

SB 50 – Public Lands Protection Act

SENATOR BEN ALLEN

Fact Sheet

SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

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