

# CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE

## 2024 SESSION UPDATE

MARCH 2, 2024

With the 2024 Session of the California State Legislature – the second year of the two-year 2023/2024 Legislative Session – now entering its third month, activity at our State Capitol has hit full speed. With the bill introduction deadline of Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, now passed, the challenges the wildlife conservation community will face this year are coming into focus.

This Report “*California State Legislature – 2024 Session Update*” will provide you with the latest status of two-year bills remaining from the 2023 Session, and an up-to-the minute look at all new legislation of interest that is hot off the press.

The status of each bill is shown in italics. Legislation is listed in bill number order, not in order of priority or interest.

- [AB 262 \(Holden\)](#) – **Children’s Camps: Safety and Regulation**

As amended September 1, 2023, AB 262 by [Assembly Member Chris Holden](#) (D/41-Pasadena) is a “two-year” bill that would require the Department of Social Services (DSS) to convene and consult with a stakeholder group on children’s camp safety. In doing so, the bill specifically would require that the stakeholder group be composed of representatives from the Department of Public Health, the Department of Education, the Department of Industrial Relations, and the Department of Parks and Recreation. AB 262 would also require that the stakeholder group include various stakeholders – specifically including parent advocate groups and children’s safety groups. Further, the bill would require the stakeholder group make recommendations to address, among other things, a definition for a children’s camp and child supervision requirements – including appropriate qualifications and training for camp staff that oversee activities that carry an “inherent or heightened risk”, including “gun ranges”.

Of primary concern, AB 262 does not require that the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) or wildlife conservation or recreational shooting groups be included in the stakeholder group. Given that DSS has no history of working with DFW, or with conservation or shooting organizations, our partner and lobbyist is very concerned that if our interests are not specifically called out in the bill we will not be at the table. Without our representation, we believe AB 262 would result in unnecessary and costly regulations being placed on camps, while not appropriately educating youth on wildlife conservation, or our hunting, fishing, and archery pastimes, and firearms safety.

To address these concerns, our partner and lobbyist, *Ducks Unlimited (DU)*, and *California Rifle and Pistol Association (CRPA)* met with the author’s office several times during the 2023 Session to try to secure amendments to the bill which would ensure wildlife conservation, shooting organizations, and DFW are appropriately represented in the stakeholder group discussions.

Our lobbyist and *DU* met again with the author’s office in early January 2024 in another attempt to seek necessary amendments to the bill. During this most recent meeting, we were told that AB 262 had been handed over to the Governor’s office at their request and that we should coordinate any future discussions regarding the legislation with them. In February 2024, our lobbyist and *DU* met with the Governor’s office

to discuss our concerns. The meeting appeared to go well, and we are hopeful that, should the bill move forward, it will be amended to address our concerns.

During the 2023 Session, AB 262 easily passed through the Assembly and the Senate. Passing off the Senate Floor in early September, AB 262 was immediately sent back to the Assembly for their vote of approval of amendments placed in the bill in the Senate. However, prior to being brought up for that vote, AB 262 was ordered to the inactive file at the request of the author and became a “two-year” bill.

*Because AB 262 was pulled from consideration just one Floor vote short of making it to the Governor’s desk, it has the entire 2024 Session to be taken up for that final vote.*

During the 2022 Session, we actively opposed and defeated AB 1737 – somewhat similar legislation also brought forth by Assembly Member Holden.

To view all the information currently available on AB 262, click [AB 262 Detail](#)

• [AB 554 \(Gabriel\)](#) – **Corporations for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: Enforcement of Laws**

Existing law authorizes a non-profit corporation for the prevention of cruelty to animals, or an officer thereof, to file a complaint against any person, before any court or judge having jurisdiction, for the violation of any law relating to or affecting animals and to aid in the prosecution of the offender before a court or magistrate.

As amended March 15, 2023, AB 554 by Assembly [Member Jesse Gabriel](#) (D/46-Woodland Hills) would have authorized any such corporation, or an officer thereof, filing such a complaint to also bring it as a civil action to obtain specific or injunctive relief to enforce laws relating to or affecting animals.

The amendment placed in AB 554 in March 2023, brought forth to the author by the American Kennel Club, changed the language of the bill from authorizing filing a complaint to bring civil action to obtain *preventative* relief to filing a complaint to bring civil action to obtain *injunctive* relief. As a result of securing this amendment in the bill, AKC went neutral on the legislation. However, our partner and lobbyist believed that, even including AKC’s amendment, AB 554 would place those who breed, train, or simply hunt with sporting dogs at unreasonable risk.

Double-referred, AB 554 was heard in two Assembly policy committees – passing out of both by April 2023. Having been tagged “non-fiscal”, AB 554 then bypassed Assembly fiscal committee and went straight to the Assembly Floor.

In May 2023, while on the Assembly Floor, AB 554 was pulled from consideration and placed in the “inactive file” at the request of the author.

*Having failed to pass off the Assembly Floor by the January 31, 2024, deadline, AB 554 is dead.*

To view all the information currently available on AB 554, click [AB 554 Detail](#)

• [AB 828 \(Connelly\)](#) – **Sustainable Groundwater Management: Managed Wetlands**

Established in current law, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires all groundwater basins designated as high- or medium-priority basins by the Department of Water Resources that are designated as basins subject to critical conditions of overdraft to be managed under a groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) or coordinated GSPs as of January 31, 2020. Further, SGMA requires all other groundwater basins designated as high- or medium-priority basins to be managed under a GSP or coordinated GSPs as of January 31, 2022. However, current law does not recognize the environmental

benefits nor make any exception for artificially irrigated wetland habitats in basins subject to SGMA that depend upon groundwater for seasonal management.

As a result of the significant changes to our natural hydrology, only 5% of historical wetland habitats remain in California. Today, nearly all our remaining interior wetlands must be artificially irrigated and intensely managed, year-round, to recreate seasonal wetland values. These managed wetland habitats not only provide critical habitat for migratory waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species, but they also improve water quality, provide groundwater recharge, and offer flood protection and recreational benefits. The availability of a wetland water supply when, where, and in the quantity necessary is integral to the ability of public and private land managers to recreate these important habitat benefits. As such, SGMA generated restrictions placed on the use of groundwater for wetland irrigations in some areas – such as the Tulare Basin in the southern San Joaquin Valley – could have devastating impacts on the ability of landowners to manage their lands to provide maximum wetland habitat values.

Because of the substantial loss of our historical wetland base, in 1993, the State adopted a “no net loss” wetlands policy pursuant to Executive Order No. W-59-93. The goal of the EO being to balance wetland loss due to economic development with wetland protection and restoration so that the total acreage of wetlands in the state does not decrease, but rather remains constant or increases.

SGMA currently requires a groundwater sustainability agency (GSA) to consider the interests of environmental users of groundwater and GSPs to describe impacts on groundwater dependent ecosystems and beneficial users of groundwater – including managed wetlands. Despite these provisions, SGMA does not protect against wetland losses or ensure availability of historic wetland groundwater supplies. Further, management actions in initial GSPs have shown a significant net loss of managed wetlands in the relatively short period since SGMA implementation. GSAs have begun to impose one-size-fits-all caps on groundwater pumping, regardless of whether land uses provide public beneficial uses, and hefty fees, including up to \$500 per acre-foot for additional pumping. With just 5% of historic wetlands remaining, the additional wetland losses likely to occur under SGMA could substantially jeopardize the health of Pacific Flyway waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species.

As amended January 11, 2024, AB 828 by [Assembly Member Damon Connelly](#) (D/12-San Rafael) would, among other things, prohibit a GSA from using their authority to limit groundwater extraction by those who must rely upon groundwater for managing wetland habitats. AB 828 would also prohibit a GSA from imposing a fee upon “managed wetland extractors”, provided the water use for each user does not increase above the extractor’s average annual extraction from 2015 to 2020. As amended, AB 828 would sunset on January 1, 2028.

AB 828 defines a “managed wetland” as an existing publicly or privately owned wetland that receives seasonal, semi-permanent, or permanent flooding to simulate natural processes that promote food production and habitat for the benefit of wetland-dependent species, and which is designated as, or administered as a:

- (1) State wildlife area;
- (2) National wildlife refuge;
- (3) Central Valley Project Improvement Act wetland habitat area;
- (4) Conservation easement held by a federal or state resource agency, a local agency whose primary function is managing land or water for wetland habitat purposes, or a non-governmental conservation organization; or
- (5) Wildlife habitat contract or other conservation agreement of no less than ten years in duration administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Conservation Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or Natural Resources Conservation Service.

AB 828 defines a “managed wetland extractor” as a person who extracts groundwater solely for managed wetland purposes.

AB 828 passed through the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee on January 9<sup>th</sup>, and then out of the Assembly Appropriations Committee and to the Assembly Floor on January 18<sup>th</sup>. On January 29<sup>th</sup>, AB 828 passed off the Assembly Floor and to the Senate.

*AB 828 is pending referral to Senate policy committee.*

To view our original AB 828 coalition letter of support to the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee dated March 21, 2023, click [AB 828 – 2023 Support – Assy WPW](#)

To view our updated AB 828 coalition letter of support to the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee dated January 4, 2024, click [AB 828 – 2024 Support – Assy WPW](#)

To view all the information currently available on AB 828, click [AB 828 Detail](#)

- [AB 1889 \(Friedman\)](#) – **General Plan: Wildlife Connectivity Element**

Existing law requires cities or counties to adopt a comprehensive general plan that includes various elements, including land use and housing elements.

As introduced, AB 1889 by [Assembly Member Laura Friedman](#) (D/44-Burbank) would require a general plan to include a wildlife connectivity element that considers the effect of development within the jurisdiction on fish, wildlife, and habitat connectivity. AB 1889 would require local jurisdictions to identify and analyze habitat connectivity areas, and to implement measures to remediate barriers to wildlife connectivity within their boundaries to the maximum extent feasible. The bill would require cities or counties to adopt or review the wildlife connectivity element upon the adoption or next revision of their general plan on or after January 1, 2025.

AB 1889 has been double-referred to the Assembly Local Government Committee and the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee, but has yet to be set for hearing.

To view all the information currently available on AB 1889, click [AB 1889 Detail](#)

- [AB 2320 \(Irwin\)](#) – **Wildlife Connectivity and Climate Adaptation Act of 2024: Wildlife Corridors**

As introduced, AB 2320 by [Assembly Member Jacqui Irwin](#) (D/42-Thousand Oaks) would require the Natural Resources Agency to identify key wildlife corridors, connections between large blocks of natural areas and habitats, progress on protecting wildlife corridors, and set goals for wildlife corridor protection in the next 5 years. AB 2320 would additionally make it the policy of the state to preserve, protect, and restore wildlife habitats by acquiring and restoring large blocks of habitat and the lands and infrastructure to provide wildlife corridors for connectivity of habitat. The bill would require the state to identify priority projects for the acquisition, restoration, protection, and expansion of wildlife corridors, and to give priority to projects that protect wildlife corridors.

*AB 2320 is pending referral to Assembly policy committee.*

To view all the information currently available on AB 2320, click [AB 2320 Detail](#)

- [AB 2875 \(Freidman\)](#) – **Wetlands: State Policy**

By Executive Order No. W-59-93, former Governor Pete Wilson declared it to be the policy of the state that its Comprehensive Wetlands Policy rests on three primary objectives, including the objective of ensuring no overall net loss and long-term net gain in the quantity, quality, and permanence of wetlands acreage and values.

As introduced, AB 2875 by [Assembly Member Laura Friedman](#) (D/44-Burbank) would declare that it is the policy of the state to ensure no net loss and long-term gain in the quantity, quality, and permanence of wetlands acreage and values in California.

*AB 2875 is pending referral to Assembly policy committee.*

To view all the information currently available on AB 2875, click [AB 2875 Detail](#)

• [AB 3064 \(Maienschein\)](#) – **Firearms: Safety Devices**

Existing law requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to compile and maintain a roster listing of all the firearm safety devices that have been tested by a certified testing laboratory, have been determined to meet DOJ's standards for firearm safety devices, and thus may be sold in this state.

As introduced, AB 3064 by [Assembly Member Brian Maienschein](#) (D/76-San Diego) would, commencing on January 1, 2026, authorize DOJ to charge an annual fee to each entity that manufactures or imports into the state for sale any firearm safety device listed on the roster. The fee may not exceed the costs of research and development, report analysis, storage of prototype devices, and other program infrastructure costs necessary to implement the requirements of the bill. Among many other things, AB 3064 would also require that any device newly added to the roster have the name of the manufacturer, the model number, and the model name, as they appear on the roster, engraved or otherwise permanently affixed to the device.

Because AB 3064 would impose a tax, it would require for passage the approval of 2/3<sup>rds</sup> of the membership of each house of the Legislature.

*AB 3064 has been double-referred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee and the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee, but has yet to be set for hearing.*

To view all the information currently available on AB 3064, click [AB 3064 Detail](#)

• [AB 3067 \(Gipson\)](#) – **Residential Property Insurance: Firearms**

As introduced, AB 3067 by [Assembly Member Mike A. Gipson](#) (D/65-Gardena) would require an insurer of residential property to include questions on their application for homeowner's or renter's insurance regarding the presence and storage of any firearms kept in the household, in accessory structures, or in vehicles kept on the property that are subject to any applicable insurance policy. AB 3067 would go into effect on January 1, 2026, and require an insurer to annually report this information to the Department of Insurance and the Legislature beginning on January 1, 2027.

*AB 3067 is pending referral to Assembly policy committee.*

To view all the information currently available on AB 3067, click [AB 3067 Detail](#)

• [SB 53 \(Portantino\)](#) – **Firearms Storage**

Existing law imposes storage requirements to prevent children from gaining access to firearms.

As introduced, SB 53 by [Senator Anthony J. Portantino](#) (D/25-Glendale) would prohibit a person from keeping or storing a firearm in their residence unless the firearm is stored in a locked box or safe that is

listed on the DOJ's list of approved firearms safety devices and properly engaged to render the firearm inaccessible to anyone other than the owner or other authorized user. SB 53 would go into effect beginning on July 1, 2025.

*SB 53 is pending referral to Senate policy committee.*

To view all the information currently available on SB 53, click [SB 53 Detail](#)

• [SB 921 \(Roth\)](#) – **Animal Welfare**

Existing law makes it a crime to inflict unnecessary cruelty or to abuse an animal in any manner, including, but not limited to, maliciously and intentionally maiming, mutilating, torturing, or wounding an animal. Existing law also requires a person who is convicted of misdemeanor or felony abuse of an animal, and who is granted probation, to successfully complete counseling.

As introduced, SB 921 by [Senator Richard D. Roth](#) (D/31-Riverside) would additionally make it a crime for a person to maliciously and intentionally mistreat any animal even if the mistreatment does not cause physical injury. Further, SB 921 would expand that requirement to require a person convicted of an infraction for abusing an animal to complete counseling. The bill would make failure to complete counseling a misdemeanor.

Our partner and lobbyist is concerned that the lack of a specific definition of the term “mistreat”, and adding the provision that the mistreatment does not have to “cause physical injury”, could open the door for animal-rights interests to place law-abiding individuals who are safely training a dog for sporting purposes or other reasons at risk.

*SB 921 has been referred to Senate Public Safety Committee but has been set to be heard.*

To view all the information currently available on SB 921, click [SB 921 Detail](#)

• [SB 922 \(Roth\)](#) – **Animal Cruelty**

Existing law makes it a crime to leave or confine an animal in an unattended motor vehicle under conditions that endanger the health or well-being of an animal due to heat, cold, lack of adequate ventilation, lack of food or water, or other circumstances that could reasonably be expected to cause suffering, disability, or death to the animal. Existing law makes a first conviction for the crime punishable by a fine not exceeding \$100, or if the animal suffers great bodily injury, by a fine not exceeding \$500, imprisonment in a county jail, or both. Existing law makes a subsequent conviction punishable by a fine not exceeding \$500 dollars, imprisonment in a county jail, or both. Existing law requires a person who is convicted of specified crimes related to animal abuse, and who is granted probation, to successfully complete counseling.

As introduced, SB 922 by [Senator Richard D. Roth](#) (D/31-Riverside) would increase those fines to \$500 for a first offense and \$2,000 for a subsequent offense or if the animal suffers great bodily injury. SB 922 would also expand the requirement to require a person convicted of leaving an animal in an unattended motor vehicle to complete counseling, an education program on the dangers of leaving an animal inside of an unattended motor vehicle, or both. The bill would make failure to complete the counseling or education program a misdemeanor.

Our partner and lobbyist is concerned that – given the loose language of existing law and the significant increase in fines and penalties that this bill proposes – SB 922 could also embolden animal-rights interests to attempt to place well meaning, law-abiding individuals at unreasonable risk.

*SB 922 has been referred to Senate Public Safety Committee but has been set to be heard.*

To view all the information currently available on SB 922, click [SB 922 Detail](#)

• [SB 1160 \(Portantino\)](#) – **Firearms: Annual Registration of Firearms**

As introduced, SB 1160 by [Senator Anthony J. Portantino](#) (D/25-Glendale) would require firearms to be annually registered with DOJ. The bill would also require registrants to annually pay a “yet to be determined” registration fee to fund DOJ’s administration and enforcement of the firearm registry. The bill would require DOJ to establish and maintain a system for the annual registration of firearms and create the Registered Firearm File – a searchable database of registered firearms that shall be made available through the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System for law enforcement purposes.

SB 1160 would exempt antique firearms, as well as firearms used in service by a peace officer, firearms owned by any department or agency of the state or federal government, or any firearm owned by the Armed Forces of the United States, California National Guard, or California State Guard. Firearms personally owned by any employee or appointee of these entities would not be exempted.

SB 1160 would require that all guns be registered as of July 1, 2025.

*SB 1160 is set to be heard in the Senate Public Safety Committee on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

*For more information on the Senate Public Safety Committee and how you can submit your own position letter on SB 1160 and/or view the hearing, click [Senate Public Safety Committee](#)*

To view all the information currently available on SB 1160, click [SB 1160 Detail](#)

• [SB 1163 \(Dahle\)](#) – **Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions: Wildlife Salvage Permits**

As introduced, SB 1163 by [Senator Brian Dahle](#) (R/01-Beiber) would improve public safety and greatly promote the health of California’s deer and other wildlife by reducing the frequency of vehicle-wildlife collisions on our roadways. SB 1163 is sponsored by the wildlife conservation community.

First, some background. According to researchers at the University of California at Davis Road Ecology Center (UCDREC), as many as 100,000 deer alone may be hit each year on California roads. In addition to causing injury or often death to the deer, these accidents often also cause injury and sometimes death to motorists. To address this very serious concern, in 2019, the California Deer Association sponsored SB 395, “The Wildlife Traffic Safety Act”, authored by Senator Bob Archuleta (D/30-Norwalk).

Signed into law by Governor Newsom in October 2019, SB 395 authorized DFW to establish a user-friendly cell phone app which would allow motorists to report the location, animal type, date, time, and characteristics of vehicle-wildlife collisions. Armed with this critically needed data, DFW, California Highway Patrol, Caltrans, and other state agencies could better predict road-kill hotspots, measure contributing factors, and evaluate the placement of wildlife road crossings and other remedial actions to greatly reduce future vehicle-wildlife collisions.

To encourage data reporting, SB 395 also authorized the Fish and Game Commission to create a pilot program that allows motorists to salvage edible portions of deer, elk, antelope, and/or wild pig meat that had been accidentally killed via a vehicle collision – provided they obtain a permit which would require they provide the above noted information to DFW. SB 395 also required the Commission to promulgate the regulations necessary to commence the program by no later than January 1, 2022. Lastly, SB 395 would “sunset” on January 1, 2029, to allow DFW, other relevant agencies, and the Commission to evaluate the results and consider next steps.

Unfortunately, to pass SB 395 out of fiscal committee we had to take language into the legislation which required a special appropriation by the Legislature for the bill's programs to be enacted.

Each Session since the passage of SB 395, CDA and our partner conservation organizations fought to secure the special appropriation necessary to implement the important programs called out in the bill. Unfortunately, the funding necessary to implement SB 395 was never appropriated, leaving California as one of the very few western states without such a program. Unsuccessful in those efforts, and with the deadline for implementing the programs now passed, follow-on legislation was necessary.

If passed, SB 1163 would streamline and fund the pilot program codified by the passage of SB 395 in 2019. SB 1163 would *delete* the requirement that implementation of the pilot program be predicted upon a special appropriation by the Legislature, and *require*, rather than just *authorize*, DFW and the Commission to develop the pilot program. Further, SB 1163 would extend the deadline for the Commission to establish the pilot program to January 1, 2027, and extend the sunset date for the pilot program to January 1, 2034.

*SB 1163 has been referred to the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee but has yet to be set to be heard.*

To view all the information currently available on SB 1163, click [SB 1163 Detail](#)

- [SB 1253 \(Gonzalez\)](#) – **Firearms Safety Certificates**

Existing law requires any person who purchases or receives a firearm to possess a firearm safety certificate. Further current law requires an applicant to pass the written test to obtain or renew a firearm safety certificate and the payment of a \$25 fee. Current law also provides that a firearm safety certificate shall expire 5 years after the date of issuance. However, existing law expresses the intent of the Legislature not to require a firearm safety certificate for the *mere possession* of a firearm.

As introduced, SB 1253 by [Senator Lena A. Gonzalez](#) (D/33-Huntington Park) would, commencing on January 1, 2026, prohibit a person from possessing a firearm without the possession of a valid, unexpired firearm safety certificate.

*SB 1253 is pending referral to Senate policy committee.*

To view all the information currently available on SB 1253, click [SB 1253 Detail](#)