

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1987 (Aguiar-Curry and Hadwick)

As Amended August 21, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires that revenues from Type A and Type B wildlife areas be used for the operation, maintenance, and reasonable administrative costs of Type A and Type B wildlife areas and authorizes the sale of nonconsumptive use entry permits through methods other than the Automated License Data System (ALDS).

Senate Amendments

- 1) Create the Waterfowl Management Areas Operations and Maintenance Fund (Fund) in the State Treasury instead of an account within the Fish and Game Preservation Fund.
- 2) Provide that moneys in the Fund are available for expenditure upon appropriation by the Legislature, rather than continuously appropriated.
- 3) Require the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to submit a report to the Legislature on revenues and expenditures on CDFW-managed lands by October 1, 2033.
- 4) Authorize CDFW to sell nonconsumptive use entry permits through methods other than ALDS.
- 5) Delete the specification that CDFW may enter into contracts with nonprofit conservation groups for administering hunting or other public use programs on CDFW-managed lands.
- 6) Provide that nothing in this bill shall be construed to invalidate, impair, or require the rebidding of any memorandum of understanding, cooperative agreement, or partnership agreement that currently exists.

COMMENTS

Type A and Type B wildlife areas are primarily for waterfowl hunting, while Type C wildlife areas are open for all legal species and are primarily for upland game. Type A and Type B areas are similar to one another and are distinguished by differences in reservation requirements and opening dates. Management expenses are also varied across wildlife area types, with Type A and Type B wildlife areas, which are generally on managed wetlands, requiring more active management than Type C wildlife areas. Wetland areas may require water pumping, mosquito abatement, and other costly operations and maintenance activities.

CDFW receives funding for wildlife areas from a variety of sources. The largest single funding source is grants issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the federal Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act. Pittman-Robertson grants may be used for up to 75% of the cost of eligible projects. Other sources of funds for wildlife areas include program income (reservation application fees, hunter pass sales, and agricultural lease agreements), Proposition 99 (1988) funding, upland game bird validations, California duck stamps, and environmental license plate funds. Federal Pittman-Robertson funding (collected from an excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment) has declined from a peak of nearly \$39 million in fiscal

year (FY) 2022–23 to just over \$29 million in FY 2024–25. Proposition 99 funding, from a surtax on tobacco products, is also decreasing, with cigarette tax revenues declining from approximately \$152 million in FY 2023–24 to a projected \$138 million in FY 2025–26. These revenue declines compound ongoing budget issues for CDFW, which estimates that only 35% of funding needs for lands and facilities are met within the FY 2024–25 budget.

Fees for the different classes of wildlife areas are significantly different. Type A wildlife areas require both reservations and hunting passes, while Type B wildlife areas require hunting passes (and reservations on opening weekend only). Type C wildlife areas do not require the purchase of a hunting pass for entry. Where reservations are required, hunters may need to enter many drawings (at a cost of \$1.34 per entry) in order to win a reservation, as 2024–2025 regular season waterfowl application success rates ranged from 0.74% to 57.8%, depending on choice of hunt. In addition to reservations, hunting passes are required: season passes for Type A and Type B wildlife areas are \$213.84 and \$71.85, respectively.

In addition to fees required for consumptive uses (i.e., hunting), some wildlife areas require fees for nonconsumptive uses (e.g., hiking, wildlife viewing, etc.). An annual Lands Pass for nonconsumptive uses costs \$33.48. Where these fees are collected (and where practical for CDFW), 35% of the revenue from these fees must be provided to the department-managed lands where the use occurred. Additionally, unlike hunting revenue which is deposited into the Fish and Game Preservation Fund generally, nonconsumptive user fees are deposited into the Native Species Conservation and Enhancement Account within the Fish and Game Preservation Fund, which is designated for the support of nongame and native plant species conservation and enhancement programs. Currently, these fees can only be collected through ALDS, a system primarily designed to sell and track hunting and fishing licenses.

An additional source of revenue on department-managed lands is agricultural leases. CDFW enters into agricultural leases on some department-managed lands for grazing and wildlife-friendly agriculture. There are currently approximately \$3 million in agricultural leases on CDFW lands. This money is available for the operation and maintenance of wildlife areas and ecological reserves, generally in the CDFW region in which it is generated, though statute does not place any controls on expenditure.

Hunters are a key constituency for CDFW wildlife areas, and consultation is required by law with hunters on public hunting programs and habitat conditions in the hunting areas on Type A and Type B wildlife areas. This outreach and consultation includes proposed wetland flood-up schedules. The primary consideration for CDFW in making wetland flood-up decisions is the wellbeing of the wildlife that the areas were acquired for, and in addition to hunter input, CDFW considers nonconsumptive uses and mosquito abatement requirements.

According to the Author

"State Wildlife Areas play a vital role in protecting California's wetlands and waterfowl while also providing opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. However, many of these lands face growing maintenance challenges due to limited staff and declining traditional funding sources...[This bill] will ensure that revenues generated by these areas are reinvested directly into their operation and management so they can continue to serve both conservation and public access for years to come."

Arguments in Support

The California Waterfowl Association writes: "Currently, Type A and B State Wildlife Areas are facing major challenges related to reduced staff and often insufficient [operations and maintenance] budgets. . . . Water pumping, mosquito abatement, noxious weed control and other annual wetland maintenance expenses continue to become more costly every year." The California Waterfowl Association continues: "[this] bill would ensure that hunter-generated user fee revenues (about \$3 million annually) from Type A and Type B Wildlife Areas (a.k.a. Waterfowl Management Areas) are used solely for the operations and maintenance of those lands."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, there are "unknown but potentially significant costs, likely over \$150,000 (General Fund or Fish and Game Preservation Fund) for [CDFW] to prepare and submit a report to the appropriate policy and budget committees of the Legislature, as specified, among other things."

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

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Ávila Farías

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Muratsuchi, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Calderon

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 76-0-4

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Flora, Lee, Celeste Rodriguez, Valencia

UPDATED

VERSION: August 21, 2026

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FN: 0004188