

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2254 (Addis) – As Amended April 8, 2026

Policy Committee:	Natural Resources	Vote:	10 - 3
	Water, Parks and Wildlife		10 - 2

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires (a) the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), in coordination with the California Coastal Commission (Commission), to identify monarchy butterfly overwintering habitat (MBOH) sites in the coastal zone and develop guidance on model policies for local governments for MBOH protection and (b) a local government with a MBOH site located within its jurisdiction and the coastal zone to subsequently include MBOH site protection policies as part of its next amendment to its local coastal program (LCP).

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Requires CDFW, in coordination with the Commission, or before January 1, 2028, to identify MBOH sites in the coastal zone and current local government MBOH management plans or policies.
- 2) Requires CDFW, in coordination with the Commission, on or before July 1, 2028, to develop and provide guidance on, and post on their websites, model policies, as defined, that may be used by a local government for the protection of MBOH, including habitat restoration and enhancement, to address gaps in habitat protection plans in the coastal zone and authorizes CDFW and the Commission to use existing data sets produced by local governments, organizations focused on the conservation of invertebrates and their habitats, and other relevant entities in developing this guidance.
- 3) Requires, after the guidance on model policies is finalized, a local government with a MBOH site located within its jurisdiction and the coastal zone, upon the next amendment to its LCP, to include MBOH site protection policies.
- 4) Provides that a local government shall be encouraged to apply for grants administered pursuant to the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program if the local government’s LCP includes MBOH site protection policies consistent with this bill and with the guidelines developed pursuant to this bill.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CDFW estimates annual General Fund costs of approximately \$1.5 million in fiscal years (FY) 2027-28 and 2028-29 for one permanent environmental scientist and five limited-term senior environmental scientist specialists to identify both MBOH sites in the coastal zone and local government MBOH management plans or policies, develop the required guidance for

local governments, and assist with habitat data updates, modeling, policy review, and consultation with the Commission and local governments in CDFW regions one, two, four, and five. In FY 2029-30 and ongoing, CDFW estimates ongoing annual General Fund costs of about \$250,000 for the one environmental scientist to input ongoing updates of MBOH data into CDFW's California Natural Diversity Database.

- 2) The Commission estimates ongoing annual General Fund costs of approximately \$230,000 for one position to coordinate with CDFW to develop the required guidance on model policies for protecting MBOH and to review and process coastal local governments' MBOH-related LCP amendments.

The 2024 Budget Act allocated \$2.1 million (General Fund) in ongoing funding to the Commission for nine new positions to implement SB 272 (Laird), Chapter 384, Statutes of 2023, which requires all local governments in the coastal zone to address sea level rise through LCPs or San Francisco Bay Shoreline Resiliency Plans by January 1, 2034. However, most of these positions were eliminated in 2025 as part of the administration's elimination of certain vacant positions to generate budgetary savings. The Legislature and administration are considering the status of these proposed cuts as part of the 2026 budget negotiations.

- 3) By imposing additional duties on a local government, this bill imposes a state-mandated local program, potentially resulting in unknown General Fund cost pressure for the state to reimburse local governments, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

The cost of updating an LCP varies widely across local jurisdictions. The FY 2021-22 budget provided \$30 million over five years for the Commission to provide grants to local governments to update their LCPs for sea level rise and climate change. The Commission awarded its last grant in March, and this one-time funding has been fully expended.

- 4) By encouraging local governments to apply for grants through the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program, this bill potentially creates greater cost pressure on the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to provide funding to local governments that include MBOH site protection policies in their LCP updates pursuant to this bill's requirements. To date, WCB has provided more than \$14.4 million in grants to private landowners, nonprofits, resource conservation districts, and public agencies. The Proposition 4 climate bond allocates \$870 million to WCB for various programs and priorities, including monarch butterfly and pollinator rescue.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Monarch butterflies, like many people, travel to California's coast every year to rest and enjoy the mild climate. However, human development has seriously damaged or even removed their fragile overwintering habitats, which they need to survive harsh winter conditions. Loss of these sites, combined with the constant threat of climate change, has led to a 95% decline in the western monarch butterfly population since the 1980s. As a result, this population is at a

serious risk of collapse. As stewards of our natural world, we need to ensure that these sites remain safe and available for the monarchs so that they can have a chance at recovering.

- 2) **Background. LCPs.** The Commission administers the Coastal Act and regulates proposed development along the coast and in nearby areas in the coastal zone. The Coastal Act requires local governments to develop LCPs consistent with policies of the Coastal Act. LCPs are land use planning documents that lay out a framework for development and coastal resource protection within a city or county's coastal zone area. Generally, any development activity in the coastal zone requires a coastal development permit (CDP) from the CCC or local government with a certified LCP. In a jurisdiction with a certified LCP, the local government issues the CDP with detailed planning and design standards. However, even when the local government grants a permit, CDP decisions are appealable to the CCC if the development falls within certain defined zones. For a jurisdiction without an LCP, also known as an "uncertified" jurisdiction, the CCC is the permitting authority for CDPs. 90% of the coastal zone is operating under a certified LCP. Updating an LCP is complex and requires significant staff time and resources.

Monarch Butterflies. According to the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, each winter, monarchs gather in sheltered groves where the trees and surrounding landscape create the specific conditions they need to survive the colder months. These overwintering sites are a cornerstone of the western monarch migration, supporting the butterflies before they disperse across the western United States in the spring. According to CDFW, monarch butterfly populations have declined precipitously over the past twenty years due to a host of interrelated factors including habitat loss in breeding and overwintering sites, habitat degradation, disease, pesticide exposure, and climate change.

In 2015, the state authorized CDFW to take feasible actions to conserve monarch butterflies and the unique habitats they depend upon for successful migration. In 2018, the state established the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program to recover and sustain populations of monarch butterflies and other pollinators. CDFW is engaged in numerous monarch conservation efforts, including as a participant in the California Multi-agency Monarch and Pollinator Collaborative, a group of 13 state and federal agencies working to identify and enact shared priorities to catalyze monarch conservation in the state. In California, monarchs are not listed under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

- 3) **Support and Opposition.** A coalition of organizations in support of this bill writes that by integrating habitat protection into existing coastal planning processes, the bill provides local governments with tools and guidance to help safeguard these important sites while maintaining flexibility in local implementation. The coalition writes: "Protecting overwintering habitat is one of the most meaningful actions California can take to support the long-term recovery of western monarchs."

Writing in an oppose-unless-amended position, League of California Cities (Cal Cities), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) argue the bill requires local governments to fill a gap where state policy has been lacking. The coalition contends the Commission has since the 1990s determined overwintering habitat sites to be environmentally sensitive habitat areas (or EHSAs). Yet, the coalition argues, in the last three decades of LCP amendment or update reviews, the

Commission has not required these EHSAs for overwintering sites be included in LCPs. Similarly, the coalition notes, and as previously noted, these migratory invertebrates and their habitat are not covered under CESA. The groups write, “Despite these state policy gaps of not protecting overwintering habitat sites, the bill would now place a requirement on coastal cities and counties to update their LCPs to protect these sites,” and request that the bill be amended “to simply allow coastal cities and counties flexibility in developing policies for overwintering habitat sites consistent with the bill to allow policies to be developed as either LCP amendments, habitat management plans or other policies to protect these sites.”

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