

Policy & Regulations: Opportunities

Supportive Legislation & Federal Policy

- Key federal policies — the Great American Outdoors Act, the Explore Act, the BOLT Act, Good Neighbor Authority, and the Innovative Finance for National Forests program — are advancing recreation access and addressing maintenance backlogs on public lands
- The U.S. Forest Service's mission to develop local community partnerships has provided meaningful programmatic and project support
- NEPA, while complex, serves a useful function in encouraging thoughtful, deliberate public land use decisions
- Adopting GO-Biz CA Jobs First regional designations as a standard definition would resolve confusion caused by differing regional boundary definitions across agencies and programs

State Funding & Policy Alignment

- Proposition 68, Proposition 4, the California Trails Act, California's Jobs First policies, and anticipated Explore California and climate bond programs represent a strong and growing state funding foundation
- Outdoors For All has successfully united conservation, recreation, equity, access, and diversity stakeholders around a shared agenda, building political momentum
- Post-COVID cottage food legislation has lowered barriers for micro-entrepreneurs, supporting rural economic diversification
- A proactively developed Recreation Resiliency Master Plan positions the region for emerging legislative and funding opportunities
- Policies favoring smaller community-based organizations in funding allocations, combined with coordination ecosystems linking large and small organizations, could more effectively distribute resources and build lasting capacity

Regulatory Relief & Streamlining

- A recent CEQA exemption for people-powered trails reduces a key regulatory barrier for trail development
- AB 518 (low-impact camping) delegates regulatory authority to counties, offering local flexibility in campsite permitting
- Restoring the prior practice of NEPA completion satisfying CEQA requirements for state-funded projects on federal land would significantly reduce duplicative burden
- Stronger CEQA exemptions for pilot projects would allow innovative approaches to be tested before full environmental review is required

Policy & Regulations: Opportunities - *continued*

Local Policy Innovation

- Effective local policy workarounds exist — such as the agreement to apply higher county-level parking fines at State Park sites — demonstrating that pragmatic solutions are achievable
- Incentive structures offering fire mitigation support in exchange for trail easements across private timberland could unlock access to 280,000 acres needed to connect South County communities
- Integrating fire mitigation and recreation planning within funding programs would better reflect interconnected on-the-ground realities

Economic & Land Access Opportunities

- Cannabis tourism presents an emerging economic opportunity if regulatory hurdles can be navigated
- Small farm owners could generate an average of \$8,000 in additional annual income by adding just 5–10 campsites, given reduced regulatory barriers
- Adapting prevailing wage, bidding, and contractor selection requirements for rural contexts would reduce costs and improve project quality
- Reframing rural economic success metrics around stabilizing existing jobs and businesses (rather than adding new ones) would better align state policy with rural realities

Relationship-Based Progress

- Relationships with agency staff are more valuable than any specific policy in getting projects done — and represent a significant, transferable asset
- Recreation funding and policy alignment with habitat restoration frameworks could unlock additional resources for trails, which currently serve far more people than restoration projects

Policy & Regulations: Challenges

Regulatory Complexity & Duplication

1. **Duplication of NEPA and CEQA environmental review** for the same project on federal land adds significant cost, time, and effort
2. A recent policy change now **requires CEQA even when NEPA has already been completed** for state money spent on federal land — adding cost and delay
3. **CEQA scope has far exceeded its original intent** through decades of litigation; monitoring requirements can shut down crews for days or weeks over minor wildlife encounters
4. **CEQA exemptions are too easily challenged**; agencies frequently add extra conditions to avoid lawsuits, adding cost unrelated to environmental protection
5. Consultants sometimes introduce **late-stage survey requirements** that delay projects and create perverse incentives within the compliance system
6. City Airbnb restrictions, while rooted in legitimate housing shortage concerns, **foreclose meaningful income opportunities for small entrepreneurs** in regions already facing hotel room shortages

Funding Complexity & Administrative Burden

7. **Bridging state and federal funding streams require skilled staff** capable of managing complex transactions — capacity that is scarce in rural areas
8. **Securing sufficient administrative capacity** to handle complex grant requirements remains a persistent challenge
9. The state has **not clearly defined what funding can be used on federal land**, leaving organizations in an ambiguous legal and financial position
10. A **massive, deferred maintenance backlog** has rendered many campgrounds obsolete and impeded on-the-ground progress

Labor & Contracting Requirements

11. **Prevailing wage and bidding requirements create disproportionate cost burdens** in rural areas — paying \$70–\$80/hour instead of a livable \$35–\$40/hour results in half the work completed for the same investment
12. **Private money spent on state facilities still triggers prevailing wage requirements**, limiting the impact of philanthropic investment
13. **Trail classifications do not align with DIR labor categories**, forcing organizations into ill-fitting designations like "landscaping" or "carpentry"

Policy & Regulations: Challenges - *continued*

Cross-Jurisdictional & Coordination Failures

14. **No consistent policy framework** guides cross-jurisdictional recreation and land management
15. **Jurisdictional conflicts** — illustrated by the Everett Memorial Highway snow plowing dispute between the Forest Service, county, and city — produce paralysis in the absence of clear policy
16. A recent CNRA meeting included no discussion of working with the federal government, **raising concerns about how rural California fits into state planning**

Land Access Barriers

17. **Private landowners fear liability and fire risk**, and at least one has explicitly refused permission to cross their property — blocking a critical trail link between Dunsmuir and McCloud
18. **No clear state policy protects private landowners from liability for trail access**, leaving the single largest connectivity barrier unaddressed
19. Sierra Pacific Industries allows trail use with no written agreement, **creating legal vulnerability for all parties**
20. Proposition 68's 30-year public access requirement lacks natural disaster clauses, creating **unacceptable risk for landowners in fire-prone areas**
21. California Wildlife Areas **prohibit bikes without clear evidence-based justification**

ADA & Infrastructure Compliance

22. **ADA compliance requirements present ongoing challenges** for trail and recreation infrastructure, as well as for small businesses in rural areas

Equity & Inclusion Gaps

23. The CEQA exemption for people-powered trails, while beneficial, **removed tribal leverage for consultation** — a significant and unresolved tradeoff
24. Fortress conservation models have been criticized by Indigenous tribes and communities of color as a form of "Colonization 2.0," reflecting **a failure to center equity in land management**
25. Federal and state policies frequently **fail to reflect local topography and community context**; hardline regulations need to be replaced with frameworks that allow local adjustment
26. Policy should **prioritize equity over equality** to account for historic injustices in who has had access to public lands
27. Short-term rental market dynamics are **displacing residents in coastal communities**, as investors purchase homes and build ADUs for tourist rental rather than resident housing