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SACRAMENTO — The California Legislative Central Coast Caucus, co-chaired by Assemblymember Dawn Addis (D-Morro Bay) and Assemblymember Gregg Hart (D-Santa Barbara) and vice chaired by Senator John Laird (D-Santa Cruz), unveiled its bill priorities for the 2026 legislative session.

“The Central Coast Caucus again has a priority bill package that uplifts the importance of our natural world to California’s economy and values,” said Addis. “As the federal government attacks our state, putting our coastline, climate, and pocketbooks at risk, I’m proud to co-chair a Caucus that is steadfast in defending California’s biggest assets – our people and our environment.”

“The Central Coast is defined by its natural landscapes, rich biodiversity, and resilient communities,” said Hart. “This year, the California Central Coast Legislative Caucus is focused on advancing policies to improve wildfire preparedness, strengthen climate resilience, and preserve vital natural habitats, both large and small. I am proud to join my colleagues in this effort to protect our coastal ecosystems, strengthen environmental stewardship, and preserve the land that makes the Central Coast unique”

“The Central Coast has always understood that protecting our environment and supporting our communities go hand in hand, said Laird. “My bills reflect those priorities by giving Californians a way to continue supporting sea otter conservation through their tax returns, making the Coastal Commission’s appeals process work better and more predictably, and making sure older adults, people with disabilities, and their families don’t lose access to important services during times of transition. They’re practical changes that will make a real difference for people and for the Central Coast.”

The 2026 legislative package is currently comprised of ten bill priorities, each poised to address critical issues facing the region:

AB 1744 (Addis) would make it illegal to label a sunscreen product as “reef safe,” “marine safe,” or any or any other phrase that leads the consumer to believe that the product is ocean friendly, unless the product is free of chemical ultraviolet filters.

AB 2254 (Addis) would require certain cities to adopt monarch butterfly overwintering site protection policies.

AB 1934 (Bennett) will require the State Fire Marshal to develop a home hardening certification program to help reduce the risk of property loss as a result of a fire by January 1st, 2028.

SB 599 (Caballero) would require the Department of Water Resources to research, develop, and implement tools that produce atmospheric river forecasting.

AB 2461 (Hart) clarifies existing law by explicitly applying bonding and financial assurance requirements when a company acquires or assumes control of an oil well or facility.

SB 575 (Laird) re-establishes the California Sea Otter Voluntary Contribution Fund to allow taxpayers to continue supporting sea otter conservation efforts through voluntary tax return donations.

SB 963 (Laird) streamlines the California Coastal Commission's appeal process by establishing requirements for filing appeals and setting deadlines for reviewing and deciding appealed coastal development permits.

SB 1261 (Laird) will ensure that Aging and Disability Resource Connection programs can continue to operate during times of transition.

AB 1668 (Pellerin) extends the welfare tax exemption on open space used exclusively for the protection of native plants and animals, biotic communities, geological or geographical structures of scientific or educational interest, or open space land used exclusively for recreation or for the enjoyment of scenic beauty, to January 1st, 2032.

AB 1919 (Pellerin) allows voters, through a qualified initiative placed on the ballot by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District Board of Directors, to approve a transaction and use tax.

Additionally, AB 1448 by Assemblymember Hart, which was a Central Coast Caucus priority last year, is still moving forward through the legislative process. This bill will prohibit the issuing of new leases that would facilitate oil and gas production from nearby federal platforms using slant drilling. Additionally, it would prohibit the use of existing infrastructure to support new federal offshore development.

“For years, we have worked on cultivating an enhanced sense of urgency in how Sacramento discusses wildfire prevention in the built environment,” said Assemblymember Steve Bennett (D-Oxnard). “We remain committed to pursuing and supporting proven methods that reduce loss of life and property and give our communities greater chances in surviving fast-moving blazes. I’m proud to author AB 1934, which establishes a certification program for home hardening as part of a two-year effort on addressing state-wide fire prevention. The bill was informed by firsthand experience of AD-38 residents following the Mountain and Thomas fires.”

“Atmospheric rivers are massive, fast moving storms which originate in the tropics, and bring an enormous amount of water causing floods in California” said Senator Anna Caballero (D-Merced) My bill, SB 599 will allow California to prepare for these storms by forecasting when and where the atmospheric river will hit, to allow for a stronger emergency response, allow communities to store excess water, and provide greater

protection for families, businesses, and agriculture. This investment will help to reduce flood risks while making the most of our water resources.

“The Central Coast is full of biodiversity hotspots and has economic needs that are unique to the region,” said Assemblymember Gail Pellerin (D-Santa Cruz). “I’m proud to stand with my colleagues in the Central Coast Caucus to protect California’s coastal and marine environments, prepare the region to be resilient to climate change, and uplift local communities’ ability to access resources.”

Further updates on the progress of these bills are anticipated as they move through the legislative process in the State Assembly and State Senate.

The California Legislative Central Caucus is made up of eleven elected officials representing Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. The caucus is led by Assemblymembers Dawn Addis and Gregg Hart as co-chairs and Senator John Laird as the vice chair. Members of the caucus include Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, Assemblymembers Steve Bennett, Jesse Gabriel, Jacqui Irwin, Gail Pellerin, President pro Tempore Monique Limón, and Senators Anna Caballero, and Henry Stern.