

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2578 (Rogers) – As Amended April 16, 2026

Policy Committee: Water, Parks and Wildlife Vote: 13 - 0

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

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to enter into a statewide agreement with a support organization to increase outdoor access and recreation opportunities on, and within, California's diverse landscapes.

Specifically, this bill, among many other things:

- 1) Authorizes CNRA to enter into a statewide agreement with a support organization (as defined) to, among other objectives, facilitate and implement the findings and recommendations of the Department of Parks and Recreation's (State Parks) Outdoors for All initiative, the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development's (GO-Biz) Jobs First report, California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Recreation and Wildfire Resilience, and efforts through the Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Hunting and Fishing Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation Initiative to develop greater capacity to expand, enhance, and complement projects and programs proposed by CNRA through 11 specific methods listed in the bill.
- 2) Requires CNRA and the support organization to collaborate with GO-Biz on a suite of interventions designed to promote the outdoors, including implementation of regional industry sector activation plans for the recreation and tourism sector, regional economic development strategies, and regional tourism strategies that support, but do not duplicate, efforts underway by Visit California. Specifies various requirements for this collaboration.
- 3) Requires the support organization, in consultation with CNRA, to (a) communicate and coordinate with specified entities to ensure that activities undertaken pursuant to the agreement complement, support, facilitate, and amplify ongoing partnerships, programs, and projects in support of increasing access to the outdoors, and (b) engage with public agencies and organizations that manage, operate, and support protected lands in the state; specifies membership requirements for the support organization; and provides that the support organization is not a state agency or a state body.
- 4) Requires CNRA and the support organization to collaborate to develop an annual list of strategic initiatives and projects that are statewide priorities for CNRA and for the support organization and that the support organization will undertake in partnership with CNRA, as specified and requires CNRA to post a copy of this priority list on its website and provide copies of the list to the Legislature.

- 5) Authorizes CNRA to develop and enter into supplementary agreements with a support organization for the purpose of securing any expertise, capacity, or financial resources that may be needed to identify, plan, develop, or implement strategic initiatives and projects on the priority list, as specified, and authorizes the Secretary of CNRA to receive donations of projects, services, and funds from a support organization.
- 6) Gives the Director of Finance 60 days to review and approve or disapprove any agreement proposed pursuant to this bill or any substantial amendment to such an agreement, and authorizes the secretary of CNRA, upon approval of the agreement, to accept donations and enter into supplementary agreements, as outlined in item 5, above.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Should CNRA elect to exercise the authority granted by this bill and enter into an agreement with a support organization, the agency anticipates initial implementation costs to be absorbable within CNRA's existing staffing and operational resources. However, CNRA's costs may be higher depending on various factors, such as the scope of the annual priority list, the number of supplementary agreements the agency elects to enter into, the scale of interagency coordination and stakeholder engagement, the workload associated with setting up and managing a fund to receive donations, and other variables (General Fund).
- 2) State Parks estimates ongoing annual General Fund costs of \$245,000 to hire one senior park and recreation specialist to coordinate with CNRA on implementation.
- 3) This bill creates ongoing cost pressures (General Fund, special fund, or bond funds) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the extent the state is expected to fund any projects identified by CNRA and the support organization in the annual list of strategic initiatives or priorities.
- 4) GO-Biz anticipates minor and absorbable General Fund costs as a result of this bill and notes that its Office of Regional Economic Development Initiatives (REDI) already provides technical assistance to regional practitioners in the outdoor recreation sector as part of its regional engagement and development work.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

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

[This bill] aims to establish an office of outdoor recreation for the state of California, which would support state investments into equitable access, recreation infrastructure, outdoor jobs, and to help sustain and grow California's outdoor economy. California has an abundance of beautiful natural resources, the highest outdoor recreation [gross domestic product] in the U.S., and the most national parks per state, but is neck-and-neck in visitations with Utah, which was the first state to create an Office of Outdoor Recreation in 2013. [This bill] promotes the strengthening and accessible access of California's outdoor

resources, allowing the population to benefit further from the mental, physical, and economic benefits associated with the outdoors.

- 2) **Background. *Outdoors for All.*** The Newsom administration launched the Outdoors for All initiative to provide all Californians with equitable access to the state’s cultural, historical, and natural resources. According to CNRA, “equitable access” means that all people can experience and enjoy California’s outdoors regardless of who they are or where they live. It also means that everyone can experience the outdoors in a way that is safe, welcoming, convenient, affordable, and culturally relevant. According to this bill’s findings, the outdoor industry contributes significantly to the economy, including a record \$1.2 trillion in total national output and \$81.5 billion in California in 2023.

Offices of Outdoor Recreation. According to the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, a business coalition to advance outdoor recreation, 24 states have an office or division of outdoor recreation, which serves as a central champion for the outdoor recreation economy and its associated benefits. Nearly all of those states have joined the Confluence of States, a bipartisan organization with the goals of growing the outdoor recreation industry, conservation and stewardship, education and workforce training, public health and wellness, and promoting safety and inclusion. The Confluence of States provides education and resources for these offices and states interested in standing up their own offices, including a guidebook to develop offices of outdoor recreation.

Parks California. According to the author, there are numerous existing nonprofit support organizations collaborating with CNRA and its departments to promote the health, fitness, mental, and economic values of outdoor engagement. Among these collaborative organizations, Parks California is a codified support organization dedicated to working with State Parks to advance priority projects identified by the department in conjunction with Parks California. The bill’s findings assert that the success of Parks California as a support organization “encourages the creation of a separate support organization dedicated to collaborating with [CNRA] and its departments on the coordination and implementation of several initiatives to facilitate greater engagement with California’s outdoors.”

Supporters of this bill further argue that the state’s Outdoors for All and California Jobs First (led by GO-Biz) initiatives are “solely strategic plans,” and that this bill “is the answer to implementing them.” The coalition contends that this bill “fills a gap that Parks California fills only for state parks, and it does so with both the Outdoors for All equity mission and the Jobs First economic development mission explicitly named as its core directive.”

Analysis Prepared by: Nikita Koraddi / APPR. / (916) 319-2081