



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

June 14, 2016

The Honorable Marc Levine
Chair, Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee
State Capitol, Room 5135
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 1396 (Wolk) – OPPOSE
(As Amended May 31, 2016)**

Dear Assembly Member Levine:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to regrettably express our opposition to Senate Bill 1396, authored by Senator Lois Wolk, relating to the Inner Coast Range Program (Program). RCRC is an association of thirty-five rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

The Inner Coast Range region for the proposed Program as defined in SB 1396 includes all or part of the following 13 counties: Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, Tehama, Trinity and Yolo. This proposed geographic region includes 12 RCRC member counties.

RCRC had previously taken an “Oppose Unless Amended” position on SB 1396 as introduced. As introduced, SB 1396 would have established the Inner Coast Range Conservancy. While not identical, SB 1396 was modeled after the implementing legislation (Assembly Bill 2600) for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) in 2004. RCRC requested amendments which would have added two additional local government representatives to the Board, consistent with the make-up of the SNC Board, as well as provided clarifying language that any future proposed water infrastructure project would not be negatively affected.

State conservancies are departments within the Natural Resources Agency that encompass a unique, though often similar, mission of the protection and restoration of their defined regions physical, cultural, recreational, educational and other attributes through the acquisition of land and other programs that fulfill the objectives of the conservancy.

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SB 1396, as amended, would create a new Program within the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), an independent board consisting of the Director of Department of Fish and Wildlife, President of Fish and Game Commission and the Director of Finance. This approach includes many of the responsibilities of a state conservancy, but lacks the oversight and accountability of the ten existing state conservancies. While SB 1396 provides for an advisory board that allows for representation by local government, virtually all the authority and decision-making rests with the WCB unlike that of the state conservancies that incorporate a formal role for the locally elected county supervisors into their governance structure. Additionally, the mission of the WCB is not inclusive of many of the features of conservancies such as SNC's statutory provisions to assist the regional economy and aid in the preservation of working landscapes.

Finally, the proposed boundaries of the Inner Coast Range Program raise a number of concerns as well. Unfortunately, as with the entire proposal, the impacted counties were not officially approached prior to the measure's introduction; nor were they consulted or given the opportunity for input regarding the proposed boundaries. This raises a host of issues including the land use decision-making process and jurisdiction of local government, impact to property tax rolls, and that the proposed boundaries exceed the Inner Coast Region in a number of geographic areas.

For the reasons stated, RCRC respectfully requests your 'No' vote on SB 1396, when it is heard before your Committee. If you should have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,



MARY ANN WARMERDAM
Legislative Advocate

cc: Members, Assembly Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee
Diane Colborn, Committee Consultant
Robert Spiegel, Republican Consultant
The Honorable Lois Wolk, Member of the California State Senate
The Honorable Mike McGuire, Member of the California State Senate
The Honorable Bill Dodd, Member of the California State Assembly