

Date of Hearing: January 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 623 (Dixon) – As Amended January 14, 2026

Policy Committee: Natural Resources

Vote: 13 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), and the California Coastal Commission (CCC) to report to the Legislature certain information related to fuel reduction projects.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires CNRA and CalEPA, by January 1, 2028, to report to the Legislature on the implementation of the Governor's emergency proclamation issued on March 1, 2025, that suspends applicable state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements that fall within the jurisdiction of boards, departments, and offices within the two agencies to the extent necessary for expediting critical fuels reduction projects and specifies the information the report must include.
- 2) Requires CCC, by January 1, 2028, to report to the Legislature certain information related to fuel modification or reduction projects approved under coastal development permits (CDP) and public works plans (PWP) and specifies the information the report must include.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) As discussed below, the Governor's emergency proclamation requires each agency to maintain on its website a list of all suspensions approved under the proclamation. CalEPA and CNRA maintain a dashboard that tracks this information. As of January 9, 2026, CNRA and CalEPA have received 508 applications requesting streamlining. To date, 220 projects have been approved, totaling more than 40,100 acres. The dashboard includes various details on each project such as acres treated, primary project objectives, cooperating agencies, applicant and jurisdictional information, and an overall description of the project. While there is considerable overlap between the information captured by the dashboard and the requirements of this bill, there are elements of the bill not currently reflected on the administration's webpage, such as information on how the project for which suspension was provided advances the state's wildfire mitigation and forest health treatment goals. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume CNRA and CalEPA may incur some costs to complete the report required by the bill, although the magnitude of the costs is unknown.

For their part, CNRA estimates General Fund costs of approximately \$212,000 annually for two years for one limited-term position and CalEPA estimates General Fund costs of approximately \$265,000 annually for two years for one limited-term position to coordinate

the work of various departments and agencies to implement the requirements of this bill. It is not clear to the committee if the requirements of the bill warrant two limited-term positions. However, given the bill has the primary purpose of creating a reporting requirement, it is a candidate for the committee's suspense file regardless of costs, consistent with the committee's rules.

- 2) CCC estimates a one-time General Fund cost of approximately \$115,000 to gather the required data and synthesize it into a report to the Legislature.

#### **COMMENTS:**

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

Due to a lack of data, we are unable to accurately determine how successful the suspension of both the Coastal Act and [the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)] has been since the Governor's proclamation. AB 623...seeks to remedy this shortfall by requiring [CNRA] and [CalEPA] and [CCC] to each provide a report to the Legislature...to assess how successful the Governor's emergency proclamation and subsequent suspension of CEQA and [the California Coastal Act] have been in encouraging fuel reduction and mitigation projects.

- 2) **Background. *Emergency Proclamation.*** In March 2025, following the devastating Los Angeles fires, the Governor issued an emergency proclamation ordering a suspension of all laws, regulations, rules, and requirements that fall within the jurisdiction of boards, departments, and offices within CalEPA and CNRA to the extent necessary for expediting critical fuels reduction projects initiated in 2025. In December 2025, the Governor decreed that a project must be initiated by May 1, 2026, to be eligible for the streamlined process.

The proclamation requires an entity that wishes to conduct activities under the suspension to first request that the appropriate agency secretary, or the secretary's designee, make a determination that the proposed activity is eligible to be conducted under the suspension. The proclamation further requires each agency to maintain on its website a list of all suspensions approved under the proclamation.

***Vegetation Management in the Coastal Zone.*** The California Coastal Act requires development to be sited, designed, and maintained to minimize risks from fire hazards, and requires the protection of environmentally sensitive habitat areas. To meet these mandates, CCC works with public agencies and private entities to plan for and permit necessary vegetation management projects through Local Coastal Programs, PWPs, and CDPs. In addition, CCC staff work with applicants pursuing vegetation management projects through the Governor's March 2025 emergency proclamation.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 1227 (Ellis) of the current legislative session exempts certain fuel reduction projects from CEQA and requires CNRA and CalEPA to report to the Legislature on implementation of the Governor's March 2025 emergency proclamation. AB 1227 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee's suspense file.