



AB 64

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DEVON J. MATHIS

The Beaver Reintroduction Act

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED BILL

AB 64 would require the Department of Fish and Wildlife to allow the release of the wild beaver onto public lands, and would authorize the department to partner with specified entities for the purpose of capturing, handling, or releasing the wild beaver onto public lands. AB 64 would also authorize the department to allow the release of the wild beaver onto lands held by California recognized tribal nations with a written agreement from the tribal government.

EXISTING LAW

The Department of Fish and Wildlife has been prompted by a regulatory change resulting from a 2022 Budget Change Proposal (#3600-071-BCP-2022-MR) to begin hiring staff to reintroduce beavers into California's ecosystem.

ISSUE

California faces a climate change crisis. The statement is banal but it's nonetheless true. We ignore it at our own peril. Floods devastate large portions of our state. Wildfires ravage entire counties. Carbon release continues to warm the planet. Implacable drought challenges Benjamin Franklin's adage that the only sure things are death and taxes. Both California's citizens and our ecosystem suffer. It's the state's responsibility to protect us.

The state has taken a combination of reactionary and proactive steps to mitigate the effects of or reverse climate change. Regulations and prohibitions in reaction to environmentally damaging practices have been implemented with varying degrees of success, whereas state instituted or incentivized environmentally beneficial programs have been more successful. It's the latter approach the state must focus on to meet its climate and climate equity goals.

SOLUTION

California has a super hero. Its name isn't Batman or Superman; it doesn't fight crime or for Truth, Justice, and the American Way. It's nobler. It's known as the Castor Canadensis (Beaver) — it fights climate change.

There's a reason the *Los Angeles Times* dubbed the beaver a "superhero in fighting climate change." They're a keystone species vital to the ecosystem that

research shows help mitigate drought, prevent flooding, and spread water to support vegetation and biodiversity; protect vegetation during wildfires; and facilitate incredible levels of carbon storage. There are few animals, let alone companies or government initiatives, which do as much good for our climate as the beaver. The Department of Fish and Wildlife has already been prompted by a regulatory change resulting from a 2022 BCP (#3600-071-BCP-2022-MR) to begin hiring staff to reintroduce beavers into our ecosystem for this very reason.

This bill codifies the departmental practices outlined in the BCP into law to prevent future departmental staff from reversing these practices. Unlike regulatory changes, state law can't be changed on a whim. The department is doing excellent work, but the beaver's impact on our environment warrants this extra safeguard.

A final point: The beaver is native to California. It was primarily driven out of the state by unregulated trapping. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, we know the beaver will assimilate and contribute to its ecosystem because it thrived here before. Secondly, reintroducing the beaver is consistent with the state's previous reintroductions of native species. While we don't make a moral claim on behalf of the beaver, there may be special merits to restoring an animal native to the state that was inhumanely hunted until just decades ago — made even more special by their super hero worthy benefits to our planet.

SIMILAR LEGISLATION

Budget Changes Proposal (#3600-071-BCP-2022-MR)

SUPPORT

None on file

OPPOSITION

None on file

CO-AUTHORS

None on file

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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