

Date of Hearing: June 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

SCR 136 (Laird) – As Introduced February 25, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 28-4

SUBJECT: California Coastal Act of 1976

SUMMARY: Acknowledges and celebrates 50 years of coastal protection through the California Coastal Act.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Coastal Act), establishes the California Coastal Commission (Commission), and prescribes the membership and duties of the Commission. (Public Resources Code (PRC) 30301)
- 2) Finds and declares that the California coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital and enduring interest to all the people and exists as a delicately balanced ecosystem, and that the permanent protection of the state's natural and scenic resources is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation. (PRC 30001)

THIS RESOLUTION:

- 1) Acknowledges and celebrates 50 years of coastal protection.
- 2) Affirms the State of California's longstanding commitment to protecting its coastal waters and recognizes the importance of carefully evaluating activities, including offshore oil and gas drilling and coastal development, to ensure consistency with the state's coastal protection laws, climate goals, and the public trust in a clean and healthy coast.
- 3) Acknowledges the value of ecologically sound coastal protection combined with carefully planned development as essential to the economic and social well-being of the state for the next 50 years and beyond, and reaffirms the findings of our predecessors from 1976 that the permanent protection of the state's natural and scenic coastal resources is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation.

FISCAL EFFECT: Non fiscal

COMMENTS:

- 1) **California's coast.** California's coastal zone, which represents roughly 1% of California's total land mass, is one of the most unique areas on earth. Stretching 1,100 miles from the Oregon border to Mexico, California's coast boasts the largest ocean-based economy in the United States.

California's marine wildlife – including whales, dolphins, and the threatened southern sea otter – attract millions of visitors a year to our coastline. California's coastline counties are

home to 68% of the state, and millions of people visit California coastal state parks every year. The state coast is home to endangered species, such as the California condor, who find sanctuary along the coast, highlighting the area's importance for conservation efforts, and the coast is a vital part of the Pacific Flyway for migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, and the Western Monarch butterfly.

Coastal tourism and recreation industries in California are valued at approximately \$27 billion annually. Professional surfers brought in \$140 million in surf tourism to California in 2018 alone.

Valued at \$51 billion annually, the ocean off the California coast employs more than half a million people and supports a vast diversity of marine life, as well as fishing communities that depend on fish, shellfish, and seaweeds for their livelihoods. California's aquaculture industry has a \$200 million annual impact on the state economy; fisheries support 19,750 recreational fishing jobs, with the commercial fishing and seafood industry generating 155,258 jobs.

The coastal agricultural economy, represented by hundreds of different fruits, vegetables, flowers, nuts, seeds and other crop commodities, contributes to nearly 1.5 million agricultural jobs in California.

And, California's world-leading 100% clean energy goals are driving interest in exploring use of coastal resources to achieve those goals, including wave renewable energies and assessing offshore wind capacity and feasibility.

- 2) **History of the Coastal Act.** In 1972, the people of California approved Proposition 20, the California Coastal Zone Conservation Act, establishing that protection of the California coast and ocean is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation.

In 1976, the Legislature enacted the California Coastal Act and the State Coastal Conservancy Act, based on findings that the California coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital and enduring interest to all the people.

Since 1976, California's population has nearly doubled, growing from approximately 22 million to almost 40 million people. But despite ongoing pressure to privatize some of the world's most valuable real estate, the coast is demonstrably cleaner, healthier and more accessible than it was when the Coastal Act was signed into law.

The Coastal Act as implemented by the Coastal Commission in partnership with local governments, nonprofit advocacy groups, and in coordination with other state and federal agencies has been responsible for:

- The creation of more than 2,500 public accessways to and along the coast;
- Protecting 12,000 acres of open space and habitat;
- Restoring or creating more than 4,600 acres of habitat;
- Opening 875 miles of the California Coastal Trail open to the public;

- Providing \$30 million to local governments to plan for sea level rise;
- Awarding \$25.5 million in Whale Tail grants to 1,074 Tribes, schools and nonprofits for outdoor education, stewardship and public access projects;
- The establishment 64 Local Coastal Programs created by local governments to guide development in the coastal zone; and,
- The protection of 350,000 acres of wildlands across five counties covered by fire resilience plans.

The enduring legacy of the Coastal Act is evidenced in the coastal wetlands not filled, the sensitive habitats not destroyed, the access trails not blocked, the farms and ranches not converted to urban uses, the freeways and gated communities and industrial facilities not built.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Coastal Act.

3) **Author's statement:**

Senate Concurrent Resolution 136 commemorates the 50th anniversary of the California Coastal Act and the State Coastal Conservancy Act, landmark laws that have guided coastal protection, public access, and responsible development along California's shoreline. The resolution highlights the acts' enduring role in safeguarding the state's natural resources while supporting vibrant coastal communities and economies.

Before these protections, access was limited, and development went unchecked. With the passage of these measures, California has now conserved over 500,000 acres of natural lands, opened 875 miles of the California Coastal Trail, and created over 2,500 public accessways to the coast. These milestones deserve celebration, but we must not stop there – California must now look forward to the next 50 years of coastal preservation.

- 4) **Related legislation.** ACR 149 (Hart) Acknowledges and celebrates 50 years of coastal protection through the California Coastal Act. This resolution is in the Senate.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Audubon California
Azul
Black Surf Santa Cruz, INC
Business Alliance for Protecting the Pacific Coast
California Coastal Protection Network
California Coastkeeper Alliance
Center for Biological Diversity
City Surf Project

County Park Friends
Environment California
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin (EAC)
Environmental Defense Center
Environmental Protection Information Center
Fish on
Heal the Bay

Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Monterey Bay Aquarium
Mujeres De LA Tierra
Natural Resources Defense Council
Orange County Coastkeeper
Outdoor Outreach
Paddle for Peace

Queer Surf
Salted Roots
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper
Save Our Shores
Surfrider Foundation
Un Mar De Colores
Wildcoast

Opposition

None on file

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