

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1663 (Wallis)

As Amended August 21, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Authorizes the agent of a property owner to seek a permit under the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act (WJTCA) and removes the permit application requirement that requires a signed attestation or certification of dead western Joshua trees.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Strike the provisions that authorize the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to permit, without payment of fees or other mitigation, the removal or trimming of a western Joshua tree by the owner of a single-family residence.
- 2) Authorize the agent of a property owner to seek a permit under WJTCA.
- 3) Remove the permit application requirement for a signed attestation or certification of dead western Joshua trees.

COMMENTS

The western Joshua tree, *Yucca brevifolia*, is a member of the Agave family. The Joshua tree is a monocot in the subgroup of flowering plants that also includes grasses and orchids. Many birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects depend on the Joshua tree for food and shelter. Populations of western Joshua trees within California have declined following European settlement of the Mojave Desert region, primarily due to habitat loss and degradation related to agricultural conversion and development. CDFW estimates that approximately 30% of the habitat occupied by western Joshua trees in California may have been modified between European settlement and the present.

To provide protections to western Joshua trees and hopefully prevent an official listing as a threatened or endangered species, while enabling development, the WJTCA was enacted in 2023. WJTCA prohibits the importation, export, take, possession, purchase, or sale of any western Joshua tree in California unless authorized by CDFW. WJTCA authorizes CDFW to issue permits for the incidental take of one or more western Joshua trees if the permittee meets certain conditions. Permittees may pay specified fees in lieu of conducting mitigation activities. WJTCA also authorizes CDFW to issue permits for the removal of dead western Joshua trees and the trimming of live western Joshua trees under certain circumstances.

According to the Author

"Implementation of [WJTCA] hasn't been easy for the people who deal with it day to day, tribes, homeowners, and CDFW alike. [This bill] makes two minor, yet key changes to address that, giving the department more room to work with tribes on the full range of ways they use western Joshua trees for cultural purposes, and simplifying the existing hazard tree permit process for homeowners. These fixes will make it easier for all of us to work together to protect the western Joshua tree."

Arguments in Support

The County of San Bernardino writes that this bill "would make [WJTCA] permitting process more convenient and user-friendly by allowing property owners to use an authorized agent and simplifying permit application requirements."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this bill would have the following fiscal impact:

Unknown ongoing costs, likely less than a few hundred thousand dollars annually (General Fund), for CDFW to review and respond to permit requests within specified timeframes

VOTES:**ASM WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE: 12-0-1**

YES: Papan, Jeff Gonzalez, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bennett, Boerner, Caloza, Gallagher, Hart, Rogers

ABS, ABST OR NV: Celeste Rodriguez

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

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

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0-8

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Chen, Garcia, Jackson, Lackey, Lee, Ramos, Celeste Rodriguez

UPDATED

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