



**AB 2954: Natural & Working Lands Climate Goal
(As Amended May 4th)**

SUMMARY

The health of California's natural and working lands are linked directly to the health of our climate and communities. The priority California places on stewarding and conserving these lands will determine how well we fight climate change and prepare for climate impacts that may take a dramatic toll on our environment and our communities. California's lands can play a critical role in capturing and storing carbon emissions that contribute to climate change and its impacts. AB 2954 calls on relevant state agencies and other relevant agencies to establish a climate goal for California's natural and working lands to capture carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

BACKGROUND

California is a global leader in climate change mitigation efforts through bold climate goals and actions, using the state's power as the fifth largest economy in the world to drive positive action. California has ambitious climate goals to transition to a healthier, more sustainable economy, including: reducing greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, providing 100 percent of the state's electricity from clean energy sources by 2045, and reducing methane emissions and hydrofluorocarbon gases by 40 percent by 2030.

Recent studies by The Nature Conservancy, Next 10 and others find that California's lands, through improved stewardship and conservation, can significantly reduce emissions by absorbing carbon from the atmosphere, while delivering billions in economic value and reducing fire risk. Natural and working lands are the foundation of the State's water resources that supply agricultural crops, quality drinking water to residents throughout California, and buffer runoff from extreme storm events.

AB 2954 sets a goal to use the State's natural and working lands to reduce the levels of carbon while identifying means by which we can achieve that goal. It is vital that California identifies best practices, policy incentives, and means by which we can combat climate change by using our natural and working lands. Investment in nature-based climate strategies means cleaner air and water, flood protection, and resiliency to extreme heat and fires.

For example, investments in wetlands restoration in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and along California's coast will help reverse erosion and reduce carbon emissions while improving flood protection and providing critical habitat. In urban areas, expanding the tree canopy by planting and maintaining trees along streets, walkways, parks and yards

increases the capture of carbon, filters the air and captures water runoff. Improved shade helps reduce heat island effects, protecting vulnerable populations from life-threatening weather events.

The decisions we make today will determine if our wetlands, rangelands, farms, forests and urban green spaces become an asset or a liability in the fight against climate change. A recent analysis by Next 10 finds that the State's natural and working lands, absent any interventions, are at risk of becoming an increasing source of emissions due to fire and deterioration of the ecosystem, among other things. Natural and working lands are the State's only resource that is immediately available to naturally remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Investments in these landscapes now will provide climate benefits long into the future.

SOLUTION

AB 2954 will require, in accordance with the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, relevant state agencies and departments to identify a climate goal for California's natural and working lands to capture carbon and reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions when updating the next scoping plan. As a part of this process, the Natural Resources Agency, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Food and Agriculture, Air Resources Board, and the Strategic Growth Council will identify practices, policy incentives, and means to achieve climate goals. AB 2954 establishes a pathway to accomplish ambitious climate goals by implementing practices that reduce carbon while supporting natural and working lands. In addition to climate benefits, investment in nature-based climate strategies means cleaner air and water, flood protection, and improved resiliency to extreme heat and fires

SUPPORT

The Nature Conservancy (Sponsor)
350 Silicon Valley
American Farmland Trust
Audubon California
Big Sure Land Trust
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
California Catholic Conference
California Climate Action Network (CalCAN)
California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition
California League of Conservation Voters
California ReLeaf
Carbon Cycle Institute
Climate Reality, Santa Clara County Chapter
Defenders of Wildlife
Elders Climate Action Nor Cal Chapter



Assemblymember Robert Rivas, 30th Assembly District

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Environmental Defense Fund
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
National Audubon Society
Natural Resources Defense Council
Pacific Forest Trust
Regeneración
Romero Institute
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
Sonoma Land Trust
Trust for Public Land
Water Resources Association San Benito County

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