



January 31, 2023

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

The Honorable Heath Flora
Vice Chair, Natural Resources Committee
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Honorable Chair Rivas and Vice Chair Flora;

Surfrider Foundation San Diego Chapter is pleased to request the support of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee in passage of AB 45 which will protect and conserve blue carbon ecosystems, such as coastal wetlands, in the coastal permitting process. As volunteer activists looking to protect our ocean, waves and beaches; we are invested in resilient climate solutions in the San Diego region.

AB 45 will work to ensure that blue carbon ecosystems are preserved by authorizing the California Coastal Commission to require contribution to a blue carbon demonstration project with any coastal development permit that will impact coastal wetlands, subtidal, intertidal, or marine habitat. AB 45 will also add to rapidly growing research that demonstrates how blue carbon ecosystems are improving carbon sequestration and ecosystem storage potential over a long term scale.

Blue carbon is carbon removed from the atmosphere through photosynthesizing plants and algae in coastal and marine ecosystems, which is then buried in the soil or sediment. Studies suggest that blue carbon ecosystems can sequester up to 10x more carbon and store up to 5x more carbon than terrestrial forests. However, when degraded by events like sea level rise or development, the carbon they have been

storing is released back into the atmosphere. Consequently, one of the most important carbon sinks can become a carbon source when coastal development is left unchecked.

Only 10% of California's historic wetlands remain. Conserving the remaining wetlands and restoring degraded wetlands should be of high importance. While coastal habitats (including wetlands) cover less than 2% of the total ocean area, they account for roughly half of the total carbon that is stored in ocean sediments¹

Without the ability to require demonstration projects, development of our coastlines will continue to degrade blue carbon ecosystems, turning them from a valuable carbon storing resource into a carbon emitting problem. Surfrider Foundation San Diego County offers their strong ***support of AB 45 because it ensures that coastal wetlands will continue to be a vital natural climate solution for years to come.***

Sincerely,

Dr. Udo Wahn
Vice Chair- Executive Committee
San Diego Chapter of Surfrider Foundation

Mitch Silverstein
Policy Manager
San Diego Chapter of Surfrider Foundation

Emily Field
Climate Change Committee Co-Lead
San Diego Chapter of Surfrider Foundation

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Ryan Vaughn
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¹ The Blue Carbon Initiative. <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/blue-carbon>