



PRESS RELEASE



KARUK TRIBE • SHINGLE SPRINGS BAND OF MIWOK INDIANS

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Tribal Water Rights Bill AB 2218 Heads to Governor Newsom Following Strong Tribal Advocacy

California Nations Indian Gaming Association (52 Member Tribes) Endorsed the Measure Last Week

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California legislation aimed at giving Tribal governments a stronger voice in decisions affecting water and aquatic ecosystems is headed to Governor Newsom's desk after clearing the Senate on August 25.

Assembly Bill 2218, authored by Assemblymember Ash Kalra, would establish a state policy recognizing and addressing historic inequities in Tribal access to and control over water while strengthening government-to-government consultation between state agencies and Native American Tribes.

The Senate floor vote came three weeks after Tribal leaders and advocates traveled to Sacramento on August 4 to meet directly with legislators and urge passage of AB 2218.

"For generations, decisions about our rivers and water have been made without the meaningful participation of the Tribal people who have depended on and cared for these waters since time immemorial," said Kenneth Brink, Vice Chairman of the Karuk Tribe. "AB 2218 is an important step toward changing that relationship. Tribes need to be at the table when decisions are being made, not brought in after the important decisions have already been made."

AB 2218 would establish state policy directing the State Water Resources Control Board, regional water quality control boards, California Natural Resources Agency and other state entities to address inequities affecting California Native American Tribes when developing water policies, regulations, permits and grant criteria.

The legislation would also strengthen Tribal participation in water-right investigations. When the State Water Board investigates claimed riparian or appropriative water rights, a Tribe whose ancestral territory includes the affected water body could request government-to-government consultation with the Board.

“The Governor has acknowledged the terrible history of dispossession suffered by Native People but the legislature has yet to translate that acknowledgement into policy changes,” said Malissa Tayaba, Vice Chair of Shingle Springs Band of Miwok. “Water decisions affect our fisheries, our cultures, our economies and the ecosystems that sustain our communities. Meaningful Tribal participation in those decisions is both a matter of good public policy and justice.”

AB 2218 has received broad support as it has moved through the Legislature and has not received a single “no” vote in any committee or floor vote to date. The Assembly approved the measure 56-0 in May. It subsequently passed the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, Senate Environmental Quality Committee and Senate Appropriations Committee without opposition. The Senate floor vote was a bipartisan vote of 28-0.

“I am proud to author AB 2218, a measure that will support California’s efforts to respectfully and effectively address the historic water inequities that continue to affect Tribal communities,” Assemblymember Ash Kalra said. “Despite being the original stewards of this land, Tribes have been systemically dispossessed of the water resources they have depended on for millennia. I hope Governor Newsom will recognize this bill as an essential component in the state’s ongoing work to address this injustice.”

The bill lands on Governor Newsom’s desk. Krystal Moreno, Shingle Springs Tribal TEK Program manager, said the strong legislative support reflects growing recognition that California cannot build a sustainable water future without Tribal governments playing a meaningful role in shaping it.

“California is facing enormous decisions about how we manage water in a changing climate,” She said. “The people who have stewarded these rivers and landscapes for thousands of years should help shape those decisions. We urge Governor Newsom to sign AB 2218 and move California from apology to action.”

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Editor’s notes: AB 2218 passed the Assembly 57-0, Senate Natural Resources and Water 5-0, Senate Environmental Quality 4-0, and Senate Appropriations 4-0. Click [here](#) for more info on Bill history and read text.