Calif. lawmakers approve $4B ballot measure for parks, water projects

By Paul Rogers, Bay Area News Group

Immigration and housing dominated the headlines from Sacramento this year. But with little fanfare, state lawmakers working with Gov. Jerry Brown also approved a sweeping measure to provide $4.1 billion in new funding for parks and water projects – everything from building Bay Area hiking trails to expanding Lake Tahoe beaches to constructing new inner city parks in Los Angeles.

The bill, SB5, passed near midnight Friday and now sits on Brown's desk. If he signs it, as expected, it would be placed on the June 5 statewide ballot. It also would represent the first statewide parks and water bond to appear on a state ballot in 12 years, since Proposition 84 in 2006, which won approval of 54 percent of voters and provided $5.4 billion.

Unlike other parks bonds in the past – all the way back to California's first parks bond, which voters approved in 1928 to preserve areas like Mount Diablo, Mount Tamalpais and Del Norte Redwoods state parks – this one is heavily tilted toward urban parks and Southern California, along with water improvements in low-income communities.

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