
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Josh Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 946	Hearing Date:	June 9, 2026
Author:	Bryan		
Version:	January 5, 2026 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Edith Hannigan		

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

SUMMARY

This bill would provide that, to advance and promote environmental, conservation, and public access policies and budget actions, the Governor's office, state agencies, and the Legislature, when distributing resources, shall 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.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

Outdoors for All Initiative. The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) administers the Outdoors for All initiative championed by Governor Gavin Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom. CNRA published a strategy (Strategy) for the initiative in November 2023 identifying six priorities:

- 1) Establish Spaces for People and Nature to Thrive.
- 2) Foster Belonging.
- 3) Connect People and the Outdoors.
- 4) Co-Create with Communities.
- 5) Build Equitable Career Pathways and a Representative Workforce.
- 6) Align Funding to Achieve Outdoors for All.

30x30. California's 30x30 initiative to conserve 30% of the state's land and coastal waters by 2030 is part of an international movement to conserve natural areas across our planet, through which scores of countries have established their own 30x30 commitments. California's initiative seeks to protect and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, and mitigate and build resilience to climate change.

Equitable Outdoor Access Act. The Equitable Outdoor Access Act (AB 30, Kalra, Chapter 939, Statutes of 2022) established that it is the policy of the state to 1) ensure all Californians have equitable opportunities to the benefits of nature; 2) maximize public access to public lands; and 3) prevent and minimize the intentional and unwarranted limitation of sustainable public access to public lands.

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes CNRA and vests it with the responsibility to restore, protect, and manage the state's natural, historical, and cultural resources for current and future generations (Government Code (GOV) § 12805).
- 2) Establishes a goal to conserve 30 percent of California's land and coastal waters by 2030 ("30x30") (Public Resources Code (PRC) § 71450 and Executive Order No. N-82-20).
- 3) Requires relevant state agencies, including CNRA and its departments, boards, offices, conservancies, and commissions, and the Department of Transportation to consider and incorporate state policy regarding equitable outdoor access when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, or grant criteria, or making expenditures (PRC § 1002).
- 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) Requires CNRA to submit a report to the Legislature regarding the implementation of the Equitable Outdoor Access Act by January 1, 2024 (PRC § 1003).

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would:

- 1) Incorporate the priorities and implementation strategies of the November 2023 Outdoors for All Strategy into statute.
- 2) Require the Governor's office, state agencies and state departments, and the Legislature to aspire to recognize the coequal goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal and the Outdoors for All initiative. Also requires those offices to maximize investment in historically underserved urban communities, to the extent practical.
- 3) Encourage decisionmakers to consider factors unique to urban settings when distributing resources to achieve the goals and benefits of 30x30 and Outdoors for All.
- 4) Encourage regulatory agencies to work with local communities to restore degraded lands.
- 5) Allow state agencies to fund urban nature-based projects that are eligible and competitive for such funds, consistent with the funding program's authorizing statutes.
- 6) Make related findings and declarations.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, "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."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None received

COMMENTS

Overlap with SB 1268 (Gonzalez). Heard in this committee on April 21, 2026, SB 1268 authored by Senator Gonzalez proposes to codify the Outdoors for All initiative in statute under the provisions of the Equitable Outdoor Access Act (PRC §§ 1001-1003). AB 946 contains some duplicative language to SB 1268 but also addresses additional cobenefits of 30x30 and Outdoors for All that are not included in SB 1268. The Committee may wish to amend the bill so that, if both bills are enacted, the language in statute is harmonized, and that if only one bill is enacted, there is enough context for the chosen statute to be implemented **[See amendments 1 and 2]**.

Understanding the 30x30 goal. The goal to conserve 30% of California lands and coastal waters by 2030 is a goal based on conserving a certain *quantity* of California lands. Although the authorizing statute mentions equitable public access to nature, it is acknowledged as a secondary priority of 30x30 and a cobenefit of stewardship rather than a primary priority related to choosing which lands or coastal waters to conserve under the 30x30 goal (PRC §§ 71451, 71453).

No functional changes to how projects are funded. This bill requires state agencies such as CNRA to “aspire to” recognize coequal funding goals and fund projects “as practical.” It also “encourages” them to consider unique urban factors and “encourages” work with communities to restore degraded land, and “allows” eligible projects to be funded through relevant programs.

This bill does not contain statutory language that would functionally change the funding practices of the agencies implementing 30x30 and Outdoors for All. Although letters received by the committee in support of this Legislation, such as from Los Angeles County, appear to mistakenly believe there will be changes to guidelines, there is no requirement in this bill that state agencies change the way they program or award funding.

Related Legislation

SB 1268 (Gonzalez, 2026) codifies the Outdoors for All Initiative. This bill is pending hearing in the Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee.

AB 900 (Papan, Chapter 385, Statutes of 2025) requires CNRA to develop strategies to reduce barriers and increase support for stewardship of conserved lands.

AB 2440 (Reyes, Chapter 716, Statutes of 2024) requires CNRA to prioritize promoting and supporting partnering state agencies and departments that acquire and steward state land, and requires the 30x30 progress report include information on the amount of funding expended by each partnering state agency and department for land and water conservation, science and research, public outreach and engagement, and managing, monitoring, and restoring conserved lands and water, as well as information on state funding invested in equitable outdoor access.

SB 1402 (Min, 2024) would have required all state agencies, departments, boards, offices, commissions, and conservancies to consider the 30x30 goal when adopting, revising, or establishing plans, policies, or regulations that directly affect the use of coastal waters or land, management of natural resources, or biodiversity conservation. This bill was held on the Assembly Appropriations suspense file.

AB 30 (Kalra, Chapter 939, Statutes of 2022) established the Equitable Outdoor Access Act.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT 1

Amend Section 1. as follows:

(a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) Executive Order No. N-82-20 by Governor Gavin Newsom directs the Natural Resources Agency to combat the biodiversity and climate crises by, among other things, establishing the California Biodiversity Collaborative and conserving at least 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030, known as the 30x30 goal. The executive order directs the Natural Resources Agency to develop strategies to achieve this goal in a manner that, among other things, expands equitable outdoor access and recreation for all Californians. Senate Bill 337 (Chapter 392 of the Statutes of 2023) codified the 30x30 goal.

(2) Hundreds of millions of dollars in General Fund allocations have been directed to the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Department of Conservation, and state conservancies, among others, to meet the 30x30 goal.

(3) Governor Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom are championing the Outdoors for All initiative under the Natural Resources Agency that, among other things, seeks to expand parks in communities with little outdoor space and supports and underwrites programs to connect people who lack access to green space, fostering a sense of belonging and stewardship of the state's outdoors.

~~(4) Senate Bill 337 (Chapter 392 of the Statutes of 2023) codifies the 30x30 goal. The November 2023 Strategy of the Outdoors for All initiative, "Providing Equitable Access to Parks and Nature," establishes six priorities to achieve the goal of outdoors for all:~~

~~(A) Establish spaces for people and nature to thrive.~~

~~(B) Foster belonging.~~

~~(C) Connect people and the outdoors~~

~~(D) Cocreate with communities.~~

~~(E) Build equitable career pathways and a representative workforce.~~

~~(F) Align funding to achieve the Outdoors for All initiative.~~

(5) The County of Los Angeles adopted the 2022 Parks Needs Assessment Plus (PNA+), which forms the basis for a 30x30 strategy for the County as its 30x30 plan. PNA+ identifies environmental conservation opportunities in the County of

Los Angeles, including both natural lands ~~as well as~~ and the restoration of degraded lands, such as brownfields, that would provide increased access to open space in highly urbanized parts of the County of Los Angeles.

~~(6) PNA+ goes beyond traditional conservation models that involve the acquisition and protection of natural lands and reimagines the 30x30 goal through a more equity- and access-facing lens to direct funding and resources into the healing and conversion of blighted, degraded, and otherwise underutilized urban-based lands into green spaces and microhabitats promoting nature-based opportunities, access, and enhanced community and neighborhood aesthetics.~~

~~(7) Through thorough analysis, PNA+ identifies possible green space acquisition and restoration opportunities within the county and reveals a sharp contrast among regions in the county.~~

~~(8) PNA+ discovered that most of the available land for acquisition pursuant to the 30x30 goal was in the northern part of the County of Los Angeles, an area already rich in park and open-space resources as compared to the southern part of the County of Los Angeles, an area richer in diversity and more challenged economically, wherein the opportunities for 30x30 projects are confined to degraded and underutilized lands.~~

~~(b8) It is the intent of the Legislature, in order to promote equity in the allocation of resources and investments in nature-based solutions, including any funding that is already available for these purposes from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, particularly in California's marginalized and historically underserved communities, that the Legislature, the Governor, and state agencies and departments charged with the distribution of state and federal funds creatively strive to reintroduce nature through land restoration and land healing interventions for the greening of California's most nature-deficient communities.~~

AMENDMENT 2

Amend Section 2. as follows:

SEC. 2. Section ~~4004~~ 1006 is added to the Public Resources Code, to read:

~~4004~~1006. (a) The Legislature finds and declares that the November 2023 report of the Outdoors for All initiative, "Providing Equitable Access to Parks and Nature," ~~proposes the following priorities to achieve the goal of outdoors for all:~~

~~(1) Establish spaces for people and nature to thrive. This priority includes strategies to achieve all of the following goals:~~

~~(A) Develop, improve, and maintain local and regional outdoor spaces.~~

~~(B) Support tribal ancestral land return as a pathway for outdoor access.~~

~~(C) Support the use of cultural easements by California Native American tribes to protect cultural and sacred sites.~~

~~(D) Support multibenefit solutions for access and environmental priorities.~~

~~(E) Support deferred maintenance projects statewide that seek to expand access to recreation and provide a safe and welcoming experience for visitors.~~

~~(F) Coordinate with school districts and regional governments to enhance green schoolyards and explore opportunities for schoolyards to fill gaps outside of school hours.~~

~~(G) Support connecting different sized outdoor spaces, including statewide and regional trail networks, to provide diverse experiences for all skill levels, with the cobenefit of creating wildlife corridors.~~

~~(H) Ensure outdoor space development and management is consistent with California's climate adaptation strategy, climate change scoping plan, and Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy.~~

~~(I) Support implementation of antidisplacement measures to ensure access to open space does not lead to gentrification.~~

~~(J) Collaborate with private landowners and federal, state, regional, and local governments to explore opportunities to expand recreation access on private lands.~~

~~(2) Foster belonging. This priority includes strategies to achieve all of the following goals:~~

~~(A) Share culturally diverse, relevant, and relatable stories and images of California's people and history through the programming, interpretive materials, art, and signage offered at outdoor spaces, cultural and historic places, and museums.~~

~~(B) Foster public appreciation of, and connection to, California's natural and cultural resources.~~

~~(C) Support improvements to language access for outdoor programming, educational materials, and staff at open spaces, cultural and historic places, and museums.~~

~~(D) Build trust between and among staff and visitors.~~

~~(E) Create adult and youth centered programming, including intergenerational opportunities, at outdoor spaces to inspire and build confidence across a broad range of recreational users and activities.~~

~~(F) Rename offensive and derogatory geographic features and place names across outdoor spaces to address historical wrongs and create safe and inclusive spaces.~~

~~(3) Connect people and the outdoors. This priority includes strategies to achieve all of the following goals:~~

~~(A) Make information about California's parks and outdoor spaces easier to find and understand.~~

~~(B) Explore opportunities to offer free broadband on state recreation lands and cultural and historic properties, allowing for more accessible information, inclusive signage, programming, and connectivity to address safety concerns.~~

~~(C) Enhance and create more green, accessible, safe, active, public, and shared transportation options linking the outdoors and communities.~~

~~(D) Explore ways to provide free access to California state parks for low-income communities.~~

~~(E) Support tribal members in harvesting culturally significant materials in outdoor spaces.~~

~~(F) Explore public-private partnerships to support gear libraries and low-cost outings and classes at outdoor spaces.~~

~~(G) Prioritize funding and a streamlined process for building lower-cost coastal accommodations.~~

~~(H) Prioritize partnerships with nonprofit organizations that provide youth and families from underserved communities and people with disabilities with access to state lands through supervised programming.~~

~~(4) Cocreate with communities. This priority includes strategies to achieve all of the following goals:~~

~~(A) Conduct early, often, and meaningful tribal consultations with the goal of enhancing tribal partnerships and collaboration.~~

~~(B) Invite and embed meaningful tribal consultation and community engagement into grant processes.~~

~~(C) Update the grant applications of the Natural Resources Agency and its departments to increase support and reduce barriers for underserved communities, including California Native American tribes, and the organizations that serve them.~~

~~(D) Collaborate with other agencies to build best practices for public meetings that are accessible to people with disabilities and increase involvement by underserved communities through language access and greater transparency about state processes.~~

~~(E) Collaborate with the Governor's office to enhance outreach efforts for appointed positions on Natural Resources Agency boards and commissions to increase community representation.~~

~~(F) Identify opportunities for tribal governments and community-based organizations to cocreate and comanage parks and outdoor spaces.~~

~~(G) Continue to grow the Natural Resources Agency's capacity to meaningfully engage underserved communities.~~

~~(5) Build equitable career pathways and a representative workforce. This priority includes strategies to achieve all of the following goals:~~

~~(A) Bridge internships, California Conservation Corps, community conservation corps that have been certified as described in Section 14507.5, and other career development programs to careers with the state.~~

~~(B) Enhance strategies and inclusive career outreach and programming through dedicated staff at the Natural Resources Agency's career center.~~

~~(C) Continue coordination of intraagency workgroups and the Department of Human Resources to reassess job classifications, hiring processes, and salary ranges.~~

~~(D) Continue coordination efforts of intraagency workgroups to develop career pathways strategies to support aligned efforts in employee retention.~~

~~(6) Align funding to achieve the Outdoors for All initiative. This priority includes strategies to achieve all of the following goals:~~

~~(A) Develop and communicate an inventory of equitable access investments and impacts.~~

~~(B) Prioritize resource efficiency and reduce redundancies.~~

~~(C) Establish partnerships with philanthropic and for-profit sectors.~~

~~(D) Align existing funding sources to create multibenefit projects and programs.~~

~~(E) Streamline standards and decisionmaking tools for equitable outdoor access to determine strategic investments for the state.~~

~~(b) (1) To advance and promote environmental, conservation, and public access policies and budget actions, the Governor's office, state agencies and state departments, and the Legislature, when distributing resources, shall aspire to recognize the coequal goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal, as defined in Section 71450, and the Equitable Outdoor Access Act, as established in Chapter 2, Division 1.5, including the Outdoors for All initiative, and, to the extent practical, maximize investment in historically underserved urban communities consistent with those initiatives.~~

(2) When distributing resources to achieve the goals and benefits of the 30x30 goal and the Outdoors for All initiative, decisionmakers are encouraged 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.

(eb) Regulatory agencies, including, but not limited to, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, are encouraged 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.

(dc) State funding agencies, including, but not limited to, the Natural Resources Agency, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the conservancies established pursuant to Sections 31100, 32320, 32510, 32555, 32602, 32633, 33200, and 33501 of this code, Section 66906 of the Government Code, and the Wildlife Conservation Board, shall 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.

SUPPORT

California Association of Recreation & Park Districts
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership
California Park & Recreation Society
Los Angeles County
Prevention Institute

OPPOSITION

None Received

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