

Conservation

## How Trump's Attack on Environmental Programs Is Already Affecting Local Conservation Work

**Grant funding from BIL and IRA, Biden's signature climate laws, has been frozen. "We're in a biodiversity meltdown," says butterfly scientist Stu Weiss. "We don't have time for these kinds of delays."**

by **Tanvi Dutta Gupta**

February 5, 2025

SHARE THIS:   



Two weeks into President Donald Trump's presidency, the situation is murky for doing federal-grant-funded conservation work, from fish passage projects to wildfire resilience. (Salmon by Michael Wier, courtesy of California Trout)

As scientist loses sight of recovery for an endangered butterfly he's spent his career protecting. An environmental justice nonprofit director anticipates possible layoffs. A forest expert watches wildfire risks grow as critical work gets delayed. A fish passage barrier that has blocked steelhead trout migrations for years was set to be removed this summer; now it might stand for years more.

Bay Nature has talked to more than 15 nonprofit leaders, lawyers, scientists, conservation practitioners, and agency staff working with programs receiving BIL or IRA money across the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Since President Trump's inauguration on January 20, one thing is clear: The raft of memos, executive orders and other Trump administration actions have left environmental work in the Bay Area and beyond in "confusion and chaos," says Redgie Collins, the legal and policy director for California Trout.

Among the onslaught was a freeze on all federal grant programs (swiftly challenged, then blocked by a judge), and a separate freeze on all disbursements of money from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. President Biden's signature climate bills (whose investments in nature Bay Nature has tracked since 2023 through our Wild Billions reporting project). The new administration also suspended environmental justice work, notified some 1,100 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency employees that they could be fired immediately, and initiated an ideological review of all grant and loan programs for compliance with the Trump administration's priorities. Even obligated dollars may be imperiled; some BIL and IRA grantees with binding contracts reportedly found themselves locked out of payment portals. Bay Nature's analysis of the programs under review shows nature-related grant programs originally funded by IRA or BIL to the tune of \$59 billion nationally are included. How much of the \$59 billion has been spent is unclear.



Bay Nature is tracking big federal money for nature in the Bay Area. See stories and maps at the [project page](#); send tips to [wildbillions@baynature.org](mailto:wildbillions@baynature.org).

### Wild Billions under fire (or rather, freezes)

Bay Nature has identified national conservation, climate adaptation, and environmental justice grant programs funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) or the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that impact the greater San Francisco Bay Area—and are among the roughly 2,600 federal assistance programs under ideological review by the Trump administration. At present, all BIL and IRA funding has been frozen.

Agency	Program (links to SAM.gov listing)	Amount funded by BIL or IRA
Agriculture	Bioproduct Pilot Program	\$10,000,000
Agriculture	Urban and Community Forestry Program	\$1,500,000,000
Agriculture	Forest Legacy Program	\$790,000,000
Agriculture	State & Private Forestry Cooperative Fire Assistance Program	\$88,000,000
Agriculture	Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program	\$100,000,000
Agriculture	Joint Fire Science Program (Research & Development)	\$20,000,000
Agriculture	Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program	\$100,000,000
Agriculture	Prescribed Fire/Fire Recovery	\$250,000,000
Agriculture	Restoration/Revegetation	\$560,000,000
Agriculture	Capital Maintenance and Improvement	\$360,000,000
Agriculture	Community Wildfire Defense Grants	\$1,000,000,000
Agriculture	Temporary Bridge Program	\$60,000,000
Agriculture	Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscapes	\$3,200,000,000
Agriculture	Financial Assistance to Facilities that Purchase and Process Byproducts for Ecosystem Restoration	\$400,000,000
Agriculture	Forest Legacy Program	\$700,000,000
Agriculture	Environmental Quality Incentives Program	\$8,450,000,000
Agriculture	Watershed Rehabilitation Program	\$118,000,000
Agriculture	Emergency Watershed Protection Program	\$300,000,000
Agriculture	Conservation Stewardship Program	\$3,250,000,000
Agriculture	Regional Conservation Partnership Program	\$4,950,000,000

[+ Show 22 more](#)

Programs listed here are national, not specific to the Bay Area (except local EPA SF Bay funding). See linked sam.gov listings for how much programs have spent in previous years. There are many environment grant programs not listed here that are also under review—we only included the BIL/IRA-funded ones here. There is no straightforward accounting of how much money has already been spent, and no clarity on whether obligated funds are frozen. If you have additions to this list or more information, email [wildbillions@baynature.org](mailto:wildbillions@baynature.org).

Table: Kate Golden • Source: Bay Nature • Get the data • Created with [Datawrapper](#)












In California, state and local funding may provide a limited stopgap, particularly the newly passed Prop. 4, a \$10 billion bond measure for climate resilience, and Measure AA, a local wetland restoration tax.

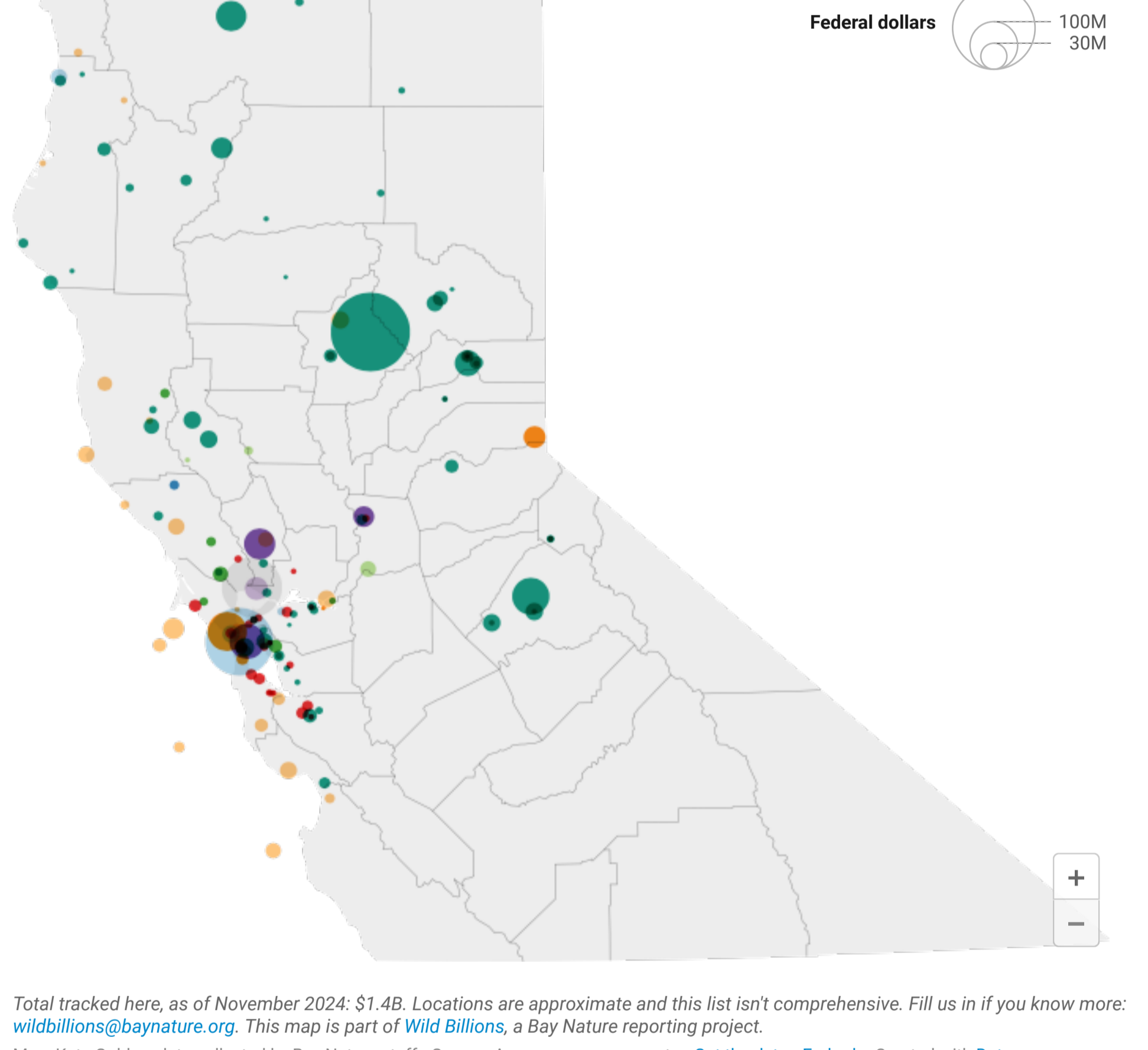
Grantees say that their federal contacts across agencies have provided limited information about how the executive order affects projects already under way. "There's no official advice. There's no official to give advice," says Susan Jane Brown, an environmental lawyer who focuses on federal land management. Multiple people involved with BIL and IRA programs declined to comment for this article because they feared repercussions or because of the lack of clarity on the scope of the administration's orders.

So grantees have had to come up with their own strategies. Some grantees have told contractors and employees to continue work as normal; others paused projects briefly; still more have completely stopped work until further direction emerges. Jim Wilcox, the executive director of Plumas Corporation, halted work last week on a \$6.2 million BIL-funded wildfire project meant to reduce risks in the Plumas National Forest—after he heard about the federal spending freeze on CNN, and not through his federal contact. When that freeze lifted, he restarted the work the next day. Going forward, "we're going to be cognizant of reading the newspaper every day," he says.

### BIL and IRA spending on nature

Bay Nature is tracking funded projects in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Our collection includes coastal resilience, ecorestoration, wildfire prevention, climate-smart agriculture, biodiversity, and other nature-based climate solutions.

 Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works
  Federal Emergency Management Agency
  National Park Service
  Bureau of Indian Affairs
  Bureau of Land Management
  Bureau of Reclamation
  Council on Environmental Quality
  Environmental Protection Agency
  National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
  U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
  U.S. Forest Service



Total tracked here, as of November 2024: \$1.4B. Locations are approximate and this list isn't comprehensive. Fill us in if you know more: [wildbillions@baynature.org](mailto:wildbillions@baynature.org). This map is part of Wild Billions, a Bay Nature reporting project. Map: Kate Golden; data collected by Bay Nature staff • Source: Agency announcements • Get the data • Embed • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Other organizations have stopped all IRA-funded work until clarity emerges. Violet Wulf-Saena, the executive director of Climate-Resilient Communities, a Palo Alto-based nonprofit, is figuring out how to support her 15-person staff, including people specifically hired to manage federal grants. They rely on reimbursements for such programs, which include climate risk assessments, youth training programs, and community engagement. "There's no way we can continue the work when we don't know we're going to get paid," Wulf-Saena says.

Alison Blodorn, the forestry program manager at the Napa Resource Conservation District (RCD), says district staff stopped a time-sensitive, \$6 million fish barrier removal project at Sulphur Creek for which they've spent months securing permits, and years planning. They were hoping to dismantle the barrier—a bridge that's been blocking steelhead migrations for years—this summer during the dry season. Now, it's uncertain when that barrier will come down; the RCD can't pay for the contractors and construction without the federal support. "We've been told [grant managers] can't process any invoices," Blodorn says. "A lot of neighboring RCDs are in similar situations."



Organizations are also tallying sunk costs for BIL- and IRA-funded grant funds they applied for that now seem unlikely to ever arrive. Wulf-Saena says Climate-Resilient Communities had already spent \$30,000 and significant staff time to apply for a \$20 million BIL-supported grant to build more rain gardens to protect East Palo Alto residents from climate impacts. "Right now, I don't think anything is going to come out of that effort," she says. Stu Weiss, of Creekside Science, was all "psyched up," he says, to get up to \$250,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for growing Mission blue butterfly host plants to expand its habitat—and, he hoped, downlist the butterfly from endangered to threatened. Now, that money appears to have dissolved into nothing. "We're in a biodiversity meltdown," he says. "We don't have time for these kinds of delays."

Even beyond the immediate grantees, the work supported by BIL and IRA funds across the Bay Area has in turn supported numerous contractors, construction companies, and consultants. Bay Nature has tallied nearly \$1.4 billion in awards just for nature-related programs in the Bay Area, and many program funds were meant to be available through 2026 or beyond. "If these funds are clawed back, it would have a massive impact on California's economy, not just fish and trout," Collins says. Collins of CalTrout, which has been awarded millions of dollars for BIL- and IRA-funded fish passage and floodplain projects that it is leading in the greater Bay Area.

Some work may be able to continue. Earlier funding crises—including a state bond crisis 15 years ago—taught some organizations, like Plumas Corp., to diversify funding sources. Environmental organizations are now eagerly waiting for Prop. 4 funds, details of which the Legislature is negotiating in the state budget process, to open for applications starting in July. Weiss says he will continue growing host plants for the Mission blue butterfly, with funding coming out of Creekside Science's pocket if necessary.

The situation is evolving quickly. On Wednesday, Politico reported on an internal EPA memo that promises a detailed list of BIL and IRA programs whose funds will be frozen.

Nearly everyone Bay Nature spoke to agrees that the consequences of the BIL and IRA funding freezes for Bay Area nature are only just emerging. "We can always do better and be more efficient," Brown says. "But taking a sledgehammer to these things is not going to work long-term."

### About the Author

#### Tanvi Dutta Gupta



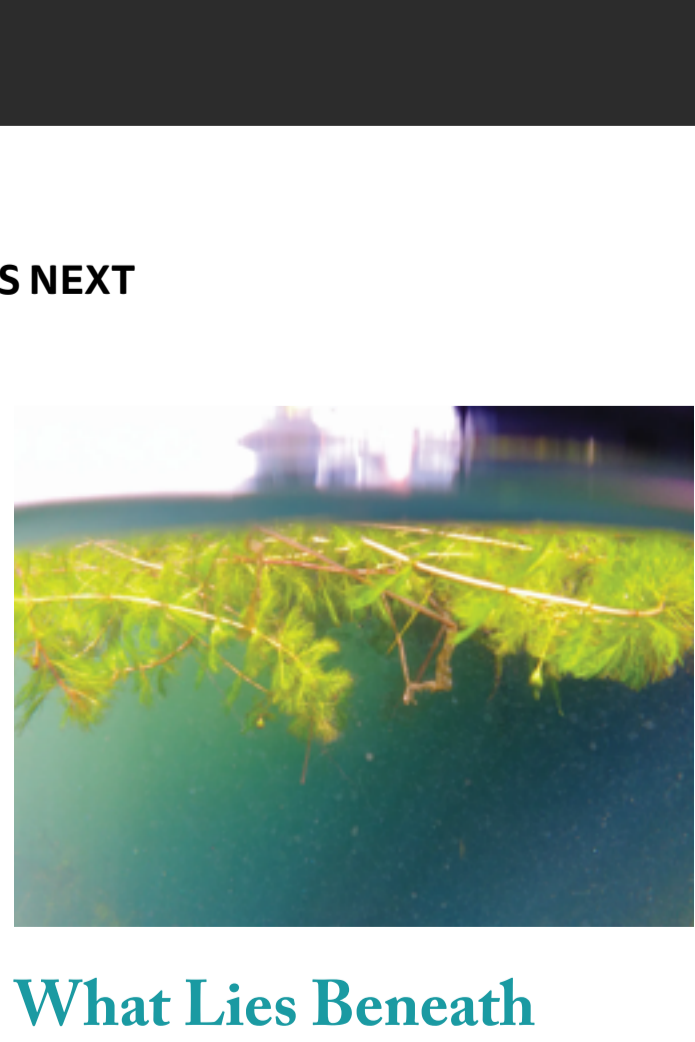
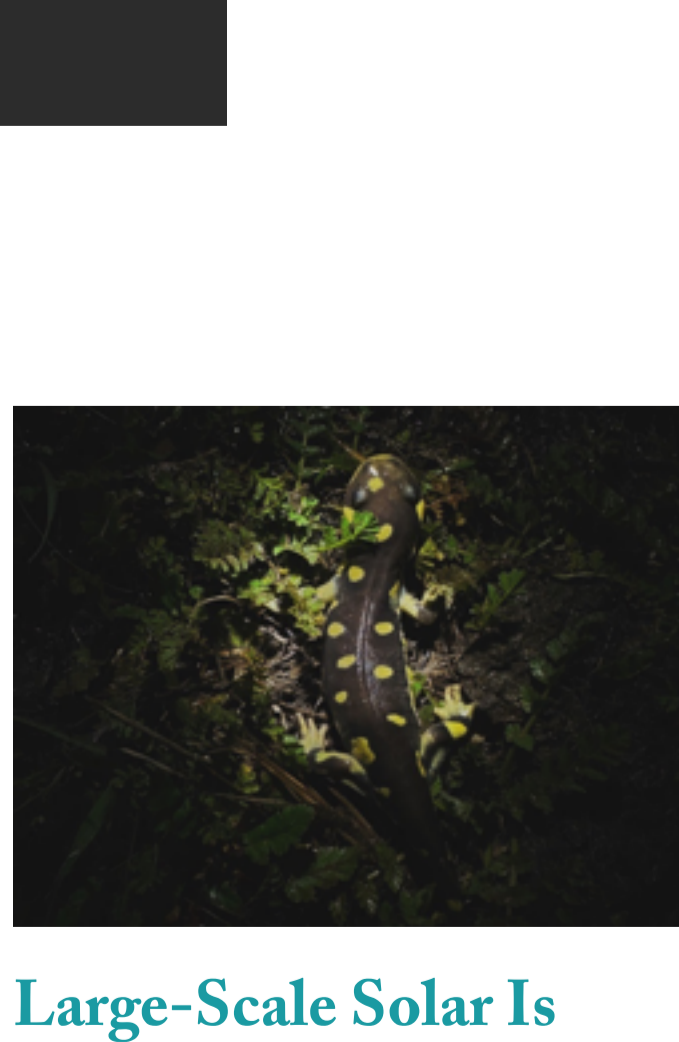
Tanvi Dutta Gupta is a 2024-2025 editorial fellow at Bay Nature focusing on Wild Billions, Bay Nature's project tracking federal money for nature. She graduated in June 2024 from Stanford with an assortment of degrees including earth systems, ecology, and science communication. Before reaching California, she grew up across Singapore, London, Hong Kong, and India. She enjoys unraveling the intersections of people, nature, and politics; cool animal facts; long runs; and new scene flavors.

SHARE THIS:   

Every story from Bay Nature magazine is the product of a team dedicated to connecting our readers to the world around them and increasing environmental literacy. Please help us keep this unique regional magazine thriving, and support the ecosystem we've built around it, by subscribing today—you'll get Bay Nature four times a year in your mailbox!

[JOIN/RENEW](#)

### READ THIS NEXT

-  **Paddling the Cosumnes River Preserve, a Lush Refuge in the Central Valley**  
January 23, 2025 | [BAYNATURE.ORG](#)
-  **A Mussel Bed is Full of Life, 80 Years Later**  
January 22, 2025 | [BAYNATURE.ORG](#)
-  **What Lies Beneath**  
January 14, 2025 | [MAGAZINE](#)
-  **Large-Scale Solar Is Coming to Tiger Salamander Country**  
December 12, 2024 | [BAYNATURE.ORG](#)

Bay Nature connects the people of the San Francisco Bay Area to our natural world and motivates nature to solve problems with nature in mind.

Header illustrations by Jane Kim, InkDwell

[DONATE](#)

Bay Nature Institute  
1338 6th St., #2  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
(510) 528-8550

Tax ID: 76-0744881

Become a Member

Bay Nature Store

Current & Back Issues in Print

Online Magazine Story Archive

Bay Nature Talks

Give Us Feedback

Pitch Us Stories, Photos or Art

Staff and Board

Employment Opportunities

Bay Nature Partners

Advertise

Add An Event

My Account


[JOIN / RENEW](#)

Membership Customer Service:  
888-4-BAYNAT (888-422-9628)  
[service@baynature.org](mailto:service@baynature.org)  
PO Box 6409  
Albany, CA 94706

[SIGN UP FOR EMAIL](#)

Bay Nature's email newsletter delivers local nature stories, hikes, and events to your inbox each week. Sign up today.

[SIGN UP!](#)

 MEMBER SINCE  
TRUSTED COMPANY

[GUIDE TO MEMBER UP](#)

Bay Nature is a member of the INN Network.