - b) The vice chair shall preside in the absence of the chair.
 - c) The terms of the chair and vice chair shall be one year.
 - d) If the chair is unable to serve their term, the next board member in the rotation described in a), above, shall serve as chair for that term.
- 17) Requires, after its first meeting, the board to hold meetings at times and places determined by the board.
- 18) Specifies that meetings of the board are subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act' open meeting laws.
- 19) Requires, within six months of the date of the board's first meeting, the board to convene a Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Advisory Committee to assist and advise the board in carrying out its functions. The advisory committee shall meet on a regular basis.
- 20) Specifies that the advisory committee shall consist of no more than 12 members. The membership of the advisory committee shall be determined by the board based upon criteria that provide a broad representation of interests in the Authority's jurisdiction over the long-term stewardship of the Monterey Bay region. The advisory committee's membership may include representatives from any the following:
 - a) California Native American tribes that have historical, cultural, and present-day connections to the lands and waters in the Monterey Bay region.
 - b) State and federal agencies with expertise or missions related to long term land conservation and stewardship, including, but not limited to, the State Coastal Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
 - c) Resource conservation districts, groundwater sustainability agencies, open space districts, regional park districts, other special districts with expertise or missions related to long term land conservation and stewardship, and land trusts that own or operate parcels in the Monterey Bay region.
 - d) Community-based organizations and nongovernmental organizations working to advance land and water stewardship, cultural and ecological restoration, biodiversity, agricultural viability, equitable outdoor access, or climate resilience in the Monterey Bay region.
 - e) Members of the public from the Monterey Bay region, including individuals with experience in farming or ranching, conservation science, youth stewardship,

environmental justice, or local community organizing.

- 21) Requires the board to adopt procedures to provide for per diem expenses for advisory committee members who lack adequate resources to cover their participation in the advisory committee's meetings.
- 22) Specifies that the board is the legislative body of the Authority and, consistent with this bill, shall establish policies for the operation of the Authority.
- 23) Authorizes the board to act either by ordinance or resolution to regulate the Authority and implement this bill.
- 24) Provides that five voting members of the board shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of transacting any business of the board. A recorded majority vote of the total voting membership of the board is required on each action.
- 25) Specifies that, in carrying out its duties under this bill, the board shall ensure that the Authority's policies, funding programs, and decisionmaking processes advance fair treatment and meaningful involvement of rural, agricultural, tribal, underserved, and disadvantaged communities, consistent with the meaning of environmental justice as defined in existing law.
- 26) Provides that the Authority has, and may exercise, all powers, expressed or implied, that are necessary to carry out the intent and purposes of this bill, including, but not limited to, the power to do all of the following:
 - a) Levy a benefit assessment, special tax levied pursuant existing law, or property-related fee consistent with the Constitutional requirements, including, but not limited to, a benefit assessment levied pursuant to any of the following:
 - i) The Improvement Act of 1911.
 - ii) The Improvement Bond Act of 1915.
 - iii) The Municipal Improvement Act of 1913.
 - iv) The Landscaping and Lighting Act of 1972.
 - v) Any other statutory authorization.
 - b) Before levying an assessment on working lands, the Authority may consider the economic impacts on working lands, such as agricultural lands and lands used for timber harvesting.
 - c) Any debt, liability, or other obligation incurred by the Authority shall not constitute a debt, liability, or other obligation of any county, city, or other local government within the region. The full faith and credit or taxing power of a county or city shall not be pledged to the payment of any debt, liability, or other obligation of the Authority unless

expressly authorized by that county or city.

- d) Apply for and receive grants from federal and state agencies.
- e) Solicit and accept gifts, fees, grants, and allocations from public and private entities.
- f) Issue revenue bonds for any of the purposes authorized by this title pursuant to the Revenue Bond Law of 1941.
- g) Incur general obligation bonded indebtedness for improvement of real property or for funding or refunding of any outstanding indebtedness, subject to the following requirements:
 - i) For purposes of incurring general obligation bonded indebtedness, the Authority shall comply with existing law, as specified.
 - ii) Notwithstanding any other law, the total amount of outstanding bonded indebtedness the Authority may incur shall not exceed an unspecified number of dollars.
- h) Receive and manage a dedicated revenue source.
- i) Deposit or invest moneys of the Authority in banks or financial institutions in the state in accordance with state law.
- j) Sue and be sued, except as otherwise provided by law, in all actions and proceedings, in all courts and tribunals of competent jurisdiction.
- k) Engage counsel and other professional services.
- l) Enter into and perform all necessary contracts and other agreements.
- m) Enter into joint powers agreements pursuant to the Joint Exercise of Powers Act.
- n) Hire staff, define their qualifications and duties, and provide a schedule of compensation for the performance of their duties.
- o) Use interim or temporary staff that a state agency, or a local government within the Monterey Bay region, agrees to provide. A person who performs duties as interim or temporary staff shall not be considered an employee of the Authority.
- p) Award grants to public and private entities for eligible projects performed within the Authority's jurisdiction to implement the purposes of this title. In reviewing and assessing projects for eligibility, the Authority shall solicit and consider input from the advisory committee. The Authority shall adopt a procedure for evaluating proposals in consultation with the advisory committee.
- q) Provide advance payments to grant recipients when necessary to support participation by underresourced, rural, agricultural, tribal, or community-based organizations, consistent

with procedures adopted by the Authority.

- 27) Specifies that the Authority shall not acquire or own real property. This bill does not preclude the Authority from awarding grants that could be used by the grantee to acquire or own real property.
- 28) Provides that, if the Authority proposes a specified measure that will generate revenues, or if the voters within the Authority's jurisdiction qualify an initiative measure for the ballot, the board of supervisors of the county or counties in which the measure is proposed shall call a special election on the measure. The special election shall be consolidated with the next regularly scheduled statewide election that occurs at least 88 days after the special election is called and the measure shall be submitted to the voters in the appropriate counties, consistent with the California Constitution, as applicable.
- 29) Specifies that the Authority is a district, as defined in existing law. Except as otherwise provided in this section, a measure proposed by the Authority that requires voter approval shall be submitted to the voters of the Authority in accordance with existing law.
- 30) Provides that, notwithstanding any law, the voters of the Authority shall have the power to propose and adopt or amend a special tax by initiative petition.
- 31) Specifies that, because the Authority has no revenues as of the effective date of this bill, the appropriations limit for the Authority shall be originally established based on receipts from the initial measure that would generate revenues for the Authority, and that establishment of an appropriations limit shall not be deemed a change in an appropriations limit for purposes the California Constitution.
- 32) Requires the Authority to file with the board of supervisors of each county in which the measure shall appear on the ballot a resolution of the Authority requesting consolidation, and setting forth the exact form of the ballot question, in accordance with existing law.
- 33) Requires each county included in the measure to use the exact ballot question, impartial analysis, and ballot language provided by the Authority. If two or more counties included in the measure are required to prepare a translation of ballot materials into the same language other than English, the county that contains the largest population, as determined by the most recent federal decennial census, among those counties that are required to prepare a translation of ballot materials into the same language other than English, shall prepare the translation and that translation shall be used by the other county or counties, as applicable.
- 34) Provides that, if a measure proposed by the Authority pursuant to this bill is submitted to the voters of the Authority in two or more counties, the elections officials of those counties shall mutually agree to use the same letter designation for the measure.
- 35) Specifies that the county elections official of each county shall report the results of the special election to the Authority.
- 36) Provides that, for the first election at which either the Authority proposes a specified measure that would generate revenues or the voters within the Authority's jurisdiction qualify an initiative measure for the ballot that would generate revenues, the Authority shall reimburse

each county in which that measure appears on the ballot only for the incremental costs incurred by the county elections official related to submitting the measure to the voters.

37) Specifies that, for purposes of 36), above, “incremental costs” include both of the following:

- a) The cost to prepare a translation of ballot materials into a language other than English by any county.
- b) The additional costs that exceed the costs incurred for other election races or ballot measures, if any, appearing on the same ballot in each county in which the measure appears on the ballot, including both of the following:
 - i) The printing and mailing of ballot materials.
 - ii) The canvass of the vote regarding the measure pursuant to existing law.

38) Provides that all records prepared, owned, used, or retained by the Authority are public records for purposes of the California Public Records Act.

39) Authorizes the Authority to award grants to local governments, tribal entities, nonprofit organizations, and private entities, including, but not limited to, owners of agricultural land, for eligible projects on public and private lands within the Monterey Bay region.

40) Specifies that an eligible project shall do one or more of the following:

- a) Restore, protect, enhance, or maintain natural, working, or open space lands, including, but not limited to, rangelands, farms, wetlands, riparian corridors, forests, coastal habitats, and watersheds, to improve ecological function, soil health, water quality, and regional climate resilience.
- b) Implement nature-based or working-lands practices that contribute to greenhouse gas reduction, biodiversity protection, or water and soil resilience, including, but not limited to, riparian, stream, and floodplain restoration, soil health, carbon sequestration, and groundwater recharge, beneficial fire, vegetation, or grazing management that supports wildfire risk reduction and ecosystem health, and habitat connectivity.
- c) Support voluntary and collaborative conservation and land management partnerships among tribes, agricultural landowners, conservation organizations, local governments, the state, and the federal government, including, but not limited to, efforts that sustain long-term coordination, shared planning, and stewardship, strengthen cultural and ecological stewardship, sustain working lands, and advance the region’s ecological and economic resilience.
- d) Support long-term stewardship, facilitated access, monitoring, and maintenance necessary to sustain ecological, agricultural, or community benefits, including community education, outreach, or training that strengthens long-term stewardship outcomes.

- 41) Provides that a grantee shall not use eminent domain to acquire lands to achieve the goals of an eligible project.
- 42) Provides that, in awarding grants pursuant to this bill, the Authority shall give priority to projects that, to the greatest extent possible, do all of the following:
 - a) Demonstrate measurable benefits to climate resilience, biodiversity, water resilience, agricultural viability, equitable outdoor access, and ancestral land return and access, including projects that expand community participation or reduce barriers to engagement in planning and stewardship.
 - b) Demonstrate that rural, agricultural, tribal, underserved, or disadvantaged communities were meaningfully engaged in project design, development, and implementation, and that the project delivers measurable benefits to those communities.
 - c) Support the growth of the region's stewardship workforce, including training, apprenticeships, internships, tribal youth stewardship programs, agricultural and land management career pathways, and other efforts that build local capacity for long term land and water stewardship, restoration, and climate resilience.
- 43) Requires the Authority to consult with the advisory committee when developing grant evaluation procedures and funding recommendations. The Authority shall adopt transparent criteria for evaluating grant proposals.
- 44) Provides that grants awarded pursuant to this bill may be used to support all phases of eligible projects, including project design, planning, permitting, construction, implementation, operations, monitoring, maintenance, reporting, administrative requirements, and stewardship, except to the extent that the source of funding for the grant prohibits use of its funding for such use.
- 45) Specifies that the board shall not award a grant for a project on private lands unless it first determines that the project will provide a long term public benefit consistent with the purposes of this bill.
- 46) Requires the board to provide for regular audits of the Authority's accounts and records and to maintain accounting records and to report accounting transactions in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles adopted by the Government Accounting Standards Board of the Financial Accounting Foundation for both public reporting purposes and for reporting of activities to the Controller.
- 47) Specifies that the board shall provide for annual financial reports. The board shall make copies of the annual financial reports available to the public.
- 48) Requires the Authority to be funded through specified sources and any other lawful source. Funds for the initial establishment and support of activities under this bill, including initial administrative costs, may be advanced individually or collectively from specified local jurisdictions, grants or awards from state or federal agencies, philanthropic funding, or any other lawful source, and may be repaid by the initial proceeds from revenue generated pursuant to this bill. A county may, at its discretion, provide staffing, administrative, fiscal,

or legal services to the Authority pursuant to a written agreement approved by that county's board of supervisors. Any such agreement shall specify the scope of services, cost allocation, reimbursement terms, and termination provisions. Any direct state funding shall be subject to a future appropriation by the Legislature for this purpose.

- 49) Finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable because of the unique need to establish the Authority for purposes of restoring, enhancing, protecting, engaging in long-term stewardship, and improving access to natural and working lands in the Counties of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz.
- 50) Provides that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this bill contains costs mandated by the State, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made.
- 51) Contains other findings and declarations to support its purposes.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Natural Resources Agency, which oversees six state departments, 11 conservancies, 17 boards and commissions, three councils, and one urban park in Los Angeles that consists of two museums. [Government Code (GC) § 12805]
- 2) Establishes the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority as a regional entity to generate and allocate resources for the protection and enhancement of tidal wetlands and other wildlife habitat in and surrounding the San Francisco Bay. (GC §§ 66700 – 66706)
- 3) Establishes the Salton Sea Authority as the joint powers authority comprised of the County of Imperial, the County of Riverside, the Imperial Irrigation District, the Coachella Valley Water District, and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribe. (Fish and Game Code § 2941)
- 4) Establishes the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to maintain an equilibrium between the regions' natural endowment and its manmade environment, to preserve the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities of the region, and for the purpose of enhancing the efficiency and governmental effectiveness of the region, and grants the authority to adopt and enforce a regional plan of resource conservation and orderly development, to exercise effective environmental controls, and to perform other essential functions. (GC § 67040)
- 5) Establishes the Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority to perform coordination and implementation activities, within the boundaries of Sonoma County, to assist those agencies in meeting their greenhouse gas emission reduction goals as set forth in resolutions and adopted plans and develop, coordinate, and implement programs and policies to comply with the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 [AB 32 (Núñez), Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006], and other federal or state mandates and programs designed to respond to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. (Public Utilities Code § 181000)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill is keyed fiscal and contains a state-mandated local program.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Bill Summary.** This bill establishes the Authority to raise and allocate public funds for the purposes of restoring, enhancing, protecting, engaging in long-term stewardship, and improving access for the enjoyment of natural and working lands in the Monterey Bay region. This bill describes the board membership of the Authority and their required duties, including requiring the board to convene a Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Advisory Committee. This bill also enumerates the financing powers of the Authority, election procedures for imposing revenue measures, and authorizes the Authority to award grants.

This bill is sponsored by the Trust for Public Lands.

- 2) **Author's Statement.** According to the author, "There is a unique interconnectedness between Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito Counties. We share lands, waterways, mountains and valleys. This region represents one of California's most ecologically and culturally significant landscapes. Increasing climate pressures including wildfire risk, coastal erosion, drought, flooding, and watershed degradation are impacting the viability of many of our iconic beaches, wildlife, redwood forests, coastlines, open spaces and rivers. The health of the region's landscapes, farms, forests, wetlands, and coastlines are closely tied to the region's economic and community well-being.

"Despite these shared challenges, local governments and community organizations often lack the resources and capacity to compete for and manage the growing number of state and federal climate resilience funding opportunities.

"AB 1548 establishes the Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Authority to help the region work together to attract new resources, strengthen coordination, and support long-term stewardship of the lands and waters that sustain local communities and the Central Coast economy."

- 3) **Monterey Bay region.** The Monterey Bay region covers an area of 3.1 million acres and represents one of California's most ecologically and culturally significant landscapes. The Monterey Bay region is home to biodiversity and vital habitats that support native species such as California condors, steelhead, salmon, endemic plants, and critical wildlife corridors and nesting sites.

The Monterey Bay region is shaped by rivers, floodplains, and some of the state's largest wetland systems, including the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve and the Watsonville Slough Ecological Reserve. The region's major rivers include the San Lorenzo River, which drains from the Santa Cruz Mountains; the Pajaro River, which directly links the region; and the Salinas and Carmel Rivers. These waterways, along with the surrounding mountains, valleys, and wetlands of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Gabilan Range, the Diablo Range, and the Santa Lucia Range, support one of the world's most diverse and productive agricultural economies, where farmers and ranchers manage millions of acres and play a key role in land stewardship and connectivity that benefits both the region's economy and ecological health. The preservation of agricultural lands in active production is vital to the region's resilience and long-term prosperity.

- 4) **Monterey Bay Regional Authority.** The 2024 *Monterey Bay Natural and Working Lands Climate Mitigation and Resilience Study*, conducted by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), identified land stewardship and management strategies across the region that could significantly reduce emissions while strengthening climate resilience.

The study also found that maintaining and managing the region's natural and working lands will require sustained regional investment and coordination across jurisdictions. Similarly, the state's Regional Investment Initiative under the Labor and Workforce Development Agency identified natural and working lands as a key sector of the economy and as essential sectors to invest in.

- 5) **San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority.** This bill is largely modeled after the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Bay Authority) that was created by the Legislature in 2008 [AB 2954 (Lieber), Chapter 690, Statutes of 2008] as a regional government agency charged with raising and allocating resources for the restoration, enhancement, protection, and enjoyment of wetlands and wildlife habitat in the San Francisco Bay and along its shoreline.

The Legislature granted the Bay Authority the ability to utilize several financial tools to raise revenue, including levying a benefit assessment, special tax, or property-related fee, subject to constitutional requirements. Proposition 218 (1996) established that a tax levied by a special-purpose authority is a special tax which requires two-thirds voter approval. Additionally, the Bay Authority can issue revenue bonds under the Revenue Bond Law of 1941 and incur bond indebtedness, subject to specified requirements.

As a regional government agency, the Bay Authority spans across nine counties. AB 2103 (Hill), Chapter 373, Statutes of 2010, prescribed the method of how the Bay Authority places a proposal to levy a special tax before the voters. AB 1656 (Fong), Chapter 535, Statutes of 2012, made membership and project eligibility changes, but also contained a provision to extend the sunset date for the Bay Authority from 2029 to 2036. SB 279 (Hancock), Chapter 514, Statutes of 2013, specified procedures for conducting a multi-county election to approve a special tax measure proposed by the Bay Authority. Lastly, AB 746 (Ting), Chapter extended the sunset date from January 1, 2029, to January 1, 2049, for statutes governing the Bay Authority and made other specified changes relating to its finance provisions.

- 6) **Arguments in Support.** According to the Trust for Public Land, the sponsors of this bill, "Trust for Public Land worked closely with Assemblymember Pellerin and regional partners during the outreach and drafting phase of this legislation. Assemblymember Pellerin and her team took a proactive approach to engaging regional partners early in the process, including site visits across Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties to better understand the funding needs associated with long-term stewardship of natural and working lands that this legislation seeks to address. The concept behind MBASA reflects more than a year of conversations with local governments, special districts, land trusts, environmental conservation organizations, agricultural stewards, tribes, and community leaders about the need for a coordinated regional approach to stewardship funding.

"AB 1548 will help local governments and partners across Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties work together by unlocking new funding to support long-term stewardship of natural and working lands and strengthen regional climate and water resilience.

"MBASA is intended to function as a strategic granting and stewardship-focused entity, helping the region compete for and manage state, federal, and philanthropic resources that local agencies are often not resourced to pursue alone.

MBASA is intended to:

- Bring additional resources into the area to support the unique landscape-dependent economies of the Monterey Bay region.
- Support farms, ranchlands, forests, wetlands, rivers, parks, and open spaces through expanded access to stewardship and implementation funding
- Strengthen partnerships and outcomes among local government, tribes and Indigenous communities, nonprofits, and working lands stewards.
- Respect and reinforce local decision-making by local governments, while acknowledging the uniqueness of the Monterey Bay region within California and future needs for resilient landscapes.
- Improve long-term coordination across the region to access dedicated funds for meeting state and federal mandates.”

- 7) **Arguments in Opposition.** According to the California Forestry Association, in an oppose unless amended position, “Unfortunately, despite the recent amendments, our primary concern – the potential for new taxes on working forestlands – remains. As mentioned above, the importance of working lands to the Monterey Bay Region is specifically highlighted in the legislation, and these lands are already being well managed and contribute to the conservation goals outlined in AB 1548. Further, much of the region’s working lands are already zoned to preserve their status and provide protection from development or conversion to other uses. For example, nearly 70,000 acres of forestland in Santa Cruz County are designated as a Timber Production Zone (TPZ), a zoning designation intended to maintain the land for sustainable timber production and to protect those lands from subdivision and rezoning.

“To ensure that commercial timberland owners, most of which are small to medium-sized family-owned operations, and which are primarily concentrated in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Monterey Bay Region, maintain their financial viability, we respectfully request that the bill be amended to specifically exclude land zoned as TPZ from new taxes imposed by the proposed authority. Doing so would not only recognize that these lands are already contributing to the goals of AB 1548 but also ensure that these landowners, many of whose holdings include multiple smaller parcels, are not subject to multiple assessments that would divert scarce resources away from the sustainable management of their lands. Given the relatively small number of acres zoned as TPZ in the region, this exemption would help ensure the fiscal viability of working forests in the region, without substantially impacting the ability of the proposed authority to raise the revenue needed to achieve the goals outlined in the legislation.

“Although Calforests believes that the conservation goals outlined in AB 1548 can best be achieved by leveraging existing resources and directing those resources toward improved stewardship of existing public lands—rather than through the acquisition of new lands that would otherwise provide both conservation and economic benefits—we believe this proposed amendment would strike a fair balance and would remove our opposition to the measure.”

- 8) **Double-referral.** This bill is double referred to the Natural Resources Committee, where it passed on 10-4 vote on April 13, 2026.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Trust for Public Land [SPONSOR]
350 Bay Area Action
Amah Mutsun Land Trust
Audubon California
Big Sur Land Trust
Campaign for Organic and Regenerative Agriculture
California Marine Sanctuary Foundation
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership
Center for Biological Diversity
Ecology Action of Santa Cruz
Elkhorn Slough Foundation
Esselen Tribe of Monterey County
Green Foothills
Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
Peninsula Open Space Trust
Pesticide Action & Agroecology Network
Protect San Benito
R.E.A.C.H San Benito Parks Foundation
Regional Water Management Foundation
Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County
San Benito Agricultural Land Trust
San Benito County
San Benito Resource Conservation District
Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance
Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship
Save Our Shores
Save the Waves Coalition
Sempervirens Fund
The Climate Center
Trout Unlimited
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
Wildlife Conservation Network

Opposition

California Forestry Association (unless amended)

Concerns

Big Creek Lumber Company

Analysis Prepared by: Jimmy MacDonald / L. GOV. / (916) 319-3958