

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 946 (Bryan) – As Amended January 5, 2026

SUBJECT: Natural resources: equitable outdoor access: 30x30 goal: urban nature-based projects

SUMMARY: Requires the Governor's office, state agencies, and the Legislature, when distributing resources, to aspire to recognize the coequal goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal and the Outdoors for All initiative, and, to the extent practical, maximize investment in historically underserved urban communities consistent with those initiatives.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Directs California Natural Resources Agency (NRA) to combat the biodiversity and climate crisis by, among other things, establishing the California Biodiversity Collaborative and establishing the 30x30 goal. (Executive Order (EO) No. N-82-20)
- 2) Codifies the 30x30 goal. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 71450)
- 3) Requires NRA, in implementing actions to achieve the 30x30 goal, to prioritize specified actions. Requires the Secretary of NRA to prepare and submit, beginning on or before March 31, 2024, an annual report to the Legislature on the progress made during the prior calendar year toward achieving that goal, as provided. (PRC 71451-71452)
- 4) Establishes the Equitable Outdoor Access Act and sets forth the state's commitment to ensuring all Californians can benefit from, and have meaningful and sustainable access to, the state's rich cultural and natural resources. (PRC 1000)
- 5) Creates, under the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), a "Superfund" to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites, as well as accidents, spills, and other emergency releases of pollutants and contaminants into the environment. Provides the United States Environmental Protection Agency with the authority to seek out those parties responsible for any release and assure their cooperation in the cleanup. (42 United States Code (USC) 9601 *et seq.*)
- 6) Directs the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to implement CERCLA through the state's Hazardous Substance Account Act. (Health & Safety Code 78000 *et seq.*)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Requires the Governor's office, state agencies and state departments, and the Legislature, to advance and promote environmental, conservation, and public access policies and budget actions, when distributing resources, to aspire to recognize the coequal goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal, the Outdoors for All initiative, and, to the extent practical, maximize investment in historically underserved urban communities consistent with those initiatives.

- 2) Encourages decisionmakers to consider factors that are unique to urban settings, including, but not limited to, higher land value acquisition and development costs per acre, the use and rehabilitation of degraded lands for conservation projects, the proximity to populations lacking park and greenspace access, the acute health needs of a local population due to historic lack of greenspace access and development externalities, local park needs assessment plans, current or impending loss of parks or greenspace as a result of state or federal infrastructure projects, and the availability of mobility options near a proposed land conservation site.
- 3) Encourages regulatory agencies, including, but not limited to, DTSC, to work with local communities to restore degraded lands that could contribute to a more equitable strategy for meeting the state's environmental, conservation, and public access goals.
- 4) Requires state funding agencies, including, but not limited to, NRA, the Department of Parks and Recreation, state conservancies, and the Wildlife Conservation Board, to allow, to the extent consistent with the funding source, the funding program's authorizing statutes, and the state's goals, for urban nature-based projects on degraded lands to be eligible and competitive for state funds.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown**COMMENTS:****1) Author's statement:**

California has made a strong commitment to protecting and preserving its natural lands, but it is just as important to make sure that densely populated and underserved communities are not overlooked in this work. By urging the state to focus on greening and restoring land in heavily urbanized areas, AB 946 will ensure we take a comprehensive approach to environmental protection that supports vulnerable communities and expands access to nature throughout California.

- 2) **30x30.** In October 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-82-20 which establishes a state goal of conserving 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 – known as 30x30. The 30x30 goal is intended to help conserve our lands and coastal waters through voluntary, collaborative action with partners across the state to meet three objectives: conserve and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, and mitigate and build resilience to climate change. The 30x30 goal was codified by SB 337 (Min), Chapter 392, Statutes of 2023.

As of November 2025, the state has conserved 26.1% of its lands (26.5 million acres) and 21.9% of coastal waters (737.61 acres), which includes a network of 124 marine protected areas, toward 30x30 goals. California's strategy to conserve an additional six million acres of land and half a million acres of coastal waters is organized into ten pathways that are specific state actions that will help achieve 30x30.

- 3) **Outdoors for All.** The Outdoors for All initiative is intended to expand parks and nature access in communities with little outdoor space, supporting programs to connect people who lack access.

Spending time outdoors directly benefits mental and physical health. It improves mood and happiness, lowers stress, and strengthens people's sense of meaning. Research shows that people who visit outdoor spaces for 30 minutes or more during a week have lower rates of depression and high blood pressure. Access to outdoor spaces also facilitates exercise, which improves long-term physical health. Many healthcare professionals recognize these benefits, and in some places have started to issue medical prescriptions to spend time in nature to improve health outcomes.

Outdoor access is not equitably distributed to all communities. A history of discriminatory policies and exclusionary zoning have led to long-term disinvestment, fewer parks and outdoor spaces, and less coastal access for many communities. The practice of redlining led to neighborhoods with far fewer trees and parks that provide shade and clean the air for lower-income residents and communities of color. Instead, these neighborhoods have more paved surfaces that absorb and radiate heat. During extreme heat events some cities experience differences of up to 12 degrees between formally red- and green-lined areas.

Establishing welcoming places where all people feel safe and have a sense of belonging is essential to building an Outdoors for All. AB 30 (Kalra), Chapter 939, Statutes of 2022, codified the state's commitment to ensuring all Californians can benefit from, and have meaningful access to, the state's rich cultural and natural resources.

Outdoors for All also furthers two other NRA priorities, Nature Based Solutions and 30x30, by investing in California's public lands and natural resources. Tying it all together, the *Pathways to 30x30 Annual Progress Report* (May 2023) notes:

By increasing both the variety and accessibility of outdoor recreation, California's 30x30 initiative is working to enable everyone in California to enjoy and connect with nature. Seizing opportunities to expand conservation that also increase access has been a priority over the past year and will remain so going forward. The Outdoors for All strategy will guide this facet of its 30x30 work.

One success at the intersection of access and conservation in 2024 was the opening of Dos Rios State Park, the first new state park in more than a decade. The park opened in June 2024, offering respite and recreation in an area with few accessible parks.

- 4) **Need for urban investments.** Parks, open spaces, recreation facilities, trails, and gardens are essential community infrastructure, but, as mentioned, not all communities have access to these resources. In Los Angeles (LA) County, communities with the fewest parks often have the highest (?) environmental burdens, i.e., pollutants and other stressors that directly impact public health and well-being. In LA, people of color account for 84% of the population living in areas with highest environmental burdens. Over time, some areas of the county have accrued significant environmental burdens as the result of historic land development practices, natural resource extraction and consumption, industrial operations, transportation projects, energy production and other impacts of urbanization.

The LA County *Parks Needs Assessment Plus* identifies priority areas for environmental conservation and restoration to form the basis of a local 30x30 strategy. This assessment reimagines conservation to include both traditional efforts to acquire and protect natural lands as well as the restoration of degraded areas, such as brownfields, landfills, and oil

fields. There is a special focus on lower-income communities of color, in which vulnerable populations and environmental burdens are concentrated.

Specific actions already taken to further 30x30 in urbanized areas include the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy investment of \$1.5 million in the Colorado Lagoon Open Channel Improvement Project to remove a 900 foot long culvert that runs through Marina Vista Park and replace it with a shallow earthen channel, reintroducing full tidal connectivity between Colorado Lagoon and Alamitos Bay to create 3.35 acres of new subtidal habitat and enhance 17.28 acres of existing marsh habitat at Colorado Lagoon. The project includes tree planting and other amenities to contribute to recreational benefits.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy also invested \$8.3 million in the River Wilderness Park (RWP) to serve as a trailhead at the northern terminus of the San Gabriel River Bike Trail, which stretches approximately 38 miles through the Los Angeles Basin and to the ocean—linking many of the region’s most underserved communities to dynamic open spaces. Construction of the RWP will include walking paths, river overlooks, extension of the San Gabriel River Bike trail, and public amenities, such as interpretive features, restrooms, play areas, and concessions.

There could be additional urban investments to advance these state goals. Maps that show where land has been conserved toward 30x30 goals demonstrate that it is nearly all outside of disadvantaged, urbanized communities. Indeed, much of the LA region, including Southeast LA County, and East LA, show no conserved lands. This is also true for more challenged Bay Area communities, such as Oakland, Richmond, and San Leandro. Public feedback gathered through the 30x30 Partnership 2024 Summit informed NRA of the key lesson that conservation and biodiversity are highly relevant to urban communities and historically excluded groups, and develop more connections and projects in these communities.

In November 2024, California voters enacted the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act, approving \$10 billion for climate, water, and fire resilience projects. NRA is charged with implementing the bond, which allocates at least 40% of funds to benefit disadvantaged, severely disadvantaged, and vulnerable communities.

- 5) **This bill.** AB 946 requires state funding agencies to allow for urban nature-based projects on degraded lands to be eligible and competitive for state funds. While nothing in current law or the Governor’s EO prohibits these investments, this bill would expressly prioritize them.
- 6) **Double referral.** This bill is also referred to the Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee.
- 7) **Related legislation.** AB 2285 (Rendon, 2024) was identical to this bill. It was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Park & Recreation Society

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /