

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 22, 2012

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2011–12 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1776

Introduced by Assembly Member Fong
(Coauthors: Senators Evans and Leno)

February 17, 2012

An act to amend Section 422.5 of, and to add Chapter 29.5 (commencing with Section 7593.5) to Division 7 of Title 1 of, the Government Code, relating to state government.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1776, as amended, Fong. State government: ~~Western Pacific leatherback sea turtle.~~

(1) Existing law establishes the state flag and the state's emblems, including, among other things, the poppy as the official state flower, the California redwood as the official state tree, and the California desert tortoise as the official state reptile.

This bill would establish the ~~Western Pacific leatherback sea turtle~~ as the official state marine reptile.

(2) Existing law designates certain periods of time for specified purposes, ~~including, among other things, the first week in January as Braille Literacy Week of celebration or recognition.~~

This bill would designate October 15, ~~2012~~ 2013, and every October 15 thereafter, as ~~Western Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle Conservation Day.~~ *The* bill would encourage public schools, state and federal agencies, nongovernmental agencies, fishers, ~~whale-watch~~ *coastal* tour operators, and other interested stakeholders to engage in certain activities, as specified.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
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 a coastal state that is dedicated to the protection
4 of ocean resources, fisheries, and marine wildlife.
- 5 (b) Sea turtles, fish, *seabirds*, and marine mammals are a central
6 component of California's natural heritage and marine biodiversity.
- 7 (c) The Legislature acknowledges that the Pacific leatherback
8 *sea* turtle population has experienced a catastrophic decline over
9 the past two decades and might be on the verge of ~~extirpation~~
10 *extinction*.
- 11 (d) The Legislature further acknowledges that Pacific
12 ~~leatherbacks~~ *leatherback sea turtles* are among the most imperiled
13 of any sea turtle population in any ocean basin on Earth and that
14 populations of the Pacific leatherback *sea turtle*, a
15 100-million-year-old species that outlived the dinosaurs, have
16 declined by approximately 90 percent in the last 25 years.
- 17 (e) ~~Leatherbacks~~ *Pacific leatherback sea turtles* foraging off
18 the coast of California are part of a distinct ~~Western-pacific~~ *Pacific*
19 breeding stock that nests on beaches in Indonesia, Papua New
20 Guinea, and the Solomon Islands.
- 21 (f) California's coastal waters are high-use foraging areas for
22 summer nesters from this critically endangered population of
23 ~~Western~~ Pacific leatherback sea turtles, according to the National
24 Marine Fisheries Service.
- 25 (g) Satellite tracking conducted over the past decade has
26 determined that after nesting hundreds of individual ~~Western~~
27 Pacific leatherback sea turtles swim more than 6,000 miles over
28 10 to 12 months to cross the Pacific to feed on jellyfish in
29 California coastal waters every year.
- 30 (h) The ~~leatherbacks~~² *Pacific leatherback sea turtles*'
31 trans-Pacific migration involved multiple years of migrating
32 between California coastal waters during the summer and lower
33 latitude wintering areas without returning to ~~western~~ *Western*
34 Pacific nesting beaches.

1 (i) These movements and foraging strategies underscore the
2 importance of and the need for ecosystem-based management and
3 coordinated Pacificwide conservation efforts.

4 (j) The Legislature supports efforts to recover and preserve the
5 ~~Western~~ Pacific leatherback sea turtle population in oceanic feeding
6 and migration areas, which are identified as important strategies
7 for their continued survival.

8 (k) On February 26, 2012, the National Marine Fisheries Service
9 designated more than 16,000 square miles of California's coastal
10 waters, and a total of nearly 42,000 square miles along the United
11 States West Coast, as critical habitat to protect high-use foraging
12 areas and primary prey species for the endangered ~~Western~~ Pacific
13 leatherback sea turtle under the federal Endangered Species Act.

14 SEC. 2. Section 422.5 of the Government Code is amended to
15 read:

16 422.5. (a) The California desert tortoise (~~gopherus~~ (*Gopherus*
17 *agassizii*) is the official state reptile.

18 (b) The ~~Western~~ Pacific leatherback sea turtle (~~dermochelys~~
19 (*Dermochelys coriacea*) is the official state marine reptile.

20 SEC. 3. Chapter 29.5 (commencing with Section 7593.5) is
21 added to Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code, to read:

22
23 CHAPTER 29.5. ~~WESTERN~~ PACIFIC LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE
24

25 7593.5. (a) October 15, ~~2012~~ 2013, and every October 15
26 thereafter, is hereby designated as ~~Western~~ Pacific Leatherback
27 Sea Turtle Conservation Day.

28 (b) The Legislature encourages California public schools to
29 include ~~Western~~ Pacific leatherback sea turtles ~~into~~ *in* their teaching
30 lessons and curriculum whenever possible.

31 (c) The Legislature encourages state and federal agencies,
32 nongovernmental agencies, fishers, ~~whale-watch~~ *coastal* tour
33 operators, and other interested stakeholders to establish and
34 participate in a statewide, voluntary *Pacific* leatherback sea turtle
35 watch to record sightings of the ~~Western~~ Pacific leatherback sea
36 turtle in California and West Coast waters.

37 (d) The Legislature encourages state and federal agencies to
38 build cooperative relationships with the *Western Pacific* island
39 nations where ~~Western~~ Pacific leatherback sea turtles return to

- 1 nest in order to increase awareness and conservation of this
- 2 critically endangered species.
- 3 *(e) The Legislature urges state and federal agencies to take*
- 4 *proactive conservation measures and prevent further threats to*
- 5 *Pacific leatherback sea turtles and their habitats.*

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