

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 1548 (Pellerin)
As Amended April 15, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes the Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Authority (Authority), a regional entity with jurisdiction extending throughout the Monterey Bay region, as defined.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes the purposes of the Authority 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.
- 2) Requires the Authority to be governed by a board that consists of nine specified voting members, as specified. Established specified policies and procedures for the board.
- 3) Prohibits the Authority from acquiring or owning real property.
- 4) Establishes rules for calling for a special election for a ballot measure to generate revenues for the Authority.
- 5) 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.
- 6) Establishes criteria for eligible projects.
- 7) Requires the Authority, when awarding grants, to give priority to specified projects.
- 8) Requires the Authority to consult with an advisory committee when developing grant evaluation procedures and funding recommendations.
- 9) Prohibits the board from awarding 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.

COMMENTS

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 2024 *Monterey Bay Natural and Working Lands Climate Mitigation and Resilience Study*, conducted by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, 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.

AB 1548 responds to this gap by establishing a regional mechanism to secure and coordinate long-term stewardship funding and to support coordinated investment at the scale the landscape requires

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."

Arguments in Support

A group of environmental organizations writes, "Our organizations represent a broad cross-section of partners working across Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties, including those engaged in land stewardship, agriculture, conservation, community access, and climate resilience. Many of us have been involved in the outreach and development of this effort from its early stages, helping shape a regional approach grounded in local priorities and practical implementation."

Arguments in Opposition

The California Building Industry Association writes, "At a time when California faces a well-documented housing shortage, the state should be removing barriers to housing production – not creating new ones. AB 1548 moves in the wrong direction by empowering a new regional entity to impose additional costs on housing, ultimately making it more difficult and expensive to build the homes California's working families so desperately need. These added costs will inevitably be passed on to renters and homebuyers, further exacerbating affordability challenges and pushing more working families into housing insecurity."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, by requiring the establishment of the Authority, specifying its duties and various requirements related to its formation and governance, and giving the Authority taxing powers and bonding authorities, this bill imposes a state-mandated local program. These local costs – particularly any startup costs – are potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates. The magnitude of these costs is unknown but could be potentially significant (General Fund).

While the bill subjects any direct state funding for purposes of this bill to a future appropriation by the Legislature and authorizes the Authority to generate its own revenue, the bill nonetheless creates potential ongoing cost and funding pressures on the state of an unknown amount, likely in excess of \$150,000, to support the Authority (General Fund, special funds, bond funds).

VOTES

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 10-4-0

YES: Bryan, Connolly, Garcia, Haney, Kalra, Muratsuchi, Pellerin, Schultz, Hart, Zbur

NO: Ellis, Alanis, Hoover, Macedo

ASM LOCAL GOVERNMENT: 8-2-0

YES: Carrillo, Pacheco, Ramos, Ransom, Blanca Rubio, Stefani, Ward, Wilson

NO: Ta, Johnson

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-4-0

YES: Wicks, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

NO: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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CONSULTANT: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /

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