

Date of Hearing: August 20, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 427 (Blakespear) – As Amended May 23, 2025

Policy Committee: Water, Parks and Wildlife

Vote: 11 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill extends the sunset date for five years, from July 1, 2030, to July 1, 2035, for the annual allocation of \$30 million to the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF), and the continuous appropriation of these monies to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and other specified state entities for expenditure.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Ongoing costs of \$30 million annually (General Fund, special fund, or bond funds) from fiscal year (FY) 2030-31 until FY 2035-36 to maintain the annual allocation to the HCF.

COMMENTS:

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

While the HCF annual allocation is relatively small in comparison to resource related bond acts that have passed over the life of Proposition 117, it has provided a necessary, consistent, and reliable revenue source for conservation efforts in California – helping to attract and secure other public and private funding critical to complete major acquisitions, restoration, and wildlife connectivity projects. [This bill] will extend the sunset for this funding to 2035 to protect a necessary, consistent, and reliable revenue source for conservation efforts that benefit California’s diverse communities and biodiversity.

2) **Background.** On June 5, 1990, California voters approved Proposition 117 – The California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990. Proposition 117 created the HCF and requires \$30 million be annually transferred from existing environmental funds and the General Fund to the HCF to support the acquisition, enhancement, or restoration of certain lands for wildlife or open space purposes. In addition, Proposition 117 provided that HCF funds be spent evenly between northern and southern California and included certain specific annual expenditures, including to the Department of Parks and Recreation, the State Coastal Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the California Tahoe Conservancy, and the balance to the WCB.

As passed by the voters, Proposition 117 sunsetted the HCF on July 1, 2020, unless a later enacted statute “deletes or extends that date.” The 2019 public resources budget trailer bill

(SB 85 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 31, Statutes of 2019)) extended the HCF for ten years until June 30, 2030. Proposition 117, as noted, expressly allowed for the extension of the HCF. In addition, it also expressly states that “the Legislature shall not reallocate the funds allocated” to the HCF.

A coalition of environmental groups writes in support of this bill and notes that since 1990, more than \$1 billion in HCF funds have protected over 1.2 million acres of wildlife habitat across California and have supported more than 350 local and regional park projects. They also note the urgency of signaling a commitment to the HCF, because in the five years since the Legislature and Governor extended the HCF through 2030, “the Department of Finance has proposed (through the May Revision process) to sweep the HCF twice and proposed in 2024 to terminate it altogether. The Legislature rejected these efforts.” This bill extends the sunset on the annual allocation to the HCF until 2035.

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