

Proposed Amendments to the Language on Management and Research in AB 2494

These comments are in response to the 3/25/26 amended version of the bill. Only sections with proposed amendments are included in this summary. See this link to follow the entire bill language

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB2494&showamends=false

Color code: Red is the prior language, and blue is the proposed language to bring a research-oriented framework to the forests. Black is text that we are not commenting on.

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

4631. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

~~(a) California faces significant challenges related to biodiversity, climate change, wildfire-resilient forests, and public access to nature, and has set important goals regarding these challenges.~~

(a) California seeks to develop adaptive management strategies to promote science-based decision making that addresses diverse goals and objectives, while promoting healthy forests that are resilient to disturbance.

~~(b) Lands that are owned and managed by the state should make a greater contribution toward reaching these goals than privately owned lands.~~

(b) The demonstration state forests are designed to serve as living laboratories and testing grounds for watershed restoration methods and scientific research that provides insight into forest ecology and stewardship.

(c) State forest lands, including those having young, mature, or older trees, should be managed for a range of habitat and ecosystem conditions that provide ample ground for robust research programs that adhere to California's environmental review process. Management should be consistent with the definition of "management" in Section 4639. ~~old timber growth, should be restored to fulfill ecological functions and processes, and managed consistent with the definition of "management" in Section 4639.~~

(d) It is the policy of the state to respect California Native American tribal sovereignty and to seek opportunities for comanagement and integration of local indigenous traditional ecological knowledge in forest management.

*(e) It is the policy of the state to accept or acquire lands, the reforestation or restoration of which is not assured under private ownership, to ~~restore~~ *steward* those lands ~~with locally appropriate species and manage those lands~~ for public benefit.*

(f) The State recognizes the importance of long-term adaptive management research and, in addition to providing demonstration state forests as living laboratories, an appropriate level of staffing will be provided to support project development, implementation, monitoring, and maintenance.

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

~~4639. (a) "Management" means the handling of forest vegetation and soils within state forests, including, but not limited to, demonstration state forests, for biodiversity conservation and wildfire resilience, while supporting durable onsite carbon storage and sequestration, climate mitigation and resiliency goals, equitable forest access, wildlife and fish habitat, recreation opportunities, and compatible research efforts.~~

(a) "Management" means the handling of forest vegetation and soils within state forests, including, but not limited to, demonstration state forests, in such a way that results in healthy forests that are resilient to disturbance while recognizing a diversity of stewardship goals and objectives, including but not limited to creating diverse forest structure and composition, increasing wildfire resilience, adapting to a changing climate, supporting recreation and access, demonstration sustainable forest management practices, and promoting and supporting research.

~~(b) Timber harvesting consistent with the definition in subdivision (a) is permissible.~~

(b) All forest management practices recognized under Forest Practice Rules are permissible.