



PCL INSIDER: News from the Capitol

Final Permit for San Clemente Dam Removal Approved!

On May 8th, [California American Water](#) (CAW) received the final permit of approval for the long-awaited [San Clemente Dam removal](#). This project – the largest ever dam removal in California – has succeeded because of an innovative public-private partnership between CAW and the State Coastal Conservancy, with the support of the National Marine Fisheries Service and more than two dozen regional, state and national conservation groups, elected officials and regulatory partners.

The San Clemente Dam, built in 1921, is a 106-foot-high concrete arch dam located on the Carmel River in Monterey County. The dam is currently a significant barrier to the natural migration of the steelhead trout to upstream spawning areas. The \$83 million dam removal project will help restore the Carmel River, and will help safeguard downstream communities along California's central coast that are currently at risk if the dam fails.

The final project permit was [approved unanimously](#) by the Monterey County Planning Commission, with a groundbreaking ceremony scheduled in June.

PCL Foundation helped initiate the contact with the Coastal Conservancy that led to this public-private partnership, and through the hard work of our water team – particularly our Central Coast Water Program Manager Dr. Monica Hunter- we have helped build support for the project and shepherd it through its many permits and agency approvals for nearly a decade. PCL Foundation will be hosting a celebratory event in Carmel in late June– stay tuned for details!

Coastal Protection Bills Need Your Support

[AB 976](#) (Atkins), a PCL-sponsored coastal resources bill, passed out of Assembly Appropriations on May 8th, with committee Democrats voting in favor. This bill gives the California Coastal Commission the ability to impose administrative penalties for Coastal Act violations – a similar authority to that held by numerous other state and local agencies. AB 976 allows the state to resolve major violations more efficiently, reduces litigation costs, and protects the coast by encouraging compliance with the Coastal Act. AB 976 will next be heard on the Assembly Floor, as will related coastal protection bill [AB 203](#) (Stone). Please call your [Assemblymember](#) to urge his or her support on both AB 976 and AB 203, or contact [Rebecca Crebbin-Coates](#) to add your organization to our support sign-on letters.

Summer Water Policy Internship Opportunity

PCL is looking for a summer Water Policy Intern to help advocate for sound policy by providing research and writing support to PCL's Water Team. Responsibilities may include tracking legislation,

policy research, report writing, communications support, and educational outreach. This is a volunteer position that requires a commitment of at least 10 hours per week. Excellent writing skills and an interest in environmental policy are required; water-specific coursework or experience is desirable. Law students or graduate students in a related field preferred. For details and application information, [visit our website](#) or contact [Rebecca Crebbin-Coates](#).

All's (Relatively) Quiet on the CEQA Front – For Now

There is not a lot new to report on the CEQA-bills front since our last Insider. There are now 19 CEQA bills in play (down from a high of 28 bills), with those bills viewed generally as positive CEQA reforms all moving forward and most legislation seeking to weaken CEQA having been killed or dropped. The next two weeks will be telling as several key bills are up in Appropriations and other committees. Below is an update on some of the key CEQA bills – for a complete list of bills and PCL's positions, click [here](#).

[SB 731](#) (Steinberg), the Senate President pro Tem's omnibus CEQA legislation, continues to garner much attention as it has made its way through the Senate Environmental Quality Committee. This bill has a number of positive CEQA reforms, while other provisions in the bill have raised concerns or still need to be fleshed out further. PCL and many of our partners are engaged in discussions with the pro Tem's office in hopes of furthering the positive reforms and addressing areas of concern with the bill.

Positive CEQA Reform Bills

PCL is taking the lead in supporting the following legislation:

[-AB 380](#) (Dickinson) creates a single system for posting notices so critical to public participation. PCL and the author's office are in discussion with a number of groups that opposed the bill and are optimistic that adjustments can be made that keep the bill's core provisions while neutralizing opposition. This bill heads to Assembly Appropriations on May 15, so if you can contact your [Assemblymembers on Appropriations](#) to voice your support for this bill, please do.

[-AB 543](#) (Campos) will require that certain CEQA notices that trigger public participation be translated when a project will likely impact a community in which 5% or more of the population are Limited English Proficient. Testimony from [Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality](#), [the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice](#), and [the Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment](#), helped move this bill. It would also be a good idea to contact your [Assemblymembers on Appropriations](#) to voice your support for this bill

[-AB 953](#) (Ammiano) would overturn the misguided [Ballona Wetlands Land Trust](#) decision and return Environmental Impact Reports to considering the effects of the physical environment on the project, looking at things like wildfire risk, sea level rise, existing air pollution, and seismic activity when siting a project. It made it out of Assembly Appropriations last week and is now headed for a floor vote in the Assembly.

[-SB 617](#) (Evans) is a commonsense omnibus that passed out of committee on Wednesday. It includes (1) a fix to the [Ballona Wetlands Land Trust](#) decision, (2) electronic notice posting requirements, (3) a provision allowing records of proceedings to be prepared concurrently and made available online, revealing the reasoning for decisions and saving time should litigation occur, and (4) removing some mooted provisions. It is headed for the Appropriations Suspense file, to be decided around the end of May.

[-SB 754](#) (Evans), a more ambitious omnibus, also [passed out of committee](#) on Wednesday. This bill looks to improve mitigation and transparency by (1) not letting project developers hire and supervise their own environmental reviews, (2) allowing mitigation for archaeological and cultural resources to proceed on case-by-case basis, (3) ensuring that EIRs used to make new decisions are under 7 years old, and (4) providing a clear process for public enforcement of mitigation.

Thanks to everyone who signed letters and gave testimony in support of these bills!

Bad CEQA Bills

[SB 787](#) (Berryhill), failed to pass out of Senate Environmental Quality on its second try. This bill was identical to Senator Rubio's SB 317 from the end of last session.

For more regular updates in CEQA legislation, and to express your support for protecting and strengthening this foundational environmental law, join the [CEQA Works](#) coalition, now 200 groups strong!



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