
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2254 (Addis) - Coastal resources: monarch butterfly habitat

Version: July 2, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: N.R. & W. 7- 0, L. GOV. 6 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would require the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, in consultation with the California Coastal Commission, to identify monarch butterfly overwintering habitat in the coastal zone, and to develop model policies for the protection of monarch butterfly overwintering habitat in the coastal zone. This bill would further direct a local government with monarch butterfly overwintering habitat in the coastal zone to develop and implement enforceable monarch butterfly overwintering habitat site protection policies, as provided, among other provisions.

Fiscal Impact:

- CDFW estimates ongoing costs of \$5.1 million annually (General Fund) to support habitat data updates, modeling, policy review, consultation with the Coastal Commission and local governments, and ongoing updates of monarch overwintering habitat data into the state's rare species data repository.
- The Coastal Commission estimates limited-term costs of approximately \$230,000 annually for 4 years (General Fund) to coordinate with CDFW to develop the required guidance on model land use policies, and to review and process LCP amendments enacting such policies, which the bill would require coastal local governments to develop and implement by July 1, 2031.

Background: CDFW manages California's fish, wildlife, and plant resources and the habitats they depend on, implementing and enforcing regulations set by the Fish and Game Commission. Through the California Multi-Agency Monarch & Pollinator Collaborative, CDFW contributed to the report "Conservation Priorities for Western Monarchs in California," which found western monarch populations at the lowest levels on record in the last five years and identified significant knowledge gaps hindering conservation. Because the monarch is broadly distributed, it serves as an umbrella species whose conservation benefits other pollinators facing similar threats.

Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) migrate annually between Canada and central Mexico, with central California serving as an overwintering stop from November to mid-March. Western overwintering populations have declined by more than 90% since the 1980s, from millions to tens of thousands, driven primarily by destruction of milkweed habitat, with severe weather and high temperatures also contributing. The monarch appears on CDFW's Terrestrial and Vernal Pool Invertebrates of Conservation Priority list and is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the state's Wildlife Action Plan. It is not listed or a candidate under the California Endangered Species Act, but has a listing pending under the federal Endangered Species Act.

California's western monarchs overwinter largely along the coast, clustering in groves of eucalyptus, Monterey pine, and cypress that provide the microclimates necessary for survival. While 35% of overwintering sites lie outside the coastal zone, most of the sites holding the highest numbers of monarchs in recent years are within it. Overwintering habitat occurs in 17 counties, four of which have sites only within the coastal zone.

The Coastal Commission, established by voter initiative in 1972 and made permanent by the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Public Resources Code §§30000 et seq.), plans for and regulates land and water use in the coastal zone, which excludes San Francisco Bay. Development there generally requires a coastal development permit issued by the Commission or by a local government with a certified local coastal program, with Coastal Act policies serving as the standards for judging proposals within the Commission's jurisdiction.

The Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program was created by AB 2421 (Stone, Chapter 760, Statutes of 2018) for the purpose of recovering and sustaining populations of monarch butterflies and other pollinators. The Wildlife Conservation Board, located at CDFW, under this program, provides grants to private landowners, nonprofit organizations, resource conservation districts and public agencies. To date, more than \$14.4 million has been awarded as part of 14 grants.

Proposed Law: This bill would:

1. Require CDFW, on or before July 1, 2028, in coordination with the Coastal Commission, to identify both of the following:
 - a. Known monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) overwintering habitat sites in the coastal zone.
 - b. Current local government monarch butterfly overwintering habitat management plans or policies.
2. Require CDFW, on or before July 1, 2029, in coordination with the Coastal Commission, to develop and provide guidance on model policies that can be used by a local government for the protection of monarch butterfly overwintering habitat, as provided.
 - a. Authorize the model policies developed to include, but not be limited to, enforceable habitat management plans with measurable outcomes, local coastal program updates, and other local policies, such as ordinances, for protecting monarch butterflies that are locally enforceable with measurable outcomes.
 - b. Require CDFW, if it provides guidance on model ordinances, to adopt the model ordinances as regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.
 - c. Authorize CDFW and the Coastal Commission in developing the guidance to use existing datasets produced by local governments, certain organizations, and other relevant entities, as provided.

- d. Require CDFW and the Coastal Commission to post the developed guidance on their internet websites, including the information about current local government plans or policies and monarch butterfly overwintering habitat sites in the coastal zone.
3. After the guidance on model policies is finalized, require a local government with a monarch butterfly overwintering habitat site in the coastal zone in its jurisdiction to develop and implement, on or before July 1, 2031, enforceable monarch butterfly overwintering habitat site protection policies consistent with those developed by CDFW, as provided.
4. Encourage a local government to apply for grants administered under the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program, as provided.
5. Require reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for state-mandated costs, if applicable, as provided.

Related Legislation:

AB 2421 (Stone, Chapter 760, Statutes of 2018) establishes the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program at the Wildlife Conservation Board.

Staff Comments: CDFW has longstanding budget concerns which have persisted despite repeated efforts over multiple decades to address them. When the state has significant fiscal concerns – as it does now – ensuring consistent and sustained funding for CDFW is particularly challenging. Recently, at legislative direction, CDFW undertook a “service-based” budgeting effort to identify the personnel needed to perform the services required by its mandates. CDFW’s services were separated into eight general programs for analysis. In 2021, the initial results of this effort were released that revealed that CDFW’s funding was inadequate to meet its “mission” service level. The “Species and Habitat Conservation” program – where most of the tasks associated with the conservation of monarch butterflies are located – only had about 27% of the mission service level resources. The Newsom Administration proposed, and the Legislature approved, significant one-time General Fund moneys to support CDFW’s activities in the near-term. Some progress in addressing the gaps in service were subsequently made, although this was offset, at least in part, by new duties.

Unfortunately, a recent update (for fiscal year 2024/2025) shows that the Species and Habitat Conservation resources remain at about 35% overall. There has been some improvement, although significant challenges remain. In the near term, Proposition 4 funding may help to offset certain implementation costs associated with the protection of monarch butterfly overwintering habitat.

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