

SB 45 – Wildfire, Drought, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2020

SENATOR BEN ALLEN

Fact Sheet

SUMMARY

SB 45 will provide the necessary investment to help our state become more resilient to climate change and reduce the impacts of climate-related natural disasters. This legislation, if enacted and passed by the voters, will provide funding for concrete steps that will help reduce the impacts of rising global temperatures and invest in necessary preventative measures to protect vulnerable communities and our natural resources.

BACKGROUND

According to California's 4th Climate Assessment prepared by the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Energy Commission, and the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, the cost of climate change for California alone could be more than \$113 billion annually by 2050. The report determined that these costs will only compound if the state does not take action now to reduce the risk of climate change impacts such as more severe wildfires, prolonged drought, and deadly floods. Investing in preventative measures early will not only protect lives and property, but will save the state billions of dollars in avoided damage costs.

Wildfires

The wildfire season is becoming longer and more intense each year due to hotter temperatures and wide scale tree death resulting from prolonged drought. In fact, between 2010-2017 an estimated 129 million trees died, leaving behind massive amounts of highly combustible fuel. This phenomenon has led to the worst fires on record. Over the 13 months starting in October of 2017 the state endured four massive fires that caused 118 deaths, burned 700,000 acres, and destroyed 27,000 properties.

While the severity of these fires is heightened by climate change, the fires themselves are undoing progress to reign in greenhouse gas emissions. The 2018 fires are estimated to have released 68 million tons of CO₂, dwarfing the

progress California has made reducing emissions from the energy and transportation sectors.

The drought-induced tree die-off coupled with hundreds of acres of scorched woodlands is also reducing our ability to sequester carbon, further exacerbating climate impacts.

Urban expansion is increasing the population living in high fire risk zones, with an estimated 15 percent of California homes in high risk or extremely high-risk fire areas. This means the increase in number and severity of fires is being compounded by the cost to protect lives and homes and to rebuild after a fire.

Sea-level Rise

Sea-level rise already is affecting California's coastline, causing more extensive coastal flooding during storms, periodic tidal flooding and increased coastal erosion. According to the Ocean Protection Council, the rate of ice loss from Greenland and Antarctica is increasing and will soon become the primary contributor to global sea-level rise, overtaking ocean expansion from warming waters and the melting of mountain glaciers and ice caps. In California, frequent coastal flooding exacerbated by sea-level rise is expected to threaten nearly half a million people, \$100 billion in property, and 3500 miles of roads within the next 80 years. The number of hazardous sites, like wastewater plants, which are susceptible to 100-year flood events is expected to increase by nearly 2.5 times over a similar period, drastically increasing the risk of pollutant disasters if adaptation measures are not taken.

Droughts

Droughts are an expected feature of California's arid climate, but the four-year period between fall 2011 and fall 2015, which correlated with the hottest two years on record in 2014 and 2015, was the driest since record keeping began in 1895. The winter of 2017 provided only



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a brief respite before historic rainfall lows again in the winter of 2018.

Not only are we seeing less precipitation, but compounding the problem, warmer temperatures and prolonged drought have devastated the Sierra snowpack, which has historically been the source of most of the State's fresh drinking water. More precipitation is falling as rain instead of snow and the snow that does fall is melting early. Traditionally a robust Sierra snowpack gradually melting over the summer has recharged groundwater basins, storing water for later in the year when supplies are low. Now, not only are we getting less rain as a result of climate change, but we are losing our natural ability to store what does fall. Six of the past seven winters have had snowpack below 60 percent of average levels with 2015 recording the lowest snowpack levels in 120 years, surpassing another historic low in 2014.

Floods

Growing and sprawling rural and urban communities increase the state's population susceptible to flood risk. Twenty percent of the state's population lives in flood prone areas, with that number expected to grow as climate change causes more concentrated rainstorms instead of more frequent smaller showers. The value of buildings vulnerable to flooding is estimated to be around \$575 billion, without the inclusion of public infrastructure such as roads, airports, and seaports. Warming temperatures are expected to increase the frequency of both large-scale and small-scale floods. While stormwater can be used to recharge groundwater basins and supplement dwindling surface supplies, rain from these more intense weather events is more difficult to capture.

The state is currently investing less than half of what is needed to properly address the growing flood risks, with the repair of existing levee and defensive flood control infrastructure alone costing estimated to be more than \$34 billion. Proper investment in flood infrastructure can simultaneously protect buildings and agriculture, while

preserving and often enhancing ecosystems and wildlife habitat.

SOLUTION

This year's deadly wildfires, on the heels of last year's catastrophic events and a devastating multi-year drought, clearly demonstrate that the impacts of climate change are here now and are already costing California billions of dollars every year. Even with recent investments to reduce fire risks, the state is still far behind the curve. We must take aggressive steps to ensure communities and natural resources can adapt to a changing climate and to increase resiliency in the face of mounting climate impacts.

SB 45 proposes a general obligation bond to inject much needed revenue to address these impacts. The measure proposes to fund projects to reduce fire risk and restore already damaged areas; restore and protect impacted wetlands, watersheds, waterways, coastal resources, and fish and wildlife populations; reduce impacts in local communities and on vulnerable populations; and improve the resiliency of the state's water supplies and agricultural lands.

For example, this bond would be able to fund projects like the successful City of Campbell Hacienda Ave Green Streets project that while rehabilitating the roadway also installed landscaped parkways to capture stormwater and planted trees to reduce heat island effect. Another example is the North Yuba River forest restoration project that is removing debris and invasive species and restoring meadows in an effort to reduce the risk of devastating fires while also improving watershed health and flood control.

SUPPORT

Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association
Allstate
American Rivers
Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy



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Audubon California
Bay Area Council
Bear Yuba Land Trust
Big Sur Land Trust
Bolsa Chica Land Trust
California Association of Local Conservation Corps
California Association of Professional Scientists
California Association of Recreation and Park Districts
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
California Coastkeeper Alliance
California Council of Land Trusts
California Farmer Justice Collaborative
California Food and Farming Network
California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition
California Forest Watershed Alliance
California Invasive Plant Council
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership (CORP)
California Park & Recreation Society
California State Parks Foundation
California Trout
California Urban Forests Council
California Water Association
California Waterfowl
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife
Clean Water Action
ClimatePlan
Climate Resolve
Committee on Clean Water, Natural Resources, and Parks
Community Nature Connection
Community Water Center
Defenders of Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited
East Bay Regional Parks District
Eastern Sierra Land Trust
Endangered Habitats League
Environment California
Escondido Creek Conservancy
Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks
Friends of Joshua Tree
Friends of the LA River
Groundwork Richmond

Hills for Everyone
John Muir Land Trust
Laguna Greenbelt, Inc.
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
Madrone Audubon Society, Sonoma County
Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation
Marin County Board of Supervisors
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
Ocean Conservancy
Outdoor Afro
Outdoor Industry Association (OIA)
Pacific Forest Trust
Paula Lane Action Network, Sonoma County
Peninsula Open Space Trust
Pesticide Action Network
Placer Land Trust
Planning and Conservation League
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Rural Communities Access Corporation (RCAC)
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
Save the Bay
Save the Redwoods League
Self Help Enterprises
Sempervirens Fund
Sierra Business Council
Sierra Foothill Conservancy
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Sonoma Agriculture and Open Space District
Sonoma County Regional Parks
Sonoma Water
Sustainable Conservation
Surfrider Foundation
Tahoe City Public Utility District
Tahoe Mountain Sports
The Nature Conservancy
The Wilderness Society
Truckee Donner Land Trust
Trust for Public Land
Tuolumne River Trust



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Watershed Conservation Authority
Westfield State University
Wildlands Conservancy
Wildlife Corridor Working Group

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