August 28, 2023

Governor Gavin Newsom  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas  
Speaker of the Assembly  
California State Assembly

The Honorable Toni Atkins  
President Pro-Tempore  
California State Senate

Senator Ben Allen  
California State Senate

Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia  
California State Assembly

Re:  **Nature Based Climate Solutions/30x30 Priorities for the 2024 Climate Resilience Bond**

Dear Governor Newsom, Senate Pro Tempore Atkins, Speaker Rivas, Senator Allen, and Assemblymember Garcia:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations who participate in the Power in Nature Coalition, we are pleased to support the current legislative climate bond proposals and urge that the final climate bond agreement include the following recommendations to ensure that there are sufficient long-term investments to meet California’s goal to protect 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030 (30x30).

Power in Nature is a statewide coalition of more than 100 community groups, environmental and conservation organizations, land trusts, indigenous organizations and tribal members dedicated to advancing California’s 30x30 commitment.

Biodiversity is our lifeboat, but it is in crisis. A new report by NatureServe shows that 34% of plants, 40% of animals and 41% of ecosystems in the United States are at risk of extinction or collapse, with California, Texas, and the Southwest US the most at risk. The integrity of our ecosystems directly impacts our climate resilience. Scientists worldwide agree that a minimum of 30% and as much as 70% of the Earth’s lands and waters must be protected to safeguard biodiversity and stabilize the planet’s climate. Therefore, 30x30 is a climate solution because the integrity of our ecosystems directly impacts our climate resilience.

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) has estimated that California must conserve another 5.5 million acres of land and half of million acres of coastal waters to meet the state goal of conserving 30% of our lands and waters by 2030.

In the last few years, California has made great strides in advancing climate resilience and achieving the state’s 30x30 goals through historic investments in biodiversity conservation and natural resources. California must continue to make progress on conserving and protecting land, water, and biodiversity by putting forward a climate bond that meaningfully invests in programs that help California adapt to and withstand the impacts of climate change through the achievement of the 30x30 goal. Additionally, the state must do this in a way that is meaningful to today’s population and maximizes public benefits.
Our organizations have worked diligently with past administrations and legislatures to enact and pass many land and water conservation bonds through direct education, engagement, and activation of our millions of members as well as the public. We stand ready to do so again with great enthusiasm at the opportunity to show the world that the 4th largest economy in the world – and one of the most biologically diverse places in the world – can achieve the planet-saving goal of protecting 1/3 of our lands and waters by 2030.

To that end, we ask that following funding requests be included in the final bond agreement to ensure that there is sufficient funding for the programs and entities essential to achieve this critical climate resilience goal:

- **We request that the bond agreement include explicit direction for the land and water conservation funding to be spent to the maximum extent feasible to further the goals set forth Executive Order N-82-20, including the goal to conserve 30 percent of California’s lands and waters by 2030, and enhancing public access where appropriate.**

This bond should require specifically that investments made for biodiversity and climate resilience are consistent with and further the directives in this Executive Order and the 30x30 strategies adopted by the state.

- **We request that the final bond should ensure that at least $5 billion of the funding will produce 30x30 outcomes.** Any funding directed towards permanent conservation will be counted towards meeting our state's 30x30 goal, which will require the state to conserve approximately 5.5 million acres of land in the next seven years. While increasing conservation protection on existing public lands will play an important role in 30x30, California also must invest in the permanent protection of private lands as well as protecting state waters, the restoration and management of these lands and waters, scientific research and monitoring, and programs to expand the capacity of the many partners and the tribal nations essential to 30x30. The Nature Conservancy estimates that California must invest $1 billion each year to reach the 30x30 goal. Since a bond passed in 2024 will not start to expend funds until 2025, there will need to be $1 billion a year dedicated to 30x30 outcomes until 2030.

**Of the $5 billion dedicated to 30x30 outcomes, we request the following specific allocations:**

- **$1 billion for the Wildlife Conservation Board.** The Wildlife Conservation Board has been a strong partner in supporting acquisition and restoration work throughout California, providing critical funding to protect California’s biodiversity and conserve places that help California achieve climate resilience and our 30x30 goals.
- **$1 billion for the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) for 30x30.** Our coastal lands and waters are critical for biodiversity conservation and investments in projects to protect and restore these areas provide important benefits to combat sea level rise, reduce flooding, and improve access to nature. The State Coastal Conservancy has been an important partner in projects to protect coastal wetlands, beaches, and rivers and streams as well as investing in science, restoration, wildlife connectivity, fish passage and dam removal.

- **Of the several billions of dollars in funding for drought, flood and water resilience, and wildfire and forest resilience and the requested $500 million for Salton Sea Restoration allocated to CNRA, its departments, and other state conservancies, we believe that at least $2 billion of these funds should be for 30x30 outcomes, including $400 million for dam removal.** While groundwater banking, flood management, Salton Sea restoration, watershed resilience, and forest health and resilience may not always produce 30x30 outcomes, a portion of those funds should produce those outcomes when they result in the conservation and/or restoration of lands for the benefit of biodiversity in addition to producing the necessary outcomes of increased resilience to drought, fire, and flooding. Further, despite funding originally dedicated to state conservancies for 30x30 in last year’s budget agreement, those allocations were deleted and no additional 30x30 funds were provided to the conservancies. The state conservancies play an important role in the state meeting its 30x30 goals and funding should be restored to those conservancies in the bond.

- **We support $150 million for funding for the Department of Fish and Wildlife to improve the climate resilience of fish and wildlife habitat.** Biodiversity is our lifeboat, but it is in crisis. We support critical funding to the Department of Fish and Wildlife to improve the climate resilience of fish and wildlife habitat by improving fish passage and wildlife connectivity, restoration and enhancement of wetland and riparian areas, and the conservation of important habitats for declining species. In particular, we request that the bond allow for the expenditure of this funding for pop-up fishing gear to prevent whale and sea turtle entanglements, allowing uninterrupted fishing across the season and improving the climate resilience of fisheries in California.

- **$325 million to the Department of Conservation for the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program ($300 million) and the Climate Smart Lands Program ($25 million).** The Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program provides important funding for groundwater sustainability projects that provide wildlife habitat, drought resilience, improve flood water management, and support implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The Climate Smart Lands Program provides critical capacity and technical assistance for nonprofit organizations, community groups and tribes to plan for and carry out climate resilience projects. This new program is already oversubscribed with $27 million in grant proposals for the $10 million in funding. California cannot achieve its ambitious climate goals without partners who have the capacity to carry out these important projects.
• **$175 million to CNRA for Urban Greening and $150 million to CALFIRE for Urban Forestry to address Extreme Heat.** California is facing more extreme heat in its communities due to climate change. As part of the strategy to combat extreme heat, California needs to invest in more urban greening and urban forest projects to provide increased shade and reduce heat islands in urban areas. Some of these projects can provide 30x30 benefits by creating new parks and other areas that promote biodiversity while also providing the critical heat reducing benefits.

• **$300 million to the Ocean Protection Council for the Ocean Protection Trust Fund to fund projects to better steward our ocean resources.** California’s 30x30 goal includes increasing conservation for half a million acres of coastal waters, including improving management of the state’s marine protected areas.

• **We support the set aside for investment in capacity building and technical assistance that sets a minimum of 10% but can exceed 10% for Tribes, severely disadvantaged communities, under-resourced communities or vulnerable populations.** 30x30 is a success only with full partnership with Tribal nations, governmental agencies, community-based organizations, and land trusts as each play a critical role in identifying, managing and acquiring lands. Many of these entities and organizations struggle with capacity to do the scope and scale of work necessary to achieve our 30x30 goals. The state must increase its commitments in building capacity with partners and in diversifying its own workforce.

• **We support a set aside of 5% for monitoring and scientific review and the inclusion of language that would direct agencies to provide funding for monitoring in grant agreement for the life of the agreement.** State and federal agencies such as the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers typically require five years of monitoring with their grant agreements. However, many grants only provide three years of funding. The first year of funding is typically spent on project construction with the remainder paying for Years 1-2 of monitoring. This requires nonprofits to raise funds for three more years of monitoring, which is challenging to find as there are few sources of funding for monitoring. We recommend including a provision to make grant agreements long enough to cover the monitoring requirements and provide sufficient funding to accomplish the required monitoring. Five years of monitoring is not overkill; it is necessary to understand if a project is working.

• **We request that the definition of Disadvantaged Community and Severely Disadvantaged Community are defined by a percentage of statewide median household income or another more inclusive metric, and not by an “area” median household income alone.** Further, we support directing 40% of bond funds to benefit historically underinvested communities and communities that have been the most environmentally overburdened.
We request that of the funding directed at CNRA, $100 million is allocated to the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program and that tribes are specifically included as eligible grant recipients for other climate and conservation funding. California has a commitment to rectifying past historic injustices, including providing increased access to important funding sources to support tribal land and water conservation and climate resilience efforts. In addition, the current Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program does not have an ongoing or additional source of funding beyond what appropriated in the last two budget years. There will need to be additional funding to ensure that this program continues to provide the intended longer-term benefits to tribes instead of being a one-time effort.

We request that there is a specific direction in this bond to allow funds to be used for land management as part of maintaining bond purchased capital assets. According to Government Code Section 16727 (a), capital assets include “expenditures that continue or enhance the useful life of the capital asset.” Too often the state invests in land protection but does not provide sufficient funding for the ongoing management of those lands. Failure to manage these lands reduces the long-term value of these lands because they degrade due to fire, illegal activities, invasive species, and pollution.

Of the current request for $900 million to be allocated to parks consistent with the Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Act of 2008, we request that there is additional consideration given to projects that support 30x30 goals. Biodiversity conservation, human health benefits, access to nature, and recreation are not incompatible goals. It is possible to create new parks that can be counted towards the 30x30 goal. Biodiversity can – and must – thrive in urban and suburban areas to ensure maximum climate resilience for all.

We thank you for your bold leadership, and for your consideration of these funding requests to ensure that the final climate bond will provide meaningful investment in California’s 30x30 goal. Without this investment, California’s commitment to achieving the 30x30 goal will be only an unfulfilled promise, but not a reality.

We look forward to working with you to get a final bond agreement signed into law, and a measure placed on the 2024 ballot for voter consideration.
Yours Sincerely,

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About the Power in Nature Coalition

Power In Nature is a statewide coalition of over 100 community groups, environmental and conservation organizations, land trusts, indigenous organizations and tribal members dedicated to advancing California’s 30x30 commitment. The Power In Nature coalition has identified nearly 100 potential 30x30 projects across the state and works on a broad range of issues including biodiversity protection, climate resilience, equity, recreation, outdoor access and social justice. For more information, visit powerinnature.org.