

# SB 50 – Public Lands Protection Act

## SENATOR BEN ALLEN

### Fact Sheet

#### SUMMARY

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SB 50 seeks to ensure that any federal public lands in California will remain in public hands, managed for the benefit of all Californians and preserved for future generations.

#### BACKGROUND

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California has 45.8 million acres of federal lands. These are managed by a variety of agencies including the U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Bureau of Land Management within the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Some of highlights in California include Yosemite National Park in the Sierra Nevada and Joshua Tree National Park in the desert.

Some of these public lands are managed as congressionally designated Wilderness Areas or as Roadless Areas, which means they are managed to provide recreational opportunities such as fishing, hunting, hiking, backpacking and horseback riding while maintaining their natural character. Other are managed to allow for resources extraction such as mining, oil and gas development and grazing.

Public, federal ownership of these lands has long been widely supported by the vast majority of Americans, including broad-based support from urban and rural communities, hunters, fishermen, conservationists, and outdoor recreation enthusiasts and was traditionally supported by both major political parties. However, we have seen a drastic shift in Congress which has culminated in efforts to open federal public lands for more oil and gas exploration and to even give lands away outright to corporations or states. There are significant questions about the Trump administration's support, or lack of support, of public lands based on his appointments and their stated positions.

There has been a groundswell of opposition to congressional efforts to sell off public lands. Congressman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) recently withdrew his bill that would have sold 3.3 million acres of public lands in the West (not California) after an outpouring of opposition from hunters, fishermen, and outdoor recreationists bombarded his office. Utah is losing the Outdoor Industry Association trade show which it hosted for two decades because of its official position opposing a newly designated national monument.

California companies like Patagonia depend on outdoor recreation for their business. Outdoor recreation is estimated to create 6.1 million jobs and contributes \$646 billion to the U.S. economy. When states can't afford to manage public lands, they sell them. At statehood, Nevada had 2.7 million acres of state-owned public lands. Now it has 3,000. Idaho has sold 40% of its public lands, and Utah has sold half of its state-owned lands. Selling off federal public lands will greatly diminish recreational access to these lands and significantly hinder our thriving outdoor recreational industry.

#### SOLUTION

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This legislation protects federal public lands in California in several ways. The bill gives the California State Lands Commission the right of first refusal either to accept or to find a suitable owner for any federal public lands, or any commensurate mineral rights, in California. The bill puts a process in place to facilitate any conveyance of lands and gives the Commission the authority to enforce that process in the courts. Should transfers of federal lands occur as provided by this bill, the new owner of the land will be solely responsible for all costs of managing the land, including the costs to develop any infrastructure.

The bill also prohibits county recorders from recording a transfer unless they obtain a certificate from the State



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Lands Commission that the Commission had a right of first refusal and the process outlined in the bill was followed.

#### SUPPORT

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350 East Bay  
American Lung Association  
American Rivers  
APEN  
Audubon Society  
Butte Environmental Council  
Cal Outdoors  
California Native Plants Society  
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance  
California Water Impact Network  
California Wilderness Coalition  
Central Valley Air Quality Coalition  
Clean Water Action  
Coalition for Clean Air  
California Bicycle Coalition  
California Coastal Protection Network  
California League of Conservation Voters  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Endangered Habitats League  
Environment California  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Environmental Working Group  
Foothill Conservancy  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
Friends of the River  
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks  
Heal the Bay  
Hills For Everyone  
Marin Council of Mayors and Councilmembers  
Mono Lake Committee  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Nature Conservancy  
PAN  
Releaf

Restore the Delta  
Sacramento River Preservation Trust  
Sierra Club  
South Yuba River Citizens League  
Surfrider Foundation  
The Bay Institute  
The Environmental Justice Coalition for Water  
The Trust For Public Land  
Voices for Progress  
Wholly H2O  
Winnemen Wintu Tribe

#### CONTACT

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