

THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1305
Author: Richardson (D), et al.
Amended: 5/14/26
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 5-2, 4/7/26
AYES: Becker, Allen, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Stern
NOES: Seyarto, Grove

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 5-2, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NOES: Seyarto, Dahle

SUBJECT: Wildlife: bears

SOURCE: Yurok tribe
Tejon Indian tribe

DIGEST: This bill 1) requires, contingent upon appropriation, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) to develop a roadmap to evaluate under what conditions the reintroduction of grizzly bear in the state is feasible and advisable; and 2) requires the roadmap to include certain scientific assessments and evaluations, consultation, and management, implementation, and regulatory measures, among other provisions, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Bear Flag as the State Flag of California (Government Code (GOV) §420).
- 2) Establishes the California Grizzly bear as the state animal (GOV §425).
- 3) Establishes the department and the California Fish and Game Commission (commission) in the California Natural Resources Agency.

- a) The department's charge includes, among other things, to manage the state's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources.
- 4) Authorizes the department to take for scientific, propagation, public health or safety, the prevention or relief of suffering, or law enforcement purposes, fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, birds, or any other plant or animal, as specified (Fish and Game Code (FGC) §1001).
- 5) Makes it unlawful to take a bird, mammal, fish, reptile, or amphibian except as provided in the Fish and Game Code or in a regulation adopted pursuant to the code, as provided (FGC §2000).
- 6) Makes it unlawful to pursue any black bear with hounds at any time, as provided (FGC §3960).
- 7) Authorizes the hunting of bear, and provides procedures to obtain a depredation permit for losses due to bear or other species, as provided (FGC §§4750 et seq., 4181, 4181.1)
- 8) Authorizes the department to issue a written permit to import into, possess, or transport within the state any wild animal as included in section 671 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations upon a determination that animal is not detrimental or that no damage of detriment can be cause to agriculture, native wildlife, public health or safety, or the welfare of the animal as a result of the importation, transportation, or possession (FGC §2150).
 - a) These are restricted species permits.

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the California Grizzly Recovery Assessment Act.
- 2) States legislative intent to determine whether reintroduction of the grizzly bear is biologically feasible and whether areas of the state exist where long-term coexistence and stewardship can be achieved, and that the department evaluate whether the ecological functions once provided by the grizzly bear may be restored, including through reintroduction, as provided.
- 3) Requires the department to develop a roadmap that evaluates whether, and under what conditions, reintroduction of the grizzly bear is feasible and advisable, and the extent to which the ecological functions once provided by the grizzly bear may be restored, as provided.

- 4) Requires the roadmap to include, but not be limited to:
 - a) Scientific assessments and evaluations, based on the best available science and data, including, of the grizzly bear's historical distribution, and an assessment of the ecosystem functions and ecological processes affected by the grizzly bear's extirpation and that may benefit from restoration of the grizzly bear, among others, as provided.
 - b) Consultation, review, and framework development, including consultation with California Native American Tribes, independent peer review of the scientific assessments and evaluations, and development of a framework for incorporating the cultural, spiritual, and ecological values of California Native American tribes, as provided.
 - c) Management, implementation, cost, and regulatory measures, including development of management procedures, including postrelease monitoring and conflict prevention, an estimate of implementation costs and agency capacity needs, and proposed statutes, if any, and regulations governing the taking and management of grizzly bears, as provided.
- 5) Requires the department to submit the roadmap to the relevant budget and policy committees of the Legislature, the Legislative Analyst's Office, and the commission by June 30, 2030. Requires the roadmap to be publicly available on the department's website.
- 6) Authorizes the department to contract with outside specialists to develop and complete the roadmap.
- 7) Prohibits the reintroduction of the grizzly bear in the state until all of the following occur:
 - a) Completion of the roadmap.
 - b) Determinations, based on the best available science, that establishment of a self-sustaining grizzly bear population in the state is biologically viable.
 - c) Identification of particular areas suitable for reintroduction, as specified.
 - d) Consultation with California Native American tribes, and engagement with communities in or near proposed reintroduction areas, as specified.
 - e) Adoption of a framework incorporating the cultural, spiritual, and ecological values of California Native American tribes into grizzly bear

reintroduction planning, management, coexistence, and long-term stewardship, as specified.

- f) Adoption of long-term stewardship standards and procedures for proposed reintroduction areas, as provided.
 - g) Adoption of procedures that minimize risk of conflict to human life and property.
 - h) Adoption of procedures that promote the welfare of grizzly bears involved in restoration efforts.
 - i) Adoption of regulations that set for the circumstances under which the taking of grizzly bears may be authorized, as specified.
- 8) States legislative intent that the department and commission be provided with sustainable funding sufficient to develop the roadmap and resulting obligations, as provided.
 - 9) Makes implementation of 2) – 8) above contingent upon an appropriation. Authorizes the department to accept and expend funds, upon appropriation, from any public or private sources to administer 2) – 8) above, and authorizes the department to accept funds regardless of whether an appropriation has been made. Provides that nothing in 2) – 8) above limits the authority of the commission or the department pursuant to the California Endangered Species Act.
 - 10) Specifically excludes the grizzly bear from multiple sections of existing code applicable to bears, including, for example, the prohibition on the use of iron or steel-jawed traps to take bear, among others.
 - 11) Makes extensive legislative findings and declarations regarding the history and cultural, historical, ecological, and symbolic significance of grizzly bears to the state, and the consistency of reintroduction – if feasible and advisable – with numerous existing state policies, among others. Makes various minor and technical changes to statute.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Unknown but likely significant limited-term costs until June 30, 2030 (General Fund, other special fund, or private funds) for CDFW to develop and make

publicly available a roadmap that evaluates whether, and under what conditions, reintroduction of the grizzly bear is feasible and advisable, and the extent to which the ecological functions once provided by the grizzly bear may be restored through human-mediated landscape restoration, including through reintroduction of the species.

- Unknown but potentially significant ongoing cost pressures (General Fund and other various funds) in future years in order to provide funding for the projects and activities identified in the roadmap and, upon determinations that a self-sustaining grizzly population is biologically viable and following consultation with Native American tribes and community engagement, potentially for the reintroduction of the grizzly bear in the state.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/15/26)

Yurok tribe (co-source)
Tejon Indian tribe (co-source)
Atsapàq
CactusToCloud Institute
Cahuilla Band of Indians
California Chaparral Institute
California Grizzly Alliance
California Grizzly Research Network
California Land Trust
California Nations Indian Gaming Association
California Tribal Business Alliance
California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Central Valley Partnership
Channel Island Restoration
CleanEarth4Kids.org
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Protection Information Center
Felidae Conservation Fund
Forests Forever
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Friends of Ballona Wetlands
Friends of the Eel River
Golden Gate Bird Alliance
Hills for Everyone

In Defense of Animals
Keep the Sespe Wild
Klamath Forest Alliance
Los Cerritos Wetlands Land Trust
Los Padres ForestWatch
Morongo Basin Conservation Association
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
National Parks Conservation Association
Native American Land Conservancy
North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California
Oswit Land Trust
Outdoor Bound Adventures
Pelecanus, Inc.
Raptors are the Solution
Resource Renewal Institute
River Otter Ecology Project
Road Ecology Center, UC Davis
Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Network
Santa Cruz Puma Project
SC Wildlands
Sierra Club California
SoCal 350 Climate Action
Social Compassion in Legislation
The Cougar Fund
The Escondido Creek Conservancy
The Summer Tree Institute
The Wildlands Conservancy
Tompkins Conservation
Voters for Animal Rights
Women for Wolves

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/15/26)

American Bear Foundation, California Chapter
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association
California Cattlemen's Association
California Deer Association
California Farm Bureau
California Forestry Association
California Hawking Club

California Houndsmen for Conservation
California Rifle & Pistol Association
California State Association of Counties
County of Lassen
County of Siskiyou
Delta Waterfowl
HOWL for Wildlife
Mule Deer Foundation
Mzuri Safari Club
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Rural County Representatives of California
Sacramento Safari Club
Safari Club International, California Coalition
Safari Club International, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
Safari Club International, Golden Gate Chapter
San Diego County Wildlife Federation
The Black Brant Group
The Honorable John McGarva, Sheriff-Coroner, Lassen County Sheriff's Office
The Honorable Mike Fisher, Sheriff-Coroner, Sierra County Sheriff's Office
The Honorable Tim Saxon, Sheriff-Coroner, Trinity County Sheriff's Office
The Honorable Wayne Woo, Sheriff-Coroner-Marshal, Placer County Sheriff's Office
The Honorable William F. Honsal, Sheriff/Coroner, Humboldt County Sheriff's Office
The Origins Foundation
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association
Wild Sheep Foundation, California Chapter

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “The loss of grizzly bears from California marks one of the most significant species losses in the state’s history. Once present in nearly every ecosystem, grizzlies were eliminated within a single human lifetime, removing a keystone species whose ecological roles were critical natural processes such as seed dispersal, vegetation management, and balancing the food web. The loss of grizzlies also severed enduring relationships between the species and many California Native American tribes, for whom the grizzly remains a vital and honored relative.” [...]

“Restoring grizzlies would strengthen California’s ecosystems, revive cultural and spiritual connections for Tribal Nations, and reduce long-term land-management costs through the natural processes’ grizzlies help sustain.”

“While biological feasibility established and clear ecological, cultural, and economic benefits, now is the moment for California to reconnect with a defining part of its natural heritage and chart a thoughtful, community-guided path toward the grizzly’s return.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: The California State Association of Counties writing in opposition states, “CSAC generally supports efforts to protect California’s natural ecosystems and species, and to restore our habitats to the maximum extent feasible. We support efforts to do so that appropriately balance the needs of communities as part of these restoration initiatives.”

“However, the potential reintroduction of grizzly bears to the forests of California after an absence of more than a century presents risks to residents in the future, and immediate risks to existing state regulatory efforts.”

They continue that we “currently experience a number of challenges related to apex predators such as mountain lions and gray wolves (recently reintroduced to the environment). [...] And while we appreciate the efforts made by [the department] to administer programs to prevent loss of life and mitigate economic losses due to wildlife conflict, these programs are not currently funded at the required levels, and challenges remain on how to best coordinate local and state response.”

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**** END ****