



Community Water Systems Alliance
An Initiative of the
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Community Water Systems Alliance & Allies Celebrate Signing of Three Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act Reform Bills

Sacramento, Calif., October 2026 – The Community Water Systems Alliance (CWSA) and its allies are celebrating Governor Gavin Newsom’s signing of three bills that make targeted but important reforms to California’s Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act (WJTCA).

The three measures – SB 1062 by Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh, AB 1808 by Assemblymember Juan Carrillo, and AB 1663 by Assemblymember Greg Wallis – address challenges that water agencies, homeowners, local governments and businesses have encountered since implementation of the Act. Since the process began in 2024, these stakeholders have been subject to steep fees and harmful delays for critical public infrastructure and home improvement projects, fire mitigation activities and emergency situations like burst water pipes or septic tank maintenance.

Together, the bills provide a more practical approach to implementing the WJTCA while maintaining protections for the western Joshua tree.

Among the changes:

- **SB 1062 (Ochoa Bogh)** requires the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to consider making mitigation fees proportionate to a project’s impact and using tiered fees based on project type, size or other criteria.
- **AB 1808 (Carrillo)** provides additional flexibility for public works projects and homeowners and expands opportunities for local governments to assume permitting authority, including for qualifying commercial and industrial projects.
- **AB 1663 (Wallis)** makes additional reforms related to the removal and trimming of western Joshua trees, including provisions intended to simplify the process in certain circumstances.

“These are reasonable adjustments that recognize we can protect the western Joshua tree while also making sure the law works for the people and communities who live within its range,” said Tim Worley, Managing Director of CWSA. “Getting these changes across the finish line took persistence and, more importantly, a lot of people willing to explain how the law was affecting their communities.”

A True Grassroots Coalition Effort

CWSA worked throughout the legislative process to bring the experiences of community water systems and their customers to Sacramento. Water agencies serving desert communities shared

examples of how WJTCA requirements impact routine infrastructure projects, increase costs and complicate the work required to provide reliable water service.

CWSA members who contributed to the effort included Jennifer Cusack and Marina West of Bighorn-Desert View Water Agency; Melody Bailey of Mojave Water Agency; Dennis LaMoreaux and Scott Rogers of Palmdale Water District; Matt Shragge of Twentynine Palms Water District; Lance Eckhart of San Geronio Pass Water Agency; Marion Champion of Mission Springs Water District; Sarah Johnson of Joshua Basin Water District; Don Bartz of Phelan-Piñon Hills Community Services District; and Tony Culver of Hi-Desert Water District. The effort also benefited from residents and local business representatives who brought their own experiences and perspectives to the discussion, including Ruieta Dasilva, Alec Mackie, Art Miller Jr., Madelaine LaVoie of the Joshua Tree Gateway Association of Realtors, and Julie Michaels and Kenneth Coate of Inland Action.

San Bernardino County Supervisor Dawn Rowe and Claire Cozad of Supervisor Rowe's office contributed the local government perspective, while Richard Filgas of the California Farm Bureau Federation helped broaden the coalition supporting practical reforms. CWSA also recognizes the work legislators and their staff who helped navigate the issues and move the legislation forward, including the offices of Senator Ochoa Bogh, Assemblymember Carrillo, and Assemblymember Wallis.

Turning Local Experience into Legislative Change

Behind the coalition was sustained advocacy and coordination. Tim Worley, associate Yasmeen Nubani and Oracio Gonzalez, CWSA's legislative advocates, worked with CWSA members, legislators, legislative staff and coalition partners throughout the process.

"The strongest advocacy happens when policymakers can hear directly from the people living with the consequences of a law," said Worley. "Our members didn't simply tell legislators that there was a problem. They explained what was happening on the ground and helped identify reasonable ways to make the law work better."

"We are enormously grateful to the legislators who carried these bills and to every agency, organization and individual who wrote a letter, participated in a meeting, testified or helped build support," Worley said. "This was very much a team effort."

About the Community Water Systems Alliance

The Community Water Systems Alliance (CWSA) gives a voice to water systems serving small and disadvantaged communities whose needs and concerns are often not given priority attention in statewide water policy discussions. Guided by the principle of "*large helping small*," CWSA brings together small, mid-sized and larger water systems to ensure that the people responsible for providing drinking water in these communities are heard by legislators, regulators and other decision-makers. CWSA advocates for practical, reasonable solutions that protect public health while recognizing the operational and economic realities facing the communities its members serve.

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