

Date of Hearing: April 24, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Juan Carrillo, Chair

AB 2939 (Rendon) – As Introduced February 15, 2024

SUBJECT: Parks: counties and cities: interpretive services.

SUMMARY: Provides that use of a local park by an eligible entity to provide interpretive services to a maximum of 30 participating park visitors at once shall be considered an allowable public use of a local park. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines the following terms:
 - a) “Eligible entity” as any of the following:
 - i) A qualified nonprofit public benefit corporation organized pursuant to specified existing law.
 - ii) A federally recognized Native American Tribe.
 - iii) A California Native American tribe listed on the California Tribal Consultation List by the Native American Heritage Commission.
 - b) “Interpretive services” as activities and programs that seek to help participating park visitors to understand and connect with natural, cultural, and historic resources of a local park and are not generally offered by the local entity.
 - c) “Local entity” as a city, county, or city and county that owns, maintains, or operates a local park.
 - d) “Local park” as a beach or park that is owned, maintained, or operated by a local entity and that is not part of the state or federal park systems.
- 2) Requires use of a local park by an eligible entity to provide interpretive services to no more than 30 participating park visitors at once to be considered an allowable public use of the local park, and shall be treated by the local entity in the same manner as general public use of the local park, provided that the local entity does not confer on the eligible entity any benefit not conferred on the general public.
- 3) Provides that if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made.
- 4) Finds and declares that this bill addresses a matter of statewide concern rather than a municipal affair. Therefore, this bill applies to all cities, including charter cities.

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill is keyed fiscal and contains a state mandated local program.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Bill Summary.** This bill requires use of a local park by an eligible entity to provide interpretive services to no more than 30 participating park visitors at once to be considered an allowable public use of the local park. It requires the local entity to treat such use in the same manner as general public use of the local park, provided that the local entity does not confer on the eligible entity any benefit not conferred on the general public.

This bill defines “eligible entity” to mean any of the following:

- a) A qualified nonprofit public benefit corporation, as specified.
- b) A federally recognized Native American Tribe.
- c) A California Native American tribe listed on the California Tribal Consultation List by the Native American Heritage Commission.

This bill defines “interpretive services” as activities and programs that seek to help participating park visitors to understand and connect with natural, cultural, and historic resources of a local park and are not generally offered by the local entity.

This bill applies to a city, county, or city and county that owns, maintains, or operates a local park.

This bill is sponsored by Outdoor Outreach.

- 2) **Author’s Statement.** According to the author, “Access to the outdoors has untold benefits for California’s communities. Non-profits and tribal organizations often play a pivotal role in connecting communities, both rural and urban, to nature. We should be making it easier, not harder, for these organizations to access county and city parks and beaches. AB 2939 removes unnecessary administrative hurdles for nonprofits and tribal organizations to access these lands, leaving staff free to focus on the important work of serving communities.”
- 3) **Background.** Spending time outdoors is understood to benefit mental and physical health, but outdoor access is not equitably distributed to all communities. A history of discriminatory policies and exclusionary zoning have led to long-term disinvestment, fewer parks and outdoor spaces, and less coastal access for many communities. The practice of redlining led to neighborhoods with far fewer trees and parks and more paved surfaces that for lower-income residents and communities of color. The Outdoors for All initiative is intended to expand access to parks and nature for communities with little outdoor space.
- 4) **Outdoors for All.** The *Outdoors for All: Providing Equitable Access to Parks and Nature* report published by the California Natural Resources agency recommends several strategies regarding urban and/or park-poor communities including: Develop, improve, and maintain local and regional outdoor spaces, which includes: (1) prioritize funding programs for park and open space development in park-poor communities such as the Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program, and the Urban Waterways Program; (2) create priorities for park-poor communities within existing funding sources for open space acquisition, development, enhancement, and/or maintenance; and (3) assist local and

regional entities to bring federal investments to California for outdoor space renovation and acquisition, especially in underserved communities.

- 5) **30x30.** In October 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-82-20, which establishes a state goal of conserving 30% of California’s lands and coastal waters by 2030. The 30x30 goal is intended to help conserve state lands and coastal waters through voluntary, collaborative action with partners across the state to meet three objectives: conserve and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, and mitigate and build resilience to climate change. As of May 2023, the state has conserved 24.4% of lands and 16.2% of coastal waters for 30x30.
- 6) **Arguments in Support.** According to a coalition of supporters, including Outdoor Outreach, sponsor of this bill, “Now is the time to advance a more equitable framework to expand access to nature for all Californians. AB 2939 would create a statewide standard in the Public Resources Code to support small non-commercial outdoor equity programs at parks and beaches managed by cities and counties. AB 2939 ensures that these nonprofit and tribal-run programs have the same access to natural resource areas as the general public, without additional restrictions or permit requirements.
- AB 2939 supports outdoor equity programs, by:
 - Extending to them the same access to natural resource areas already approved for general public enjoyment.
 - Supporting adaptive and flexible visitorship of the most appropriate parks and beaches depending on natural and human-imposed conditions (weather, pollution, crowds, park unit closures, travel distance, etc)
 - Reducing the administrative burden and cost of processing paperwork.
 - AB 2939 supports local land managers, by:
 - Ensuring that their public access practices align with the state’s equity and community access goals
 - Incentivizing beneficial visitorship that increases stewardship and helps deter destructive behavior
 - Not impacting their ability to collect revenue related to fees (parking, day use, reservations facility use, etc)
 - Reducing the administrative burden and cost of processing paperwork.
 - AB 2939 supports align with natural resource conservation, by:
 - Protecting parks and beaches from commercial monopolization by ensuring only non-commercial outdoor equity programs with a group size under 30 people are allowed general public access.

“AB 2939 would create a framework for more equitable access to support organizations that serve as trusted connectors to the outdoors for disadvantaged communities. This legislation strengthens California’s commitment to expanding equitable access outlined in the state’s 30x30 Initiative and the Natural Resource Agency’s Outdoors for All Strategy.”

7) **Arguments in Opposition.** None on file.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Azul
Black Surfers
California Coastal Protection Network
California Mountain Biking Coalition
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership
Camp Ocean Pines
Casa De Amistad
Center for Biological Diversity
Central Coast State Parks Association
City Surf Project
Earthroots Field School
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
Environmental Protection Information Center
Environmental Travelling Companions
Exploring New Horizons Outdoor Schools
Friends of Friendship Park
Groundswell Community Project
Hipcamp
Institute for Public Strategies
Intersectional Environmentalist
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Justice Outside
Latino Outdoors
Lily of the Valley Emmanuel Church of Jesus
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
Los Padres ForestWatch
Native Like Water – One World Bridge
Nature Collective
Nature for All
O’Neill Sea Odyssey
Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation
OC Habitats
One Cool Earth
Outdoor Afro
Outdoor Outreach
Outward Bound Adventures
Pathloom
Refuge Armona

REI Co-op
Resource Renewal Institute
Salted Roots
San Diego Audubon Society
San Diego Coastkeeper
San Diego for Every Child
San Dieguito River Conservancy
Santa Barbara County Trails Council
Santa Barbara Maritime Museum
Student Environmental Resource Center at UC Berkeley
Surfrider Foundation
Ten Strands
The Wilderness Society
Trust for Public Land
Un Mar De Colores
Urban Surf 4 Kids
VF Corporation
Wildcoast
YES Nature to Neighborhoods
YMCA of San Diego County
YMCA of San Francisco

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Angela Mapp / L. GOV. / (916) 319-3958