



Assembly Bill 564: The Biodiversity Protection and Restoration Act

IN BRIEF

Assembly Bill 564, The Biodiversity Protection and Restoration Act of 2021, would ensure all state agencies, consistent with recent executive orders, consider and prioritize the protection of biodiversity.

BACKGROUND & PROBLEM

California is a biodiversity hotspot, home to thousands of species, many of which occur only in the state and nowhere else. However, as many as a third of California species are of conservation concern according to estimates by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, while hundreds are at serious risk of extinction.

Over the past two decades, California has lost more than one million acres of natural area due to development. The continued loss and degradation of the natural environment from this direct habitat loss, as well as climate change, invasive species, and pests, threatens wildlife species and entire ecosystems.

Globally, scientists have advocated for the protection of the earth's natural marine and land resources in an effort to halt or reverse the world's sixth mass extinction event. In 2019, the United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services warned that a million species are at risk of extinction in the coming decades and that more than 500,000 terrestrial species have insufficient habitat for long-term survival without habitat restoration¹. Similarly, in a December 2020 global assessment, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature found that over a quarter of evaluated species of plants and animals around the globe are threatened with extinction.

Among other impacts, biodiversity decline has profound impacts on our food supply. Biodiversity decline results in more susceptibility to pests, disease, and other stressors².

On September 7, 2018, Governor Edmund G. Brown issued Executive Order [B-54-18](#), which launched the California Biodiversity Initiative and directed the Secretaries of Food and Agriculture and Natural Resources to promote deeper understanding of current and future threats to California's biodiversity; protect native vegetation; manage and restore natural and working lands and waterways; and explore appropriate financing options to achieve these goals. The order directed all state agencies to work together to achieve these goals.

Last year, AB 3030 (Kalra 2020) introduced the concept of a '30 by 30' conservation goal in California. While the legislation did not pass, on October 7, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order [N-82-20](#), which set out the state goal to conserve at least 30 percent of California's land and coastal waters by 2030. The order requires the California Natural Resources Agency and other relevant state agencies to develop and report strategies to meet that goal by February 2022, and established the California Biodiversity Collaborative.

Protections of natural areas and biodiversity not only helps preserve California's ecosystems, but also can enhance climate resiliency and increase access for Californians to the outdoors.

SOLUTION

AB 564 will ensure that the goals of biodiversity protection, including the 30 by 30 goal, are not just aspirational, but are actually pursued by agencies as an official policy of the state.

AB 564 codifies the biodiversity protection provisions of executive order B-54-18 and N-82-20 by requiring that all state agencies, boards, and commissions utilize their authority in advancement of the purposes and goals laid out in the executive orders.

While Section 2 of Executive Order N-82-20 directs the California Natural Resources Agency and others to develop a report on strategies to conserve at least 30 percent of California's land and coastal waters by 2030, AB 564 provides additional accountability by requiring this report to be submitted to the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks and Wildlife and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources no later than June 30, 2022.

The bill will also help slow the loss of biodiversity and natural lands by requiring that no public agency approve projects that are inconsistent with or would impair the implementation of the strategies developed by the Resources Agency to meet the 30 by 30 goal.

SUPPORT

Social Compassion in Legislation (Sponsor)
Center for Biological Diversity (Sponsor)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

² <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3129EN/CA3129EN.pdf>