



AB 2501 (Alvarez) – Cutting the Green Tape

Bill Summary

AB 2501 will authorize the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards) (collectively, the Water Boards) to accept funds from both state and local public agencies. The ability to receive additional funds from these public agencies would allow the Water Boards to review permit applications more efficiently for projects which address climate change adaptation and ecosystem restoration projects.

Existing Law

The Water Boards administer federal Clean Water Act programs and adopts, reviews, and oversees water quality permit implementation. For climate change adaptation and ecosystem restoration projects, the Water Boards must participate in the planning and permitting processes associated with these projects to ensure the protection of water quality and ecosystems.

Several state agencies, including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the Coastal Commission, and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, currently have the ability to accept funds to facilitate project reviews. Additionally, a similar funding approach that allows the Water Boards to accept funding from other state agencies is already in place with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), with agreements to provide staff resources to facilitate permitting for Caltrans projects that fill creeks, wetlands, and tidal waters. However, this funding approach is not available for the Water Boards to accept funding from local agencies.

Problem

Statewide, the number of projects proposed to address climate change adaptation and ecosystem restoration is growing rapidly and substantially. This is especially the case in the coastal regions as

these areas face additional challenges due to rising tides. The Water Boards must participate in the planning and permitting processes associated with these projects to ensure the protection of water quality and ecosystems.

In the past, local agencies have contemplated funding coordination to better assist Water Board staff on high-priority work projects. However, the Water Boards lacks sufficient statutory authority to accept grants or funds from public agencies, other than state agencies, to support staff permitting work.

Solution

This bill establishes the State Water Board's authority to accept funds from public agencies such as Cities, municipalities, and local governments, on behalf of the Regional Water Boards. These funds would be used to support staff to complete project reviews for urgently-needed climate change adaptation and ecosystem restoration projects. This bill would also align authority to be consistent with that of other state agencies. Including California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Coastal Commission.

Support

City of San Diego (Sponsor)
California Chamber of Commerce

For More Information

Chris Jonsmyr
Principal Field Representative
Assemblymember David Alvarez
Chris.Jonsmyr@asm.ca.gov
O: (619) 498-8580
C: (619) 768-3090