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AB-900 Environmental protection: 30x30 goals: land conservation: stewardship. (2025-2026)

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Assembly Bill No. 900

CHAPTER 385

An act to add Section 71453 to the Public Resources Code, relating to environmental protection.

[Approved by Governor October 06, 2025. Filed with Secretary of State October 06, 2025.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 900, Papan. Environmental protection: 30x30 goals: land conservation: stewardship.

By Executive Order No. N-82-20, Governor Gavin Newsom directed the Natural Resources Agency to combat the biodiversity and climate crises by, among other things, establishing the California Biodiversity Collaborative and conserving at least 30% of the state's lands and coastal waters by 2030. Existing law provides that it is the goal of the state to conserve at least 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030, known as the 30x30 goal. On April 22, 2022, the Natural Resources Agency issued the "Pathways to 30x30 California: Accelerating Conservation of California's Nature" report and existing law requires the Secretary of Natural Resources Agency to prepare and submit an annual report to the Legislature on progress made toward achieving the 30x30 goal, as provided.

This bill would, to further specified findings of the Pathways to 30x30 Report, require the agency to develop strategies to reduce barriers and increase support for stewardship of conserved lands. The bill would require the agency to collaborate with stakeholders, California Native American tribes, and relevant state agencies to prepare a section on stewardship as part of the 2027 annual report on progress made toward achieving the 30x30 goal, which the bill would require to include, among other things, recommendations to increase and improve stewardship of 30x30 lands, including innovative ways to reduce barriers and increase federal, state, and local support for stewardship, as specified. The bill would require the update to be posted on the agency's internet website.

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

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

SECTION 1. Section 71453 is added to the Public Resources Code, immediately following Section 71452, to read:

71453. (a) The Natural Resources Agency shall develop strategies to reduce barriers and increase support for stewardship of conserved lands in order to further the findings from the Pathways to 30x30 Report, which provided that designating an area as conserved is only the beginning of effective conservation and that protected areas require ongoing stewardship and monitoring.

(b) The Natural Resources Agency shall collaborate with stakeholders, California Native American tribes, and relevant state agencies to prepare a section on stewardship as part of the 2027 annual report required pursuant to Section 71452 that shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following information:

(1) An estimate of backlogged, critical, recurring, and future stewardship needs throughout the state with associated costs. The Natural Resources Agency may use datasets, that are in existence on or before March 31, 2027, from federal, state, and local governments, California Native American tribes, private entities, and tribal landowners and managers to complete this estimate.

(2) Case studies of effective stewardship.

(3) A review of stewardship best practices for conserved lands that includes, but is not limited to, new technology and innovative practices that improve outcomes and cost-effectiveness.

(4) A valuation of the benefits of stewardship on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

(5) Identification of the ecological workforce needs for stewardship and opportunities to support workforce training.

(6) A review of the cobenefits of stewardship that includes, but is not limited to, recreation and public access, the provision of habitat and resources for wildlife, carbon sequestration, water and air purification, and climate regulation.

(7) Recommendations to increase and improve stewardship of 30x30 lands, including innovative ways to reduce barriers and increase federal, state, and local support for stewardship.

(8) Recommendations to increase ancestral land return.

(9) Recommendations to increase consultation and partnership with California Native American tribes and tribal cultural practitioners throughout the state, including, but not limited to, support for tribal stewardship activities, traditional ecological knowledge, and cultural practices.

(c) The update required pursuant to subdivision (b) shall be posted on the Natural Resources Agency's internet website.

(d) For purposes of this section, "stewardship" includes, but is not limited to, science-based management, adaptive management, traditional ecological knowledge, and best land management practices across all land types.