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AB-2421 Wildlife Conservation Board: Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program. (2017-2018)

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Assembly Bill No. 2421

CHAPTER 760

An act to add Article 3.7 (commencing with Section 1374) to Chapter 4 of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code, relating to pollinators.

[Approved by Governor September 26, 2018. Filed with Secretary of State September 26, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2421, Mark Stone. Wildlife Conservation Board: Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program.

The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947 establishes the Wildlife Conservation Board and requires the board to determine the areas in the state that are most essential and suitable for certain wildlife-related purposes. Under that law, the Wildlife Conservation Board may authorize the Department of Fish and Wildlife or the State Public Works Board to acquire real property, rights in real property, water, or water rights for the benefit of wildlife.

The Rangeland, Grazing Land, and Grassland Protection Act requires the Wildlife Conservation Board to carry out the California Rangeland, Grazing Land, and Grassland Protection Program to protect California's rangeland, grazing land, and grasslands through the use of conservation easements.

Existing law authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife to take feasible actions to conserve monarch butterflies and the unique habitats they depend upon for successful migration and authorizes the department to partner with federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic programs, private landowners, and other entities that undertake actions to conserve monarch butterflies and aid their successful migration.

This bill would establish the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program, to be administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board, for the purpose of recovering and sustaining populations of monarch butterflies and other pollinators. To achieve these purposes, the bill would authorize the board to provide grants and technical assistance, as prescribed. The bill would require the board to develop and adopt project selection and evaluation guidelines, in coordination with the Department of Food and Agriculture, before disbursing these grants. The bill would establish the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Fund Account in the State Treasury, and would authorize expenditure of moneys in the account, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for purposes of the program.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Monarch butterflies are a favorite butterfly of people throughout North America, and concern for their survival brings people together like few other wildlife species such that, in February 2014, the United States, Mexico, and Canada joined efforts to ensure monarch butterfly recovery.

(b) Experts estimate that monarch butterfly populations overwintering on the California coast have declined to about 200,000 individual monarch butterflies, which is a fraction of its peak estimated to be approximately 10 million in the early 1980s.

(c) These same experts estimate that the probability of extinction of migrating monarch butterflies in the western United States is 72 percent over the next 20 years.

(d) Monarch butterflies face a variety of threats, including loss of breeding and overwintering habitat, effects of climate change, pesticides, and disease. But the consensus of most scientists is that efforts to protect and restore breeding and overwintering habitat are the best strategies to employ to recover the monarch butterfly population.

(e) Since more than one-third of the most promising California winter habitat for monarch butterflies is on privately owned land, collaboration with landowners is critical. Fortunately, many landowners are some of the strongest advocates for protecting and restoring overwintering and breeding habitat for the monarch butterfly.

(f) Concentrated action to restore breeding habitat throughout the monarch butterfly's spring and summer range, particularly on farms and ranches in the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada foothills, can help rebuild populations relatively quickly.

(g) The monarch butterfly's breeding habitat is California prairie, a blend of grasses, native wildflowers, and milkweed that, as documented by John Muir in the 1870s, once carpeted the Central Valley. Milkweed is the critical component. Monarch butterflies exclusively lay eggs on several species of milkweed and they only feed on milkweed during the caterpillar stage. This same habitat, California prairie, provides food and shelter to a wide variety of pollinators, including native bees and bumblebees, and dozens of bird and mammal species.

SEC. 2. Article 3.7 (commencing with Section 1374) is added to Chapter 4 of Division 2 of the Fish and Game Code, to read:

Article 3.7. Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program

1374. (a) The Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Program is hereby established and shall be administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board.

(b) The purpose of the program is to recover and sustain populations of monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

(c) To achieve the purposes of the program, the Wildlife Conservation Board may do all of the following:

(1) Provide grants for the restoration or enhancement of California prairie and other appropriate breeding habitat for monarch butterflies and pollinators on private and public lands.

(2) Provide grants for the restoration or enhancement of overwintering monarch butterfly habitat on private and public lands.

(3) Provide technical assistance to grant recipients, including farmers and ranchers, regarding restoration and enhancement of breeding, overwintering, and other appropriate monarch butterfly habitat.

(4) Award grants pursuant to this chapter.

(5) Provide grants for seasonal or temporary habitat improvements.

(6) Provide block grants in which suballocations are made by the grant recipient, with the approval of the Wildlife Conservation Board.

(d) Eligible recipients for grants under the program include private landowners, nonprofit organizations, resource conservation districts, or public agencies.

(e) (1) Before disbursing a grant pursuant to this article, the Wildlife Conservation Board shall develop and adopt project selection and evaluation guidelines. The guidelines shall include monitoring and reporting requirements to help assess grant outcomes.

(2) The Wildlife Conservation Board shall coordinate with the Department of Food and Agriculture in developing program guidelines.

1374.1. (a) The Monarch Butterfly and Pollinator Rescue Fund Account is hereby created in the State Treasury. The account shall be administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board. Moneys in the account may be expended, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for the purposes of this article.

(b) Moneys may be deposited into the account from gifts, donations, funds appropriated by the Legislature for the purposes of this article, or from federal grants or other sources, and shall be used for the purpose of implementing this article, including administrative costs.