

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2051 (Wicks)

As Amended March 25, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency (NRA), in consultation with the Secretary for Environmental Protection (CalEPA), to convene a Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group (Working Group) for the purpose of developing a Coastal Resilience Permitting Roadmap (Roadmap) for coastal resilience projects proposed along the California coast and in the San Francisco Bay, and in and adjacent to state and federal waters.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires the Secretary of NRA, in consultation with the Secretary for CalEPA, to convene a Working Group for the purpose of developing a Roadmap for coastal resilience projects proposed along the California coast and in the San Francisco Bay, and in and adjacent to state and federal waters.
- 2) Requires the Working Group to consist of representatives from federal, state, and local agencies, including, but not limited to specified representatives.
- 3) Requires, on or before January 1, 2028, the Secretary of NRA to submit the Roadmap to the Governor and the relevant fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature. Sunsets this requirement on January 1, 2032.
- 4) Requires the Roadmap to include, at a minimum, recommendations that address:
 - a) Specified permitting processes and timelines.
 - b) A state process to align agency mitigation requirements and enable in-lieu fees or advance mitigation.
 - c) Legislative reforms that can further accelerate permitting for projects that increase coastal resilience.
 - d) If needed to test alternative approaches, a coastal resilience project pilot program along with any required legislative authorizations to evaluate the effectiveness of recommended reforms and environmental protection.
 - e) An evaluation of whether consolidated coastal resilience permits similar to those provided for offshore wind projects would facilitate timely permits.
 - f) A workforce assessment and funding options for regulatory staffing positions and as-needed permitting support contracts to supplement staff.
- 5) Requires, on or before April 1, 2027, the Coastal Commission and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), in collaboration with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the regional water boards with jurisdiction over the California coast and San Francisco Bay, to convene a Coastal Resilience Permit Advisory Group

(Advisory Group). Requires the Advisory Group membership to include specified representatives.

- 6) Requires the Coastal Commission and BCDC, in consultation with the CDFW, and the regional water boards, to conduct a series of public workshops with the Advisory Group.

COMMENTS

In 2024, the Select Committee on Permit Reform met to discuss permit challenges and permit process reform for infill housing, clean energy, transit, and climate resiliency projects. The resultant *California Assembly Select Committee on Permitting Reform Final Report* (March 2025) notes that despite permit reforms already undertaken, many stakeholders expressed concern that further permitting reform is necessary for the state to achieve its housing production goals, such as eliminating uncertainty in the application process; minimizing uncertainty in the entitlement process; creating more consistency across permitting entities; focusing on the California Environmental Quality Act and environmental issues; and, minimizing uncertainty for post-entitlement permits.

The report identified best practices for permitting reform, including prioritizing agency objectives and workload, providing a clear and straightforward permit application process, and establishing specific timeframes for reviewing permits.

This bill requires NRA to convene a Working Group to develop a Roadmap for coastal resilience projects proposed along the California coast and in the San Francisco Bay, and make recommendations on myriad administrative reforms and alignment of agency requirements to streamline permitting processes and timeframes.

Numerous recent reports completed by agencies participating in the Working Group and/or Advisory Group have been published with recommendations to streamline the permitting process for coastal development projects. These reports can both inform the Roadmap and eliminate unnecessary redundancies in the Working Group's efforts.

According to the Author

The communities most at risk from climate change are disproportionately low-income and communities of color, located in low-lying areas adjacent to San Francisco Bay and the Pacific coast, with limited resources to self-finance adaptation. Every year of permitting delay is a year these communities remain exposed to harm they did not cause and cannot afford to absorb. AB 2051 would outline a process that could help accelerate the delivery of flood protection, wetland restoration, and shoreline adaptation infrastructure to the people who need it most... The bill's Coastal Resilience Permit Advisory Group is specifically charged with ensuring that streamlining efforts do not weaken protections for fish and wildlife habitat, tribal cultural resources, or public access.

Arguments in Support

California State Association of Counties writes that delivering needed climate resilience projects quickly and responsibly is essential. Unfortunately, California's current coastal permitting system is often fragmented and unpredictable, slowing urgently needed adaptation efforts and increasing costs, as illustrated by the California State Assembly Select Committee on Permitting Reform's final report. AB 2051 takes a thoughtful and collaborative approach to addressing these challenges. The bill directs the California Natural Resources Agency to convene an interagency

Coastal Resilience Permitting Working Group to identify administrative improvements and develop a clear roadmap for streamlining permitting for coastal resilience projects.

Arguments in Opposition

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) NRA estimates General Fund costs of approximately \$769,000 over two years to facilitate interagency collaboration, public workshops, development of the Roadmap, and other deliverables required by the bill.
- 2) BCDC estimates ongoing annual General Fund costs of approximately \$1.1 million to hire five staff to assist with development of the Roadmap and implement reforms identified by the Working Group.
- 3) CDFW estimates General Fund costs of approximately \$270,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2027-28 and \$262,000 in FY 2028-29 and FY 2029-30 for one limited-term senior environmental scientist.
- 4) The California Coastal Commission estimates annual General Fund costs of approximately \$1.1 million in 2027 and 2028 for five limited-term staff to help develop relevant components of the Roadmap.
- 5) CalEPA estimates ongoing annual General Fund costs of approximately \$208,000 for one senior environmental scientist to consult with members of the Working Group and collaborate on the drafting of recommendations to be included in the Roadmap.
- 6) The State Water Resources Control Board estimates ongoing annual costs of approximately \$4.5 million (General Fund or Waste Discharge Permit Fund) for 18 positions to support participation by the state board and nine regional boards in the creation and implementation of the Roadmap.

VOTES

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 12-1-1

YES: Bryan, Alanis, Connolly, Garcia, Haney, Hoover, Kalra, Muratsuchi, Pellerin, Schultz, Wicks, Zbur

NO: Macedo

ABS, ABST OR NV: Ellis

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

YES: Papan, Jeff Gonzalez, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Fariás, Bains, Bennett, Boerner, Caloza, Hart, Muratsuchi, Rogers

ABS, ABST OR NV: Gallagher

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 12-2-1

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

NO: Dixon, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Ta

UPDATED

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