

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2494

Introduced by Assembly Member Rogers
(Coauthor: Senator McGuire)

February 20, 2026

An act to amend Sections 4629.6, 4629.8, 4629.9, 4631, 4631.5, 4639, 4651, 4652, and 4656 of, and to add Section 4649.5 to, the Public Resources Code, relating to state forests.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AB 2494, as introduced, Rogers. State forests: forest management.

(1) Existing law authorizes the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to engage in management of state forests and defines “management” for purposes of the state forests as a means of handling forest crop and forest soil to achieve maximum sustained production of high-quality forest products while giving consideration to values relating to, among other values, recreation, watershed, and wildlife, as provided.

This bill would redefine “management” for purposes of state forests as the handling of forest vegetation and soils within state forests for biodiversity conservation and fire resilience, while maximizing the promotion of durable onsite carbon storage and sequestration, climate resiliency goals, equitable forest access, wildlife and recreation opportunities, and compatible research efforts.

(2) Existing law declares it is in the interest of the welfare of the people of the state and their industries and other activities involving the use of wood, lumber, poles, piling, wood pulp, and other forest products that desirable cutover forest lands be made fully productive and that the holding and reforestation of such lands is a necessary

measure predicated on waning supplies of original old growth timber, as provided. Existing law further declares it is in the interest of the welfare of the people of the state that the state retain the existing land base of state forests in timber production for research and demonstration.

This bill would instead declare that desirable forest lands should be restored to fulfill ecological conditions and processes, and managed consistent with the definition of management, and would further declare policy of the state to be to respect California Native American tribal sovereignty and to seek opportunities for comanagement and integration of indigenous traditional ecological knowledge in forest management. The bill would instead declare that the state should retain the existing land base of state forests primarily for research and demonstration purposes and allow the sale of timber and other forest products only when harvest occurs for ecological restoration or research purposes.

(3) Existing law requires the management of state forests and the cutting and sale of timber and other forest products from state forests to conform with regulations prepared by the Director of Forestry and Fire Protection and approved by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Existing law requires the regulations to conform with forest management practices designed to achieve maximum sustained production of high-quality forest products while giving consideration to values relating to, among other values, recreation, watershed, and wildlife, as specified. Existing law authorizes state forest lands to be used for grazing and mining purposes pursuant to regulations established by the board. Under existing law, a person who violates the rules and regulations pertaining to the state forests established by the board is guilty of a misdemeanor.

The bill would prohibit the sale of timber and other forest products from state forests unless harvest occurs for ecological restoration or research purposes in a manner consistent with the definition of management, as provided. The bill would repeal the authorization for state forest lands to be used for mining purposes. The bill would require the regulations concerning the management of state forests and the cutting and sale of timber and other forest products to prioritize management practices, as specified. The bill would require the regulations permitting grazing on state forest lands to be updated to reflect the redefinition of management. Because a violation of these regulations would be a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(4) Existing law requires the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, in consultation with the Secretary for Environmental Protection, to submit a report to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee on the activities of all state departments, agencies, and boards relating to forest and timberland regulation, as specified.

This bill would, among other changes to the report, require the report include additional information including, among other things, any identified staffing needs, by department, and costs per position, to support a more efficient review of timber harvest plans.

(5) Existing law authorizes the department to collect recreational user fees for overnight camping and reserved group activities in a demonstration state forest. Existing law requires all user fees collected by the department to be deposited into the Forest Resources Improvement Fund and requires the fees to be used, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to reimburse the department's cost of maintaining and improving the campground facilities, associated recreational facilities, natural environment, and access thereto. Under existing law, the Forest Resources Improvement Fund is the depository for all revenue derived from the receipts from the sale of forest products, as defined, from state forests to support specified operations. Existing law authorizes money in the Forest Resource Improvement Fund to only be expended, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for the cost of operations associated with management of lands held in trust by the state and operated as demonstration state forests, as specified.

Existing law creates the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund in the State Treasury and requires that specified revenues received from a lumber or engineered wood products assessment, less amounts deducted for refunds and reimbursements, be deposited in the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund and, upon appropriation by the Legislature, be used for specified purposes, including for forest resources improvement grants and projects administered by the department.

This bill would instead require that all recreational user fees received by the department be deposited into the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund, as provided. The bill would instead also require that all revenue derived from the receipts from the sales of forest products, and any other funds generated by a demonstration state forest, be deposited in the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund, except as provided. The bill would require moneys deposited in the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund to, upon appropriation by the

Legislature, be expended to support demonstration state forests, as provided.

(6) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.

State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 4629.6 of the Public Resources Code is
2 amended to read:

3 4629.6. Moneys deposited in the fund shall, upon appropriation
4 by the Legislature, only be expended for the following purposes:

5 (a) To reimburse the State Board of Equalization for its
6 administrative costs associated with the administration, collection,
7 audit, and issuance of refunds related to the lumber products and
8 engineered wood assessment established pursuant to Section
9 4629.5.

10 (b) To pay refunds issued pursuant to Part 30 (commencing
11 with Section 55001) of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation
12 Code.

13 (c) To support the activities and costs of the department, the
14 Department of Conservation, the Department of Fish and Wildlife,
15 the State Water Resources Control Board, and regional water
16 quality control boards associated with the review of projects or
17 permits necessary to conduct timber operations. On or after July
18 1, 2013, except for fees applicable for fire prevention or protection
19 within state responsibility area classified lands or timber yield
20 assessments, no currently authorized or required fees shall be
21 charged by the agencies listed in this subdivision for activities or
22 costs associated with the review of a project, inspection and
23 oversight of projects, and permits necessary to conduct timber
24 operations of those departments and boards.

25 (d) For transfer to the department's Forest Improvement Program
26 for forest resources improvement grants and projects administered
27 by the department pursuant to Chapter 1 (commencing with Section

1 4790) and Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 4799.06) of Part
2 2.5.

3 (e) To fund existing restoration grant programs, with priority
4 given to the Fisheries Restoration Grant Program administered by
5 the Department of Fish and Wildlife and grant programs
6 administered by state conservancies.

7 (f) (1) As a loan to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for
8 activities to address environmental damage occurring on forest
9 lands resulting from marijuana cultivation. Not more than five
10 hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) may be loaned from the fund
11 in a fiscal year pursuant to this paragraph. This paragraph shall
12 become inoperative on July 1, 2017.

13 (2) Any funds deposited into the fund pursuant to subdivision
14 (d) or (f) of Section 12025 or subdivision (b), (c), (e), or (f) of
15 Section 12025.1 of the Fish and Game Code shall be credited
16 toward loan repayment.

17 (3) Moneys from the General Fund shall not be used to repay
18 a loan authorized pursuant to this subdivision.

19 *(g) To support demonstration state forests.*

20 ~~(g)~~

21 *(h) To the department for fuel treatment grants and projects*
22 *pursuant to authorities under the Wildland Fire Protection and*
23 *Resources Management Act of 1978 (Article 1 (commencing with*
24 *Section 4461) of Chapter 7).*

25 ~~(h)~~

26 *(i) To the department to provide grants to local agencies*
27 *responsible for fire protection, qualified nonprofits, recognized*
28 *tribes, local and state governments, and resources conservation*
29 *districts, undertaken on a state responsibility area (SRA) or on*
30 *wildlands not in an SRA that pose a threat to the SRA, to reduce*
31 *the costs of wildland fire suppression, reduce greenhouse gas*
32 *emissions, promote adaptation of forested landscapes to changing*
33 *climate, improve forest health, and protect homes and communities.*

34 ~~(i)~~

35 *(j) To the Natural Resources Agency to provide a reasonable*
36 *per diem for attendance at a meeting of the advisory body for the*
37 *state's forest practice program by a member of the body who is*
38 *not an employee of a government agency.*

39 SEC. 2. Section 4629.8 of the Public Resources Code is
40 amended to read:

1 4629.8. (a) Funds deposited in the fund shall be appropriated
2 in accordance with the following priorities:

3 (1) First priority shall be for funding associated with the
4 administration and delivery of responsibilities identified in
5 subdivisions (a) to (c), inclusive, of Section 4629.6.

6 (2) Only after paragraph (1) is funded, the second priority shall
7 be, if deposits are sufficient in future years to maintain the fund,
8 by 2016, at a minimum reserve of four million dollars (\$4,000,000),
9 for use and appropriation by the Legislature in years during which
10 revenues to the account are projected to fall short of the ongoing
11 budget allocations for support of the activities identified in
12 paragraph (1).

13 (3) Only after paragraphs (1) and (2) are funded, the third
14 priority shall be in support of activities designated in subdivisions
15 (d) to (f), inclusive, of Section 4629.6.

16 (4) Only after paragraphs (1) to (3), inclusive, are funded, the
17 fourth priority shall be to support the activities designated in
18 subdivisions (g) to ~~(i)~~, (j), inclusive, of Section 4629.6.

19 (b) Funds shall not be used to pay for or reimburse any
20 requirements, including mitigation of a project proponent or
21 applicant, as a condition of any permit.

22 SEC. 3. Section 4629.9 of the Public Resources Code is
23 amended to read:

24 4629.9. (a) ~~On or before January 10, 2013, and on each January~~
25 ~~10 thereafter 10, and annually thereafter on January 10,~~ in
26 conjunction with the ~~2014-15 Governor's Budget and each~~
27 ~~Governor's Budget thereafter, Budget,~~ the Secretary of the Natural
28 Resources Agency, in consultation with the Secretary for
29 Environmental Protection, shall submit to the Joint Legislative
30 Budget Committee a report on the activities of all state
31 departments, agencies, and boards relating to forest and timberland
32 regulation. This report shall include, at a minimum, all of the
33 following:

34 (1) A listing, by organization, of the proposed total costs
35 associated with the review, approval, and inspection of timber
36 harvest plans and associated ~~permits~~. *permits and agreements*.

37 (2) The number of timber harvest plans, and acreage covered
38 by the plans, reviewed ~~in the 2011-12 fiscal year, or~~ *and approved*
39 *in the most recent fiscal year.*

1 (3) To the extent feasible, a listing of activities, personnel, and
2 funding, by department, for the forest practice program for
3 ~~2012-13, or the most recent fiscal year, and the preceding 10 fiscal~~
4 ~~years. years, including, but not limited to, any other expenditures~~
5 ~~or transfers from the fund.~~

6 (4) The number of staff in each organization dedicated fully or
7 partially to (A) review of timber harvest plans, and (B) other
8 forestry-related activities, by geographical location in the state.

9 (5) The costs of other forestry-related activities undertaken.

10 (6) A summary of any process improvements identified by the
11 administration as part of ongoing review of the timber harvest
12 process, including data and technology improvement needs.

13 (7) Workload analysis for the forest practice program in each
14 ~~organization. department, including, but not limited to, an~~
15 ~~assessment of whether there is adequate staff to efficiently and~~
16 ~~effectively review plans.~~

17 (8) *Any identified staffing needs, by department, and costs per*
18 *position, to support a more efficient review of timber harvest plans.*

19 ~~(8)~~

20 (9) In order to assess efficiencies in the program and the
21 effectiveness of spending, a set of measures for, and a plan for
22 collection of data on, the program, including, but not limited to:

23 (A) The number of timber harvest plans ~~reviewed. submitted,~~
24 ~~returned for incompleteness, accepted, reviewed, and approved.~~

25 (B) Average and median time for plan ~~review. review and time~~
26 ~~of review for any subsequent agreements or permits to support the~~
27 ~~conduct of timber operations under an approved timber harvest~~
28 ~~plan.~~

29 (C) ~~Number of field inspections per inspector. and percentage~~
30 ~~of preharvest inspections attended by each review team agency.~~

31 (D) Number of acres under active plans.

32 (E) Number of violations.

33 (F) Evaluating ecological performance.

34 (b) A report required to be submitted pursuant to subdivision
35 (a) shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the
36 Government Code.

37 SEC. 4. Section 4631 of the Public Resources Code is amended
38 to read:

39 4631. ~~It is hereby declared to be in the interest of the welfare~~
40 ~~of the people of this state and their industries and other activities~~

1 involving the use of wood, lumber, poles, piling, and other forest
2 products, *The Legislature finds and declares* that desirable cutover
3 forest lands, including those having young and old timber growth,
4 *should be made fully productive and that the holding and*
5 *reforestation of such lands is a necessary measure predicated on*
6 *waning supplies of original old growth timber, restored to fulfill*
7 *ecological conditions and processes, and managed consistent with*
8 *the definition of “management” in Section 4639. It is further*
9 *declared to be the policy of the state to respect California Native*
10 *American tribal sovereignty and to seek opportunities for*
11 *comanagement and integration of indigenous traditional ecological*
12 *knowledge in forest management.* It is further declared to be the
13 policy of the state to acquire by purchase, exchange, lease, or grant
14 all of the following:

15 (a) ~~Such cutover lands, the reforestation or restoration of which~~
16 ~~is not assured under private ownership, to reforest or restore such~~
17 ~~lands during periods of unemployment and at other times, with~~
18 *locally appropriate species.*

19 (b) ~~Liquidating Disposal of forest lands primarily suitable for~~
20 ~~timber production production, which may be acquired under~~
21 ~~precutting agreements.~~

22 (c) ~~Demonstration forests of 2,000 acres or less adapted to~~
23 ~~furnish local needs of investigation, demonstration, and education~~
24 ~~in those timber counties where the ownership pattern is such that~~
25 ~~management of small areas is an important problem, throughout~~
26 *the state.*

27 (d) ~~One area, not to exceed approximately 40,000 acres, in each~~
28 ~~of the following forest districts, Coast Range Pine and Fir District,~~
29 ~~North Sierra Pine District and the South Sierra Pine District, for~~
30 ~~the purpose of demonstration of economical forest management.~~
31 ~~These areas shall not include virgin timber except that which is~~
32 ~~incidental to areas previously harvested.~~

33 SEC. 5. Section 4631.5 of the Public Resources Code is
34 amended to read:

35 4631.5. ~~It is further declared to be in the interest of the welfare~~
36 ~~of the people of this state that the state do all~~ *The Legislature*
37 *further declares that the state should do both of the following:*

38 (a) ~~Retain the existing land base of state forests in timber~~
39 ~~production for research and demonstration purposes, primarily for~~
40 *research and demonstration purposes and allow the sale of timber*

1 *and other forest products only when harvest occurs for ecological*
2 *restoration or research purposes.*

3 (b) Cooperate with local governments in mitigating the impacts
4 on school enrollment of geothermal development ~~which that~~ occurs
5 in proximity to state-owned forest lands.

6 SEC. 6. Section 4639 of the Public Resources Code is amended
7 to read:

8 4639. "Management" means the handling of forest ~~crop and~~
9 ~~forest soil so as to achieve maximum sustained production of high~~
10 ~~quality forest products while giving consideration to values relating~~
11 ~~to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, fisheries, and~~
12 ~~aesthetic enjoyment. vegetation and soils within state forests,~~
13 ~~including, but not limited to, demonstration state forests, for~~
14 ~~biodiversity conservation and fire resilience, while maximizing~~
15 ~~the promotion of durable onsite carbon storage and sequestration,~~
16 ~~climate resiliency goals, equitable forest access, wildlife and~~
17 ~~recreation opportunities, and compatible research efforts.~~

18 SEC. 7. Section 4649.5 is added to the Public Resources Code,
19 to read:

20 4649.5. The sale of timber and other forest products shall be
21 prohibited unless harvest occurs for ecological restoration or
22 research purposes in a manner consistent with the definition of
23 "management" in Section 4639.

24 SEC. 8. Section 4651 of the Public Resources Code is amended
25 to read:

26 4651. The management of state forests and the cutting and sale
27 of timber and other forest products from state forests shall conform
28 to regulations prepared by the director and approved by the board.
29 These regulations shall ~~be in conformity with forest management~~
30 ~~practices designed to achieve maximum sustained production of~~
31 ~~high-quality forest products while giving consideration to values~~
32 ~~relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage,~~
33 ~~fisheries, and aesthetic enjoyment. The sale of timber and other~~
34 ~~forest products is limited to raw materials only. prioritize~~
35 ~~management practices consistent with the definition of~~
36 ~~"management" in Section 4639.~~

37 SEC. 9. Section 4652 of the Public Resources Code is amended
38 to read:

39 4652. (a) The department may collect recreational user fees
40 for overnight camping and reserved group activities in a

1 demonstration state forest. The department shall not charge a fee
2 that exceeds the amount necessary to reimburse the department's
3 costs for maintenance and improvement of campground facilities,
4 associated recreational facilities, natural environment, and access
5 thereto.

6 (b) All recreational user fees received by the department during
7 each fiscal year shall be deposited into the ~~Forest Resources~~
8 ~~Improvement Fund~~ *Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration*
9 *Fund established pursuant to Section 4629.3* and shall be used,
10 upon appropriation by the Legislature, to reimburse the
11 department's cost of maintaining and improving the campground
12 facilities, associated recreational facilities, natural environment,
13 and access thereto.

14 (c) ~~Receipts~~ *Notwithstanding Section 4799.13, receipts* from
15 the sales of forest products and recreational user fees shall be
16 deposited monthly with the State Treasurer in the ~~Forest Resources~~
17 ~~Improvement Fund~~ *Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration*
18 *Fund*. The Controller shall keep a record of accounts of such
19 receipts separately.

20 (d) *Any other funds generated by a demonstration state forest,*
21 *including, but not limited to, any funds that are deposited into the*
22 *Forest Resources Improvement Fund, shall be transferred to the*
23 *Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund.*

24 SEC. 10. Section 4656 of the Public Resources Code is
25 amended to read:

26 4656. (a) This chapter does not interfere with the reasonable
27 use of state forests for hunting, fishing, ~~recreation~~ *foraging*,
28 *recreation*, and camping, except as otherwise provided by law.

29 ~~The~~

30 (b) *The* use of state forest lands for grazing and ~~mining~~ purposes
31 shall be permitted pursuant to regulations established by the board
32 in accordance with Chapter ~~3.5~~ 3.5 (commencing with Section
33 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government ~~Code~~.
34 *Code, and reflect the definition of "management" in Section 4639.*
35 The use and development of water facilities for irrigation and
36 power shall be permitted as provided by law.

37 SEC. 11. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to
38 Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because
39 the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school
40 district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or

1 infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty
2 for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of
3 the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within
4 the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California
5 Constitution.

O