

November 30, 2021

To: CSAC Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources (AENR) Policy Committee
From: Catherine Freeman, Legislative Representative
Ada Waelder, Legislative Analyst
Re: **CSAC AENR Year in Review and 2021 Legislative Priorities**

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

Organic Waste—Funding and Regulatory Relief. This year good collaboration, and a lot of perseverance, led to unprecedented action for organic waste regulatory implementation. At the beginning of the year, CSAC and our local government partners established a focused approach to support local governments with the implementation of SB 1383’s organic waste diversion rules, through both a pathway to regulatory relief and dedicated funding. Not without controversy, the team steadfastly negotiated throughout the year resulting in administrative civil penalty relief for the 2022 calendar year. Leveraging our work on the policy side, we were able to secure an unprecedented \$170 million for implementation of organic waste recycling and infrastructure development, with \$60 million dedicated solely to local governments.

Recycling, Waste Recovery, and Truth in Labeling. Recycling and waste bills dominated much of the work of our AENR team with strong finishes in “truth in labeling” requirement bills signed in to law. SB 343 (Allen) will prohibit the use of the “chasing arrows” logo on non-recyclable products. AB 818 (Bloom) similarly establishes labeling requirements for non-flushable wet wipes. Together these bills will reduce inputs into recycling and wastewater infrastructure, saving counties time, funding, and effort as they manage the waste stream. CSAC also advocated to continue the exemption program for treated wood waste (TWW). AB 322 (Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials) facilitates the safe and proper handling and disposal of TWW by codifying the alternative Management Standards that sunset on January 1, 2021. By closing this loophole, counties have one less product that could end up in roadside or illegal dumping areas.

Wildfires Prevention Funding. Through another difficult wildfire year, CSAC worked diligently on wildfire funding and legislation. Our team fought to allocate all fire prevention funding before the Legislature adjourned for the year, and pushed for ongoing funding for prevention. After a challenging June budget, where funding was put off or subject to a determination of need, August saw a reversal of this action along with a first-ever \$200 million continuous appropriation of funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund towards wildfire prevention. These funding wins were two key bills that CSAC worked on.

Working, Living and Rebuilding Communities in Fire Threatened Areas. CSAC moved quickly to stop SB 55 (Stern), which would have prohibited all development in the State Responsibility Area and Very High Fire Severity Zones. While counties support reasonable development mitigation in fire areas, this bill would have set a new precedent for building moratoriums without consideration for the differences in county land use and ownership. In contrast, local governments made a strong push for AB 9 (Wood) which was signed in to law and makes permanent the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program with the goal of increasing regional capacity to create fire-adapted communities and landscapes which provides support and funding beyond capital expenditures for regional wildfire collaboratives. CSAC is also actively engaged on the Board of Forestry's Fire Safe Regulations, which, if implemented, would have severe consequences on county roads and development.

Drought and Flood Infrastructure. Throughout this extreme drought year, CSAC remained in close contact with leadership within the Natural Resources Agency, Department of Water Resources, and State Water Resources Control Board. As conditions continued to worsen throughout the state, CSAC pushed for funding and assistance to all communities, and especially those most impacted by drought. In October, California Disaster Assistance Aid funding was released for health and safety issues, in addition to significant emergency funding through the adopted budget. However, as droughts come, floods follow and CSAC has been engaged at the state and county level raising awareness about floods, post-wildfire debris flows, and climate impacted flooding.

2022 AENR PRIORITIES

Addressing Wildfire in the Modern Age. CSAC will focus on seeking proactive, sustained investments from state and federal sources to match fire suppression funding and bring about investments in every community that builds lasting change to address wildfire. These investments should improve each county's professional capital to match the challenge. A proactive policy and regulatory strategy is critical to developing a long-term, successful statewide wildfire prevention program.

Drought Preparedness. CSAC has built a strong connection with state and federal agencies to create ongoing funding streams, disaster aid, and planning funding for counties as they continue to grapple with a multi-year drought. CSAC will continue these efforts by advocating for increased local support for the Sustainable Groundwater Management Program, water storage infrastructure, continued health and safety disaster funding, and streamlining the processes that counties use to secure state and federal aid.

Organic Waste Recycling Implementation. Counties are moving into the implementation phase of SB 1383's organic waste regulations. CSAC will continue to advocate for ongoing funding and implementation support, regulatory streamlining, and common-sense approaches to waste reduction. Funding secured in the 2020-21 budget cycle is necessary, but more action is needed to support all counties as they come into compliance with state regulations. CSAC will advocate to make implementation of this mandate manageable, while reducing the impacts to customers. CSAC will also advocate to include funding for organic waste diversion infrastructure as a necessary component of any bond measure.

Comprehensive Recycling and Source Reduction. 2021 saw changes to recycling from "truth in labeling" laws to plastics recycling. While the 2022 ballot is slated to have an initiative focused on extended producer responsibility, CSAC will continue to advocate in support of measures that help reduce plastic waste and increase domestic markets for recyclable materials. In addition, funding for waste and recycling infrastructure will continue to be a topic of interest for local governments.

Statewide Flooding and Flood Infrastructure Investment. CSAC has been building a strong and sustained advocacy program for flood infrastructure from stream gage inventories to post-wildfire debris flow management. Core statewide flood programs including subventions, regulatory streamlining, and ensuring funding is available for all types of flood development will be key to our advocacy strategy. Revisiting state and federal cost-sharing programs and matches are all on the table.

Illegal Cannabis. CSAC will continue to advocate for counties to secure resources and assistance as they deal with increasing levels and sophistication of illegal cannabis grows. Highlighting successes and replicating these throughout the state, from targeted enforcement to emphasizing the impacts of illegal cannabis, will be part of the CSAC strategy.