

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 57

**Introduced by Assembly Member Kalra
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Mike Fong, Lee, and Wicks)**

December 6, 2022

An act to add and repeal Chapter 2.1 (commencing with Section 4799.12.2) of Part 2.5 of Division 4 of the Public Resources Code, relating to forests.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 57, as introduced, Kalra. California Pocket Forest Initiative.

Existing law establishes the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection within the Natural Resources Agency. Existing law vests the department with specified responsibilities, including providing fire protection, fire prevention, pest control, and forest and range protection and enhancement implements and apparatus as necessary. Existing law, the California Urban Forestry Act of 1978, has as a stated purpose the promotion of the use of urban forest resources for purposes of increasing integrated projects with multiple benefits in urban communities.

This bill would establish the California Pocket Forest Initiative in the department and would authorize the department to coordinate implementation of the initiative in conjunction with the act. Upon an appropriation by the Legislature, the bill would authorize the department to provide grants to cities, counties, districts, nonprofit organizations, and public schools to establish pocket forests on public lands, as provided. The bill would require the department to prioritize disadvantaged communities and communities that lack publicly accessible green space for these grants. The bill would require the department to partner with one or more academic institutions to test,

and submit a report on or before January 1, 2030, to the Legislature that evaluates, the applicability and effectiveness of the Miyawaki method, as defined, to restore degraded lands and reforest urban areas in multiple regions throughout California. The bill would repeal these provisions on January 1, 2031.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
- 2 following:
- 3 (a) California is home to a wide variety of rich, biodiverse
- 4 natural habitats.
- 5 (b) Natural habitats offer many benefits, such as groundwater
- 6 recharge.
- 7 (c) According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- 8 Environmental Conservation Online System, California hosts 286
- 9 threatened and endangered species of plants and animals. It is also
- 10 home to thousands of other species that fill crucial roles in the
- 11 state’s ecosystems. Many of these species require access to natural
- 12 habitats in order to survive.
- 13 (d) Access to natural green spaces is beneficial to human health
- 14 and happiness, especially for children and economically
- 15 disadvantaged communities.
- 16 (e) According to the United States census, 95 percent of
- 17 California’s population lives in urban areas. This makes it the most
- 18 urban state in the nation.
- 19 (f) Pocket forests can benefit society in a number of ways. First,
- 20 they can confer some of the benefits of natural habitat onto urban
- 21 areas. Second, they can attract and sustain species that may
- 22 otherwise struggle to thrive in highly developed, low biodiversity
- 23 regions. Third, they can provide easy access to natural green spaces
- 24 for the growing number of urban-dwelling Californians.
- 25 (g) California works diligently to conserve its unique, biodiverse
- 26 natural habitats and improve the health and happiness of its
- 27 residents. Therefore, it is in the state’s interest to promote the
- 28 creation of pocket forests.

1 SEC. 2. Chapter 2.1 (commencing with Section 4799.12.2) is
2 added to Part 2.5 of Division 4 of the Public Resources Code, to
3 read:

4
5 CHAPTER 2.1. CALIFORNIA POCKET FOREST INITIATIVE
6

7 4799.12.2. For purposes of this chapter, the following
8 definitions apply:

9 (a) "Initiative" means the California Pocket Forest Initiative.

10 (b) "Miyawaki method" means a method of planting that first
11 analyzes and improves a plot's soil conditions, then densely plants
12 the plot with native main tree species, subspecies, shrubs, and
13 ground-covering herbs. The trees planted through this method
14 should, if possible, be grown from seeds, not grafts or clones.

15 (c) "Pocket forest" means a small plot of urban land that has
16 been planted according to the Miyawaki method.

17 4799.12.3. The California Pocket Forest Initiative is hereby
18 established in the department. The department may coordinate
19 implementation of the initiative in conjunction with the California
20 Urban Forestry Act of 1978 (Chapter 2 (commencing with Section
21 4799.06)).

22 4799.12.4. The department shall partner with one or more
23 academic institutions to test the applicability and effectiveness of
24 the Miyawaki method to restore degraded lands and reforest urban
25 areas in multiple regions throughout California.

26 4799.12.5. (a) Upon appropriation of funds by the Legislature
27 for the purposes of this section, the department may offer grants
28 to cities, counties, districts, nonprofit organizations, and public
29 schools to establish pocket forests on public lands in order to test
30 and demonstrate the applicability and effectiveness of the
31 Miyawaki method in California.

32 (b) The department shall prioritize disadvantaged communities
33 and communities that lack publicly accessible green space for these
34 demonstration grants.

35 (c) For public school grantees, the grant may include funding
36 to develop and offer grade-appropriate urban forestry and ecology
37 curriculum.

38 4799.12.6. (a) Notwithstanding Section 10231.5 of the
39 Government Code, on or before January 1, 2030, the department
40 shall submit a report to the Legislature that evaluates the

1 applicability and effectiveness of the Miyawaki method to restore
2 degraded lands and reforest urban areas in multiple regions
3 throughout California. The report shall include an assessment of
4 the costs and benefits of the Miyawaki method, a discussion of
5 appropriate species for different regions of the state, and
6 recommendations for any modifications to the method that may
7 be appropriate for its use in California. The department may
8 contract with academic institutions to prepare the report, which
9 shall be subject to the peer review process.

10 (b) The report to be submitted pursuant to subdivision (a) shall
11 be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government
12 Code.

13 4799.12.7. This chapter shall remain in effect only until January
14 1, 2031, and as of that date is repealed.

