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Deliver rapid greenhouse gas reductions at scale, starting in California.

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March 18, 2021

The Honorable Luz Rivas
Chair, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 284 (R. Rivas): SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Madam Chair Luz Rivas,

I am writing to express The Climate Center's support for AB 284, which accelerates state action to advance the climate benefits of California's natural and working lands. We recognize that AB 284 provides much needed policy direction and guidance to ensure that California's forests, urban green spaces, rangelands, arid lands, agricultural lands and wetlands are integrated into state plans and policies to support carbon sequestration and foster climate resilience. Although we support the overall direction and intent of this legislation, there are also a few changes that we would like to see made to the bill that we believe would better reflect the urgency of the climate crisis.

Last year Governor Newsom in response to the catastrophic wildfire season said that "California is in a climate emergency." In 2019 research worked on by numerous scientists out of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impacts Research found that nine of eleven global climate tipping points had been activated¹. They wrote: "We have underestimated the risks of unleashing irreversible changes ... The next decade is our window." This and other recent studies showing we will pass the 1.5C threshold of dangerous warming in the next decade, make it clear that climate change impacts are happening sooner than expected and that we must act as quickly as possible. In light of these findings, we suggest three amendments to the bill.

- First, Section 38561.5 (b) would read as follows: As part of the next update to the scoping plan prepared pursuant to Section 38561, the state board, in collaboration with the Natural Resources Agency and other relevant state agencies and departments, shall do all of the following no later than December 31 2022.
- Second, Section 38561.5 (b) (1) Identify a 2025, 2030, and 2045 climate goal, with interim milestones, for the state's natural and working lands to sequester carbon and reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions.

¹ Lenton, Rockstrom, Gaffney, Rahmstorf, Richardson, Steffen, Schyellhuber. Nature, Nov 27 2019
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03595-0>

- Third, Section 38561.5 (c) No later than **December 31 2022** the state board shall develop standard methods for state agencies to consistently track greenhouse gas emissions reductions, carbon sequestration, and additional benefits from natural and working lands over time.

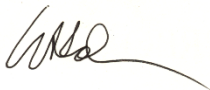
It will be a huge challenge to reach net-negative emissions by 2030 as the recent science suggests we must. A new scientific perspectives² paper by Daniel Kammen, et al, makes it clear that there is no way to achieve this bold target without significant nature-based sequestration. There is no time to waste. The California Air Resources Board, the Natural Resources Agency and other agencies must work to update plans, develop methodologies, and establish milestones under an expedited timeline.

The health of California's natural and working lands are linked directly to the health of our climate and communities. The priority California places on stewarding and conserving these lands will determine how well we fight climate change and prepare for climate impacts. California's lands can play a critical role in capturing and storing carbon emissions that contribute to climate change and its impacts.

The decisions we make today will determine if our wetlands, rangelands, farms, forests and urban green spaces become an asset or a liability in the fight against climate change. A recent analysis by Next 10 finds that the State's natural and working lands, absent any interventions, are at risk of becoming an increasing source of emissions due to fire and deterioration of these ecosystems, among other things. Natural and working lands are the State's only resource that is immediately available to naturally remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Investments in these lands now will provide climate benefits long into the future.

AB 284 establishes a pathway forward to accomplish ambitious climate goals by implementing practices that reduce carbon while supporting natural and working lands. In addition to climate benefits, investment in nature-based climate strategies means increases in groundwater, clean air, biodiversity, flood protection, and resiliency to drought, extreme heat and fires. We applaud Assemblymember Rivas for leading this effort and we respectfully urge your support of AB 284 with the above amendments when it comes before the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

Sincerely,



Ellie Cohen
Chief Executive Office
The Climate Center

² Daniel M Kammen, Teenie Matlock, Manuel Pastor, David Pellow, Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Tom Steyer, Leah Stokes, and Feliz Ventura, **California Must and Can Accelerate Commitments to Global Climate Leadership**, Prepublication for submission to Environmental Research Letters, March 2021
<https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/2103/2103.07801.pdf>