

Sierra Club California Priority Bills as of May 28, 2013

Sierra Club California tracks hundreds of bills making their way through the legislative process each year. Of those, a few dozen require closer monitoring. And of those few dozen, a number deserve active engagement because they will significantly affect environmental policy in the state--either positive way or a negative way.

Our priority list below is compiled by staff, based on bill positions established by our volunteer-based legislative committee, and on staff assessment of where attention is needed at the time the list is compiled. The legislative process is fluid and the fate of a bill can change often and very quickly--more quickly than time often allows for us to update this list.

Support:

Fracking Moratorium--AB 1373 (Mitchell) was one of three bills introduced in the Assembly that would establish a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in California until the legislature is confident this technique for extracting oil and gas isn't harming public health and the environment. It is the only one of the three bills to survive the committee process. We are anticipating that it will not come to a floor vote in the Assembly until the second year of the session.

Fracking Protections—AB 669 (Stone) provides that fracking is regulated to make sure the oil and gas industry notifies water regulators about the disposal method and location of wastewater disposal for drilling, re-drilling, or deepening operations. **SB 395 (Jackson)** expands certain regulations to include injection wells and expands industry responsibilities for testing water “produced” during drilling operations.

Coastal Commission Enforcement Powers--AB 976 (Atkins) and AB 203 (Stone) would, in complementary ways, help the Coastal Commission enforce existing laws regarding coastal development. One, AB 976, would give the commission power to fine chronic lawbreakers. The other, AB 203, would prevent new development permits from being granted to properties that are in violation of the law. Together, these bills will help clear out a backlog of 1,800 cases in which lawbreakers have refused to mend their ways.

Shared Renewable Energy--SB 43 (Wolk) will expand opportunities for renters and others who don't have access to renewable rooftop solar energy to subscribe to a medium-size solar energy project. The bill would establish a limited pilot project and would also require the Public Utilities Commission to establish a permanent shared renewables program.

Low-Income Access to Solar--AB 217 (Bradford) establishes a new program which provides \$108 million to keep the existing Single-family Affordable Solar Home (SASH) and Multi-family Affordable Solar Home (MASH) programs going. This program is designed to provide rebates for up to 50 megawatts to qualified low-income households until 2021.

Environmental Review Improvements--SB 617 (Evans) will improve public notice about big projects that require review under the California Environmental Quality Act. It would also make a common sense fix to make sure natural hazards (e.g. earthquake faults, flooding risks) are revealed in environmental review. **SB 436 (Jackson)** will ensure that at least one public scoping meeting is conducted by the lead agency for projects of significance.

Plastic Bags Ban--SB 405 (Padilla) would reduce plastic bag litter by prohibiting grocery stores, pharmacies, and convenience stores from distributing single-use plastic bags while allowing them to sell recyclable paper and durable reusable bags.

Wildlife Protections--AB 1213 (Bloom) would place new restrictions on trapping of bobcats. **AB 711 (Rendon)** would restrict the use lead bullets in all hunting in the state. **SB 132 (Hill)** would require safe, non-lethal removal of mountain lions if they pose a threat to the public. **AB 789 (Williams)** prohibits cruel killing methods of animals in traps such as drowning, crushing chests, and injections of substances not meant for humane killing. It also reduces the size of killer conibear traps set on land.

Water Quality--AB 21 (Alejo) would provide a sustainable funding source for the Clean Water Emergency Grant Fund by assessing a set annual charge in lieu of interest on loans for water projects from the Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, and deposit that money into the Safe Drinking Water Small Community Emergency Grant Fund, which the bill would create in the State Treasury.

Flame Retardants--AB 127 (Skinner) would call for reducing the use of toxic flame retardant chemicals in building insulation while maintaining building fire safety and encouraging healthy building practices.

Pharmaceutical Waste--SB 727 (Jackson) would limit environmental and public health threats from pharmaceutical waste by allowing pharmaceutical producers to develop, support, and implement programs in California for consumers to properly dispose of expired or unused medications.

Oppose:

Forest Protections Threat--AB 904 (Chesbro) would dramatically revise portions of the Forest Protection Act despite evidence that the revisions would be very difficult for responsible agencies to review and monitor. This would put forest health and wildlife habitat unnecessarily at risk. This bill needs a lot more thoughtful work before it deserves to come to a floor vote.

Oil Industry Regulatory Rollback--AB 8 (Perea and Skinner) and SB 11 (Pavley), identical bills designed to extend fees levied to create incentive funds for vehicle emissions reduction programs, both include a single paragraph that would ban for 12 years enforcement of a California Air Resources Board regulation requiring fuel companies (i.e. oil companies) to provide hydrogen fueling stations for vehicles. The paragraph was included to encourage oil industry lobbyists to support the fee bill, which requires a two-thirds vote in the legislature, and deliver needed Republican votes. The bill would have the legislature acting to undercut the outcome of a publicly vetted regulatory process in exchange for oil industry lobbying for the fee extension.

Fracking Notification--AB 7 (Wieckowski) and SB 4 (Pavley) move toward better notification and regulatory requirements for hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for oil and gas. However, both bills provide for trade secret protections for fracking fluids, making it cumbersome, if not impossible, for the public to obtain needed information about chemicals used in specific wells and to provide oversight of enforcement by the lead regulatory agency.