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THIRD READING

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Bill No: AB 1789  
Author: Bennett (D)  
Amended: 8/11/22 in Senate  
Vote: 21

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SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/20/22  
AYES: Stern, Jones, Allen, Eggman, Hertzberg, Hueso, Laird  
NO VOTE RECORDED: Grove, Limón

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 8/11/22  
AYES: Portantino, Bates, Bradford, Jones, Laird, Wieckowski  
NO VOTE RECORDED: McGuire

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 5/26/22 - See last page for vote

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**SUBJECT:** Outdoor recreation: California Recreational Trails System Plan

**SOURCE:** Author

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**DIGEST:** This bill requires the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) to prepare a full update of the California Recreation Trails System Plan by January 1, 2024, and thereafter to periodically update this plan and report to the Legislature on progress in implementing the plan.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the State Parks within the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA). Vests State Parks with control of the state park system. State Parks is responsible for administering and managing the state park system for the use and enjoyment of the public, protecting this system from damage, and preserving the peace. *Public Resources Code (PRC) §§501, 5001, 5003, and 5008.*

- 2) Establishes the State Park and Recreation Commission (Commission) within State Parks, consisting of nine voting members appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate, to guide the director in the administration, protection and development of the state park system. *PRC §§530 and 539, respectively.*
- 3) Requires the State Parks director to cause to be prepared, and continuously maintained, a comprehensive plan, known as the California Recreational Trails System Plan, for the development and operation of a statewide system of recreation trails.
- 4) Requires the State Parks director to continuously review, revise, and update the plan and, every two years following completion of the plan, submit a report to the Legislature describing progress in carrying out the plan and recommendations for additional routes or other modifications in the system, specified. *PRC §5073.*
- 5) Establishes funding priorities for routes which meet certain specifications, including routes located in proximity or accessible to major urban areas of the state and routes located on lands in public ownership, among others. *PRC §5075.3.*

This bill requires State Parks to prepare a full update of the California Recreation Trails System Plan by January 1, 2024, and to thereafter periodically update this plan and report to the Legislature on progress in implementing the plan. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Makes a series of findings and declarations.
- 2) Expands the scope of the California Recreational Trails System Plan to include recommended priorities for funding to improve and expand nonmotorized natural surface trails, trail networks, greenway corridors, and other nonmotorized infrastructure, as specified.
- 3) Requires the State Parks director, on or before January 1, 2024, to prepare a full update of the California Recreational Trails System Plan, submit this update to the Legislature, and post the update on State Parks' website.
  - a) Following this update, require the director to periodically review, revise, and update the plan, post all updates on State Parks' website, and provide copies to the Legislature.

- b) Every three years following an update, require the director to report to the Legislature on progress in carrying out the plan, as specified.
- 4) Removes obsolete language and makes other minor technical, non-substantive, and conforming changes.

## **Background**

*Trends in trails use.* According to surveys conducted by the Outdoor Industry Association, trail use is the most popular outdoor activity in the nation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, park and natural surface trail use saw marked increases in visitation. For example, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District saw a 100% increase in preserve and trails visitations during 2020 over the previous year. The state's largest regional park entity, the East Bay Regional Park District, reported similar statistics.

*State Parks.* State Parks' mission is to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. With 279 state park units, covering 1.3 million acres, over 340 miles of coastline, 970 miles of lake and river frontage, 15,000 campsites, 5,200 miles of trails, 3,195 historic buildings, and more than 11,000 known prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, State Parks contains the largest and most diverse recreational, natural, and cultural heritage holdings of any state agency in the nation. More than 68 million people annually visit California's state park system.

*State Parks trails.* State Parks manages more than 5,000 miles of trails. Additional thousands of miles of trails are found on other state lands, federal lands, and in regional, county and city parks. These trails range from meandering and narrow footpaths that may provide beach access or entry into a redwood forest to a variety of other types of trails that can accommodate bicyclists, runners, equestrians, hikers, in-line skaters, and wheelchair users.

*California Recreational Trails Act.* In 1974, the Legislature passed the California Recreational Trails Act (CRTA), which requires the State Parks director to prepare and maintain a comprehensive plan for the development and operation of a statewide system of recreation trails, called the California Recreational Trails System Plan (trails plan). The trails plan assesses present and future demand for recreational trail use and recommends a system of trail routes designed to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities. State Parks first completed the trails plan in 1978 and later updated it in 2002. The 2002 plan update identified 12 goals,

including to develop adequate and stable funding for planning, acquisition, development and management of trails; prepare regional and statewide inventories of existing, planned, and potential trails; and promote and encourage the incorporation of trails and greenways development and linkages into all local and statewide land use planning.

CRTA requires the State Parks director to submit a report that highlights progress on the plan to the Legislature every two years. The last available update is from 2011. It reported on progress on the 12 goals and on specific trails around the state. In particular, it noted a need for more funding for trail maintenance, planning, and increasing access. The report also highlighted conflicts on multi-use trails among different types of trail users.

*Current and recent funding programs.* The federally funded Recreational Trails Program (RTP) makes approximately \$1.7 million available annually in California for grants for non-motorized recreational trails and related projects. This includes funding pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trails projects. Funded projects may also serve as non-motorized transportation corridors. Routine maintenance is not eligible for funding under this program.

The Active Transportation Program (ATP), created by SB 99 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 359, Statutes of 2013), consolidated existing federal and state transportation programs into a single program. This included the reallocation of some funds which previously had funded natural surface trails. SB 1 (Beall, Chapter 5, Statutes of 2017) makes \$100 million available annually to the ATP from revenues from the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Account. ATP includes, as projects eligible for funding under the program, recreational trails and trailheads, park projects that facilitate trail linkages or connectivity to non-motorized corridors, and conversion of abandoned railroad corridors to trails

In 2018, Proposition 68 created the Trails and Greenways Program under administration by CNRA. The bond allocated \$30 million for trail investments. Grant applicant demand exceeded the amount of available funds with \$400 million in requests.

## **Comments**

*2013 sunset of California Recreational Trails Committee 2013.* Originally, CRTA included the California Recreational Trails Committee (committee) to assist with implementation of the trails plan. The committee had seven members appointed by the Governor and typically held public meetings on a quarterly basis in various venues around the state. Duties of the committee included:

- Coordinating trail planning and development among cities, counties, and districts.
- Advising the State Parks director in the preparation and maintenance of the trails plan.
- Advising the State Parks director on developing standards for trail construction to make efforts uniform across the state.
- Studying and advising the director on issues relating to the use of private property for recreational trails.

The committee's 2012 self-evaluation report completed prior to the 2013 statutory sunset indicated the committee's only remaining relevant statutory duty was advising the director on the preparation and maintenance of the trails plan. The report indicated the committee had been useful in helping to prepare the biennial progress reports and had contributed significantly to trail development and management in California. The report also found that the committee's main strength was providing a public forum to solicit public input during the 2002 update to the trails plan.

AB 955 (Huber, 2012) would have extended the sunset date of this committee from January 1, 2013 to January 1, 2028. Governor Brown vetoed this bill, stating:

*“While the Committee originally intended to provide opportunities for stakeholder participation on trail plans and issues, it did not meet for two years prior to 2011 and currently only plans to hold one meeting annually. In an effort to streamline state government and retain public participation, I have signed AB 1478 which reconstitutes the make-up of the State Park and Recreation Commission.*

*I ask the Commission to dedicate time to discuss trail plans and issues during at least one annual meeting so that recreational trail stakeholders can offer their advice on recreational plans.”*

Given the veto, the committee sunset in 2013.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- One-time costs of up to \$125,000 (General Fund) for State Parks to update the California Recreational Trail System Plan by January 1, 2024.

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 8/22/22)

Bay Area Ridge Trail Council  
California Mountain Biking Coalition  
California Park and Recreation Society  
City of Carlsbad  
City of Moorpark  
County of Los Angeles  
East Bay Regional Park District  
Eastern Sierra Land Trust  
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks  
Laguna Canyon Foundation  
Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation  
Marin County Parks and Open Space District  
Outdoor Outreach  
Pacific Crest Trail Association  
Placer Land Trust  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
San Diego County Bicycle Coalition  
Sea and Sage Audubon Society  
SF Urban Riders  
Sierra Business Council  
Sierra County Land Trust  
Sierra Nevada Alliance  
Sonoma County Regional Parks  
Tahoe City Public Utility District  
The San Diego Mountain Biking Association  
The Unpavement  
Truckee Donner Land Trust  
Trust for Public Land

Watershed Conservation Authority

Zander Design

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 8/22/22)

None received

**ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:** According to the author, “During the pandemic, our parks and trails were highly utilized as an outlet for stress and connection. This difficult time, put a spotlight on how integral access to outdoor spaces are to

our overall well-being. Despite some modest federal and state investments in the past, we have not funded infrastructure improvements in our trails systems. This bill would require regular updates to the California Recreational Trails System Plan and that these updates be reported to the Legislature.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 5/26/22

AYES: Aguiar-Curry, Arambula, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Bigelow, Bloom, Boerner Horvath, Mia Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Carrillo, Cervantes, Chen, Choi, Cooley, Cooper, Cunningham, Megan Dahle, Daly, Davies, Flora, Mike Fong, Fong, Friedman, Gabriel, Gallagher, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Gipson, Gray, Grayson, Haney, Holden, Irwin, Jones-Sawyer, Kalra, Kiley, Lackey, Lee, Levine, Low, Maienschein, Mathis, Mayes, McCarty, Medina, Mullin, Muratsuchi, Nazarian, Nguyen, Patterson, Petrie-Norris, Quirk, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Reyes, Luz Rivas, Robert Rivas, Rodriguez, Blanca Rubio, Salas, Santiago, Seyarto, Smith, Stone, Ting, Valladares, Voepel, Waldron, Ward, Akilah Weber, Wicks, Wilson, Wood, Rendon

NO VOTE RECORDED: Berman, O'Donnell, Villapudua

Prepared by: Catherine Baxter / N.R. & W. / (916) 651-4116  
8/22/22 11:18:51

\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*