

# Imperial Valley News

## Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia and Other Legislators Request Reinstatement of GGRF Funding for Critical Natural Resources Programs

### Details

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Sacramento, California - Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella), Chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Climate Change Policies and about a dozen other California legislators submitted a letter requesting that critical natural resources programs receive funding in this year's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) budget allocations. Earlier today, they were joined by several advocacy groups to announce their list of priorities for the 2018-2019 GGRF Expenditure Plan.

"Following the success of our work with AB 398 (E. Garcia), which extended our state's cap-and-trade program, it is essential that the legislature continues to ensure the equitable appropriation of these revenues into programs proven to provide significant health, environmental and economic benefits. I have made it a point to follow these Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund dollars through the budgeting process, until we see these investments allocated and at work advancing California communities, like those in my district, most impacted by pollution," stated Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia.

The 2017-2018 expenditure plan for GGRF adopted in August 2017 appropriated \$1.521 billion. That appropriation was made when only \$811 million was technically in the GGRF account, and relied on estimates of auction revenue for the rest of the 2017-2018 auctions to fulfill the remainder of the expenditure plan. Auctions conducted since the expenditure plan was adopted have performed better than expected, resulting in an approximate surplus of \$450 million for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

The letter submitted to Budget subcommittee Chair Bloom requests that the Legislature appropriates \$400 million from the GGRF for the following programs:

- Urban Forestry Program under Cal Fire
- Urban Greening Program under the California Natural Resources Agency
- State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP) under the California Department of Food and Agriculture
- Healthy Soils Program under the California Department of Food and Agriculture
- Wetlands and Watershed Restoration Program under the California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Programs under the Wildlife Conservation Board, California State Coastal Conservancy, California Coastal Commission, and San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

These programs had previously been funded by GGRF but had not been included or were not fully represented in the current proposal.

“Greening our communities is essential to the health, wellness, and safety of Californian children and families. The Urban Greening program transforms local infrastructure to clean our air and water, create safe places for kids to play outside, and protect neighborhoods from severe weather events,” said Mary Creasman, California Director of Government Affairs for The Trust for Public Land.

“Communities all over the state are feeling the impacts of fires and floods, particularly in low-income areas and communities of color. California should increase these programs, not cut them. We are committed to working with the Legislature to restore funds for these critical programs.”

“We can plan for a climate resilient future by funding natural resources programs with the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund,” said Assemblymember Marc Levine (D-Marin County).

“Continued investment is the best way to sequester carbon, reduce GHG emissions, and fight climate change while realizing economic benefits for California.”

Assemblymember Garcia maintains that, “These climate investment tools wield immense power to transform our most vulnerable populations. Green infrastructure, like that supported through the Urban Greening and Urban Forestry grant programs, is a critical component of creating healthy and resilient communities. Last year, we were able to utilize a collective \$4 million of these cap-and-trade dollars to break ground and set out to construct new local park projects in North Shore and El Centro; creating green space and safe recreational opportunities where there was none.”

“Imperial County agriculture contributes more than \$4.5 billion to the local economy. Likewise, the economies of the Coachella Valley and Blythe are also predominantly driven by this industry. Farmers rank amongst our state’s largest employers. For these reasons, we have been vehemently advocating for additional investments into resources like the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP). Upon our encouragement, several local farmers have already been able to take advantage of this assistance. In fact, this week, Ronald C. Leimgruber Farms will be celebrating the completion of an energy efficient conservation project that was supported by SWEEP funding,” commented Garcia. “By keeping these programs alive, we can help our vital agricultural industries meet our emission reduction targets while cleaning our air and improving our region’s overall health and prosperity.”

“Coming from the world’s leading region for sustainable agriculture practices, I’m proud to join this effort to fund the state’s environmentally responsible agriculture and forestry programs, said Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters). “We must do a better job of providing incentives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, runoff, and the use of water and soil additives in rural California. This initiative will help us protect our land and water.”

Jeanne Merrill, Policy Director with the California Climate and Agriculture Network added, “Turning our farms into carbon sinks is not only good for our climate, but good for the bottom line. The high demand for the Climate Smart Agriculture programs demonstrates that. Mr. Garcia’s proposal today acknowledges the importance of California farms and ranches in meeting our climate change goals.”

California ReLeaf Executive Director Cindy Blain noted, “Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia’s recognition of the critical role all natural resources -- including community trees and green infrastructure -- contribute to meeting the State’s GHG reduction goals and creating safer, healthier communities is reflected in this bold proposal. We applaud his vision and leadership.”

In addition to Eduardo Garcia, Assemblymembers Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters), Arambula (D-Fresno), Caballero (D-Salinas), Friedman (D-Glendale), Kalra (D-San Jose), Levine (D-Marin County), McCarty (D-Sacramento), Rubio (D-Baldwin Park), Stone (D-Monterey Bay), Talamantes Eggman (D-Stockton) and Wood (D-Healdsburg) signed on in support of this venture.