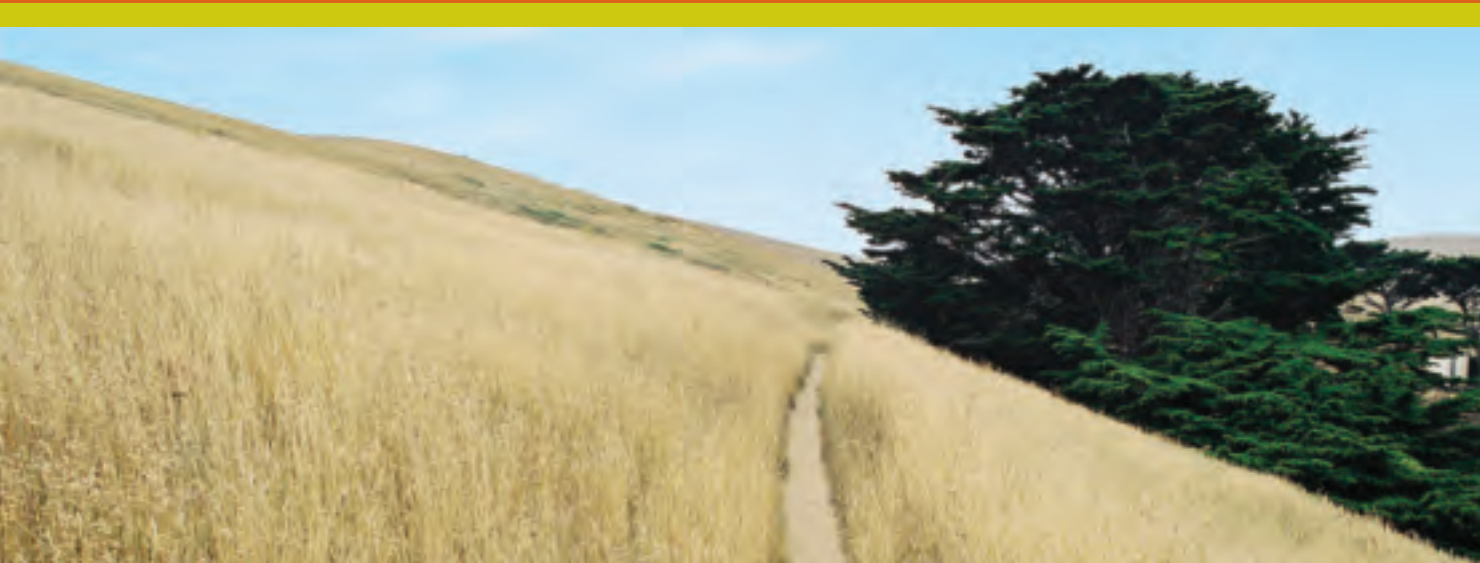


# Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity

Preserving vital Bay Area lands for all Californians



The following organizations contributed time, expertise, and/or resources to this project:

Agricultural Advisory Committee  
Agricultural-Natural Resources Trust of Contra Costa County  
Alameda County Resource Conservation District  
American Farmland Trust  
Association of Bay Area Governments  
Audubon California  
Bay Area Open Space Council  
Bay Area Ridge Trail Council  
Blue Ridge/Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership  
Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust  
California Council of Land Trusts  
California Department of Fish and Game  
California Department of Parks and Recreation  
California Native Plant Society  
California Oak Foundation  
California Rangeland Trust  
California State Parks  
Center for Whole Communities  
Citizens for East Shore Parks  
City and County of San Francisco  
City of Fairfield  
City of Novato  
City of Rohnert Park  
City of San Jose  
City of San Rafael  
City of Walnut Creek  
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Friends of the Urban Forest  
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Marin Audubon Society  
Marin Conservation League  
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Marin County Flood Control  
Marin County Open Space District  
Marin Municipal Water District  
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
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Natural Heritage Institute  
Nature in the City  
Neighborhood Parks Council  
Nichols-Berman Environmental Planners  
North Marin Water District  
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PRBO Conservation Science  
Peninsula Open Space Trust  
Point Reyes National Seashore  
San Anselmo Open Space Committee  
San Bruno Mountain Watch  
San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission  
San Francisco Bay Joint Venture  
San Francisco Bay Trail Project  
San Francisco Beautiful  
San Francisco Estuary Institute  
San Francisco Recreation and Park Department  
San Francisco Weed Management Area  
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Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan  
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Save the Redwoods League  
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Silicon Valley Land Conservancy  
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Sonoma County Regional Parks  
Sonoma Ecology Center  
Sonoma Land Trust  
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## Statement of Principles

To ensure a healthy future for vital Bay Area lands and the people who depend on them, we believe that:

- Every resident, current and future, should be able to rely on Bay Area lands to provide clean drinking water, clean air, and protection from disasters like flooding, landslides, and climate change.
- Every resident should be able to live in a walkable neighborhood with affordable homes, good jobs, and reliable public transit, where new development revitalizes the community rather than consuming irreplaceable farmland and natural areas.
- Every resident should have access to fresh, affordable food from local farms and ranches.
- Every resident should live within easy walking distance of a park that is safe and clean, have access to trails connecting cities and parks, and be able to easily reach larger natural areas like regional parks, beaches, and forests.
- Every resident should have the opportunity to help decide how to sustain their community and natural areas, and should benefit from the health of both.

The benefits of achieving these goals transcend regional boundaries.

Bay Area lands contribute to the health of the entire state, and we have an obligation to maintain them for all Californians—now and in the future.

Many of these lands are endangered. That's why we must take steps now to create a future where the benefits of the Bay Area's natural fabric are truly shared by everyone. We are committed to acting—through our own work, through partnerships, and with local, regional, and state policy makers—to make this vision a reality.

## Methods: Identifying Vital Lands

In 2006, Greenbelt Alliance and the Bay Area Open Space Council convened a group of land conservation leaders to map important Bay Area lands and to create a coordinated strategy to protect them.

The group held a series of meetings for all nine counties asking local experts—land managers, county officials, and biologists—to identify valuable lands, the benefits those lands provide, and the threats they face. The process was innovative: working together, participants digitally mapped unprotected areas, using a live geographic information system (GIS) database projected on whiteboards.

This method directly captured experts' local knowledge and created a previously unavailable data set. Greenbelt Alliance and Bay Area Open Space Council staff compiled the data, then worked with each county to refine and add to the data to create a regional picture of important lands to conserve and their benefits.

By summer 2008, the group had identified unprotected landscapes—watersheds, working farms and ranches, community greenbelts, wildlife habitat, and recreation areas—with significant value to the Bay Area and the state. These are presented here in *Golden Lands*.

This regional picture is a crucial first step toward helping dozens of organizations work together to set priorities, decide which lands can be protected through policies and which should be purchased, and—ultimately—save the most land in the most effective way.

### Data Sources

Data sets used in the mapping process include:

- Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, California Department of Conservation—boundaries of important farmland and urbanized areas in all nine counties
- Bay Area Protected Areas Database—lands owned in fee or easement that are managed for open space values and off-limits to development
- Regional Trails—San Francisco Bay Trail, Bay Area Ridge Trail, California Coastal Trail
- Base Data—natural and jurisdictional features such as county and city boundaries, highways and roads, water bodies, and topography



Photo: Ken Smith Photography



## Our Golden Opportunity

The San Francisco Bay Area's iconic landscapes provide more than beautiful vistas. They are vital to the health and prosperity of the region—and the state.

### The Benefits of Bay Area Lands

Bay Area lands support the region's \$400 billion economy and contribute to California's quality of life.

- Bay Area watersheds provide clean water for people and wildlife, and some drain into the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta, which supplies drinking water to 24 million Californians.
- Farms and ranches provide fresh, local, affordable food.
- Community greenbelts make cities and towns more livable by encouraging development within their boundaries.
- Diverse habitats support a broad array of native plants and animals—many endangered or threatened.
- Parks and trails help California's families stay healthy and draw a talented workforce.

### Facing the Challenges

A network of vital Bay Area lands is a great asset to our region and state, but it is not a guarantee. Habitat degradation, climate change, and development pressures pose serious threats.

The Bay Area faces great change: an estimated 1 million more people will call the region home by 2020. To accommodate this growing population while maintaining a strong, diversified economy and a healthy environment, we must act now to ensure that our land continues to provide for our way of life.

### A Coordinated Strategy for Conservation

Greenbelt Alliance and the Bay Area Open Space Council have assembled experts from land trusts, park districts, environmental nonprofits, and government agencies throughout the region to

identify vital Bay Area lands and create a coordinated, strategic approach to protecting them.

### Key Actions

These key actions are needed to preserve these lands:

#### Create Access

Provide parks that are safe, clean, and easy to reach, to ensure that open space benefits are shared by all.

#### Fund Conservation

Increase funding for land purchases, conservation easements, and stewardship to protect essential natural areas and keep them healthy and functioning.

#### Adopt Strong Policies

Create policies and programs that protect privately held lands—including farms, ranches, and forests—and support their care and restoration, to safeguard their public benefits.

### Poised for Success

The Bay Area is well positioned to make the most of initiatives and investments in these areas. In addition to the mapping and strategic planning work led by the Bay Area Open Space Council and Greenbelt Alliance, the Association of Bay Area Governments and other regional agencies have identified priority conservation areas as part of their blueprint for growth. The result is a remarkable level of consensus about what needs to be done and a collective commitment to making it happen.

### The Time Is Now

This is a time of great challenge, and it is the time we most need to lead. We can secure a network of vital Bay Area lands that supports people and wildlife, helps us to cope with climate change, supports our health and our economy, and makes the state's natural heritage accessible to all Californians. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to leave a legacy.



Strong leadership has protected key watershed lands around the Bay Area, providing stunning settings for outdoor activities, preserving essential wildlife habitat, and ensuring clean waterways that supply drinking water and support healthy fish populations.

“The quality of our drinking water is only as good as the watersheds it passes through. If we want clean water, we need to protect our land.”

– Ann L. Riley, San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board

WATERSHEDS:

# Clean Water for People and Wildlife



## Threats »»» Opportunities

Protected, well-managed Bay Area watersheds will mean lower costs for water treatment and storage, more fish, and fewer damaging floods. We can conserve these lands if we:

**Increase funding for acquisition and careful management** of key watershed lands to safeguard our drinking water.

**Plan for conservation across political boundaries** to reduce the need for water filtration and flood management.

**Support the protection and stewardship of private lands** around waterways to reduce erosion, protect water quality, and support healthy fish and wildlife populations.

Voters across California consistently cite water quality and supply as a critical issue. Preserving watershed lands is an essential step in addressing their concern.

## Healthy Watersheds Reduce Flooding

Soil and plants in protected watershed lands act like a sponge, naturally limiting flood danger by absorbing and slowly releasing storm water. Paved surfaces lack this capacity—water flows over them, unabsorbed, at much greater volume and speed, breaching barriers and overwhelming drainage systems.

Paving even 10% of a landscape can cause serious problems. Keeping watershed lands unpaved and healthy reduces the need for expensive flood-prevention engineering as well as the costs of repairing flood damage—and limits threats to human life.

Healthy Bay Area watersheds are fundamental to safeguarding California's limited water resources, now under increasing strain from development and climate change. These lands filter a portion of the region's water supply, and some feed into the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta—a source of drinking water for 24 million Californians. Conserving and managing these lands will help to ensure adequate supplies of clean water for people and wildlife.

Bay Area watersheds provide many benefits:

### **Clean Drinking Water**

These lands catch and filter rainwater and replenish groundwater supplies.

### **Reduced Costs**

Functioning watersheds reduce the need for costly infrastructure by storing water and naturally filtering polluted runoff.

### **Wildlife and Fisheries**

Watershed lands provide habitat

for threatened and endangered species and protect the aquatic ecosystems that sustain fisheries.

The benefits of our watersheds are unique, and these ecosystems cannot be replaced: manmade infrastructure is at best an expensive and incomplete substitute. As part of ensuring California's long-term prosperity, we must protect, restore, and carefully manage the Bay Area's vast network of watershed lands.





Sweet corn from Contra Costa, beef from Alameda, wine grapes from Napa, tomatoes from Solano, mushrooms from San Mateo and Santa Clara, and cheese from Marin and Sonoma are just a few of the Bay Area's contributions to California's agricultural bounty.

Photo: Jan Hecking

“Maintaining agriculture in the Bay Area would help secure the future availability, quality, and affordability of food in the region and the state.”

– Edward Thompson, Jr., American Farmland Trust

WORKING FARMS AND RANCHES:

# Healthy Local Food



## Threats »»» Opportunities

Between 1984 and 2006, nearly 200,000 Bay Area agricultural and grazing acres were lost.\* Development is disproportionately claiming the best land: 1 in 4 acres of the Bay Area's best farmland is threatened, compared with 1 in 10 total acres, according to Greenbelt Alliance's *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt* research.

To save what remains, we must:

**Promote land-use policies** that contain urban growth and prevent

subdivision of agricultural lands.

**Keep farmers and ranchers in business** by reducing costs and barriers to farming, helping products get to market, and compensating farmers for the public benefits their land provides.

**Protect privately held agricultural lands** through easements, zoning, and other innovative tools such as agricultural parks and conservation districts.

\* California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program



## Sonoma County Dairies Face Challenges

Sonoma County's 100,000-acre coastal dairybelt produces high-quality food for hundreds of thousands of nearby residents—along with Marin dairies, enough to provide 41% of milk and cheese consumed in the greater Bay Area. Challenging economics, however, have led to the loss of 26 Sonoma

County dairies in the past decade. To help remaining farmers stay in business, conservation organizations have purchased agricultural easements on more than 21,400 acres. Additional incentives and technical assistance are needed to preserve this important local food source and way of life.

Farming and ranching are integral to California's identity and economy—people across the country are nourished by the Golden State every day. And the Bay Area is a significant agricultural region, producing 1.3 million tons of food annually (more than enough to feed San Francisco).<sup>†</sup>

Bay Area farms and ranches benefit the state and region in several ways:

### Revenue

Bay Area agriculture earned \$1.4 billion in 2006, according to county agricultural commissions. That's just the net value of the product when it leaves the farm or ranch—food processing and food-related tourism and jobs multiply that impact.

### Market Innovation

The Bay Area's leadership in delivering local food directly

to residents through farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, and restaurants enhances California's reputation for innovation.

### Self-Sufficiency

Bay Area farms produce enough food to meet one-fifth of the region's demand.<sup>†</sup> Regional self-sufficiency is particularly important with a changing economy and fluctuating fuel prices.



<sup>†</sup>Think Globally – Eat Locally: San Francisco Foodshed Assessment. 2008. American Farmland Trust, Sustainable Agriculture Education, and Agriculture in Metropolitan Regions. Food comparison by weight; does not consider distribution across food groups.





Photo: Stephen Joseph



Photo: Karen Parry

Protected green space around communities preserves surrounding hills and scenic views and helps local farms stay in business. Greenbelts can also help direct investment into city centers, to revitalize downtowns and create inviting neighborhoods.

“Greenbelts help guide development into existing cities and towns, making them more attractive and more sustainable. That’s in everyone’s best interest—the business community included.”

– Matt Regan, Bay Area Council

COMMUNITY GREENBELTS:

# The Secret to Vibrant Cities and Towns



## Threats »»» Opportunities

More than 63% of Bay Area cities with unprotected greenbelts lack urban growth boundaries, and many that have them are vulnerable to county policies that allow development of open space. Without action, the vitality of these communities will be compromised.

To protect greenbelts, we must:

**Adopt urban growth boundaries** at the city and county levels.

When these boundaries are well

defined, long-lasting, and under voter control, they protect natural assets and community health.

**Increase land acquisition funding** locally to leverage state funds and help preserve surrounding hills and open space in perpetuity.

**Provide incentives for infill** and city-centered growth to encourage sustainable development and protect natural areas.

## Southern Santa Clara at Risk

Southern Santa Clara County illustrates the risks of unprotected greenbelts. Lands surrounding Morgan Hill, San Jose, San Martin, and Gilroy contain important wildlife corridors, the Pajaro River watershed, and some of the last stretches of Santa Clara Valley's fertile farmland. Many of these areas are threatened

by encroaching development pressures. Protecting natural assets and maintaining the character of these communities will require strong city and county growth policies, the purchase of key portions of wildlife corridors, and support for local farming.

Community greenbelts—parks, farmland, and other natural areas surrounding cities and towns—play an important role in creating vibrant communities. They help build thriving local economies, reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and improve public health. They do this by:

### Attracting Visitors, Residents, and Businesses

Greenbelts provide recreational

opportunities and define distinct communities. These features make cities and towns appealing places to live and visit.

### Limiting the Need to Drive

Creating protected greenbelts is a critical first step toward encouraging infill development and robust central business districts.

Both allow people to drive less and walk more, reducing emissions from cars and trucks.

### Helping People Stay Healthy

Walkable neighborhoods and nearby outdoor recreation areas encourage healthy lifestyles.

An extensive study found that with a 10% increase in nearby green space, people have fewer physical complaints and better mental health<sup>†</sup>



Photo: LandPaths, www.LandPaths.org

<sup>†</sup>"Nature and Health: The Relation between Health and Green Space in People's Living Environment," paper presented at the conference "Cultural Events and Leisure Systems." 2001. Sjerp de Vries, Robert A. Verheij, and Peter P. Groenewegen.





Photo: Stuart B. Weiss

With a foundation of protected lands to build on, strong local political support, and scientific planning (see right), the Bay Area is well positioned to make the most of conservation resources and provide habitat for species like the burrowing owl and Bay checkerspot butterfly.

“Connecting and expanding protected areas acts as an insurance policy for maintaining our quality of life. Healthy ecosystems support healthy people and communities.”

– Dr. Healy Hamilton, California Academy of Sciences

WILDLIFE HABITAT:

# Unique Ecosystems to Save



## Threats »»» Opportunities

The Bay Area’s remarkable biodiversity is eroding: the San Francisco metropolitan area contains 257 plant and animal species threatened by development—the most among the nation’s 35 fastest-growing metropolitan areas.\*

The path to preserving this biodiversity is clear:

**Protect and connect habitats** using land purchases, conservation easements, and cooperative

agreements with ranchers and forest owners.

**Promote land-use policies** that direct development away from natural areas and protect resources to prevent habitat fragmentation and destruction.

**Provide resources to restore and maintain** natural areas on public and private lands to allow imperiled species to recover and prevent invasives from displacing rare plants and animals.

\* *Endangered by Sprawl*. 2005. National Wildlife Federation, Smart Growth America, and NatureServe.

## Project Puts Biodiversity on the Map

The San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals Project, led by the Bay Area Open Space Council, is bringing scientists and land managers together to identify lands vital to maintaining the Bay Area's biodiversity.

Mountain by mountain, valley by valley, the project is mapping the habitats—and the

connections between them—that are needed to sustain healthy plant, fish, bird, and other wildlife communities. With this information in hand, public agencies, conservation nonprofits, and others can develop scientifically grounded conservation and restoration strategies.

*(See draft map, below left; more information at [www.uplandhabitatgoals.org](http://www.uplandhabitatgoals.org).)*

The Bay Area is a rare ecological gem: It is one of the six most important biodiversity hot spots in the nation, according to The Nature Conservancy. With only 5% of California's land, the Bay Area supports 33% of the state's natural communities.

Preserving and restoring this extraordinary environment is both an ecological imperative and in our self-interest.

A network of healthy habitats contributes to:

### **Coping with Climate Change**

Intact, functional habitats provide environmental resilience. Forests remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, wetlands buffer rising tides, and wildlife corridors allow animals to migrate to adjust to climate changes.

### **Economic Competitiveness**

Healthy fisheries fuel California's

commercial and sportfishing industries. Open spaces rich with native plants and animals attract tourists and a talented workforce that values nearby nature.

### **California's Enduring Appeal**

Walking through towering redwood forests, watching shorebirds swoop into tidal flats, spotting hawks on family camping trips—experiences like these are why people love California.





Photo: LandPaths, www.LandPaths.org



Enhanced parks and trails would help California deliver on the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. This calls for giving all children the opportunity to discover California's past, play in a safe place, camp under the stars, explore nature, learn to swim, play on a team, follow a trail, catch a fish, and celebrate their heritage.

“Our greenway has had a ripple effect. It's inspired economic revitalization and larger-scale plans—to bring in new housing, open space, retail, and community resources.”

– Fran Martin, Visitacion Valley Greenway Project, San Francisco

PARKS AND TRAILS:

# Healthy People and Economy



## Threats »»» Opportunities

The Bay Area can tap strong public support for parks to realize key opportunities:

**Close gaps** in the regional park system. For example, full protection of Franklin Ridge and Franklin Canyon would close a significant gap in the Bay Area Ridge Trail, completing part of the Carquinez Strait Scenic Loop Trail's bicycle-pedestrian path between Contra Costa and Solano counties.

**Keep all parks safe**, clean, and inviting by funding ongoing maintenance and community engagement strategies.

**Provide better access** to parks and trails by creating walking and biking paths to local parks and providing public transit to more distant natural areas.

## Bay Trail Knits Counties Together

Linking 47 cities in all nine Bay Area counties and ultimately crossing all major bridges, a completed Bay Trail would be a 500-mile pathway rivaled by few others worldwide.

Nearly 2.7 million people and 1.8 million jobs are within two miles of the trail, making it convenient not only for hiking, jogging, skating,

and wildlife watching but also for cycling or walking to work—healthy, climate-friendly commute options that also relieve traffic.

The Bay Trail enjoys widespread public support, but is only 60% complete. It will take \$191 million to make the vision a reality.

Bay Area parks and trails are lively and well-used public spaces—the Golden Gate National Recreation Area alone draws more than 13 million people a year, making it California's most visited national park. These protected open spaces attract residents and tourists, yielding public health and economic benefits for the region and the state.

Plentiful, accessible parks and trails result in:

### **A Stronger Economy**

Muir Woods, Golden Gate Park, and other famed landscapes help make California a top tourist destination. Accessible parks and trails also contribute to a high quality of life that attracts a strong workforce, encouraging businesses to locate and stay here.

### **Healthier Kids and Adults**

Studies show that people exercise more when outdoor recreation spaces are nearby, and the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has called for creating more parks and playgrounds to help fight the obesity epidemic.

By expanding our network of parks and trails and keeping them in peak condition, we can make sure the state has a solid foundation for business growth and meets the needs of a growing population.



# Successful Regional Planning: Complementary Efforts Identify Areas for Conservation

**“By naming Priority Conservation Areas,  
FOCUS took a crucial step toward making  
the *Golden Lands* vision a reality.”**

– Amy Hutzler, San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program,  
State Coastal Conservancy

The Bay Area is well positioned to make the most of conservation funding and policy support, due to coordinated regional efforts.

*Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity* identifies the Bay Area lands that provide public benefits—watersheds, farmlands, greenbelts, habitat, and parks and trails—and the actions needed to ensure they continue providing those benefits.

This complements a regional initiative called FOCUS, which identifies Priority Conservation Areas: specific targets for conservation within five years. These areas are a subset of the lands identified in *Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity*. The FOCUS process highlights priorities for conservation in the near term through purchases and easements. *Golden Lands* offers a comprehensive picture of Bay Area lands that need protection over the long term and could be protected through a variety of strategies—policies as well as purchases and easements.

## FOCUS on Conservation and Development

FOCUS is a multiagency effort led by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, with support from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. It is partially funded by a state Blueprint Grant.

The FOCUS initiative considers both conservation and development to address climate change, transportation, housing, the economy, and other issues that transcend boundaries. Local governments apply to have certain areas designated as priorities for conservation or development, making them more competitive for funding from regional agencies. The initiative encourages land conservation and compact development within established communities.

## Collaboration and Vision

In identifying Priority Conservation Areas, FOCUS has drawn on the mapping process informing *Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity*. FOCUS reconvened many of the same nonprofits and agencies to evaluate the applications for Priority Conservation Areas for their

regional significance, level of consensus, and urgency. This collaboration brought additional county and regional perspectives to bear while also streamlining the process.

The result is a regional blueprint for conserving natural areas and guiding development. This blueprint allows coordinated action by local governments, land trusts, and other organizations; minimizes redundant efforts; and ensures that conservation funding goes to the highest-priority lands.

## A Model of Regional Planning

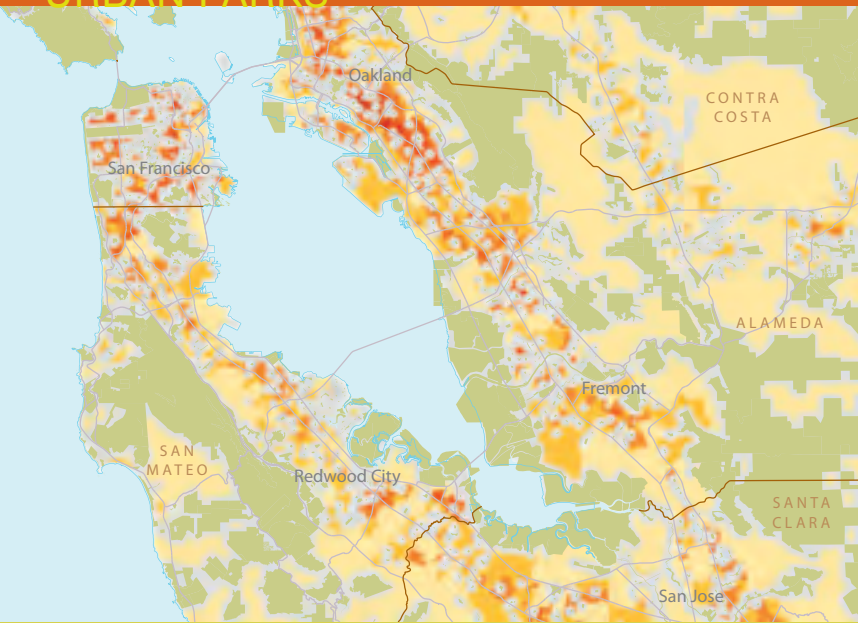
The entire process—regional agencies prioritizing short-term actions as part of a long-term plan, in facilitated collaboration with conservation professionals—can and should be replicated by other regions.

Ultimately, the Bay Area could be a model for the nation in accommodating growth while protecting the natural assets that define a place and enable it to thrive.



**The FOCUS initiative identifies priority areas for development and conservation; the near-term conservation priorities complement the longer-term needs identified in *Golden Lands*.**





The Trust for Public Land's Bay Area Park Equity Analysis reveals that many communities throughout the region lack easy access to parks. The darker the red on this map, the greater the need.



## Diverse, Accessible Urban Parks Help Cities Thrive

Green spaces within cities are as important as those surrounding them. Parks take up carbon emissions, keep cities cooler, and help manage storm runoff. They give children a much-needed place to play outside. And they serve as a community living room—a place to relax, celebrate, and hold events. We can help Bay Area cities thrive by making sure all residents have safe, clean parks nearby.

### Opportunities

- **Provide funding to maintain parks**—and involve residents in their care—to keep parks safe, clean, and inviting.
- **Support many types of green spaces**—from urban creeks to sports fields and playgrounds to community gardens—to allow parks to serve the whole community.
- **Require that parks be located no more than a 10-minute walk from every resident's home** to ensure easy access for all.

### Public Support

California voters care: they approved nearly \$13 billion in conservation funding—including money for parks and playgrounds—from 1988 to 2008.

### Key Indicator

62% of Bay Area children under 15 do not live within walking distance of a park, and low-income neighborhoods are particularly underserved, according to the Trust for Public Land.



Photo: LandPaths, www.LandPaths.org

## San Francisco County Renowned Parks, Rare Natural Areas Attract Locals, Tourists

With beaches, wetlands, Golden Gate Park, a substantial portion of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and significant habitat for native plants and animals, San Francisco has exceptional natural resources. It also has exceptional need: it's the nation's second most densely populated city, but the neighborhoods with the most people have the least parkland.

### Opportunities

- **Create more parks**, natural areas, and places to play by ensuring that open space and ecological preservation are priorities in development and planning projects.
- **Manage the network of natural areas** throughout the city to preserve and connect rare habitat, restore creeks, and give children access to wild places.
- **Complete the Blue Greenway**, a 13-mile corridor along the city's southeastern waterfront that will bring green space, recreational opportunities, and Bay access to an underserved part of the city.



### Population

2005: 796,000 | 2020 projection: 857,000

### Conservation in Action

The Crissy Field restoration transformed the former Presidio airstrip into a thriving tidal marsh, learning center, and popular place to bike, run, and play. It involved thousands of volunteers plus public and private funding.

**Golden Gate Park alone gets about 15 million visitors each year, nearly half of them nonresidents, and city lands support more than 300 species of native plants.**



Marin County

»»» Gems Like Mt. Tam, Point Reyes Show Value of Conservation

Marin County is a leader in preserving its natural heritage, from the rugged Point Reyes coast, to farm and bay lands, to Mount Tamalpais. As a result, the Mount Tamalpais watershed supplies 75% of eastern Marin’s clean water, the public has access to hundreds of miles of trails, and local farms provide fresh food to the region. The priorities now are filling in gaps and keeping these lands healthy.

Opportunities

- **Close gaps in Marin’s protected lands system** to preserve 15,000 acres of habitat, complete wildlife and trail corridors, and save wetlands.
- **Actively maintain natural areas**—including controlling invasive plants and erosion—to help protect Marin’s streams, such as Lagunitas Creek, a rare remaining coho salmon run.
- **Permanently protect** 60,000 acres of farmland from nonagricultural development to allow Marin to keep producing locally farmed food.



Population

2005: 253,000 | 2020 projection: 271,000

Conservation in Action

Restoration of Tiburon Ridge lands should preserve six imperiled plant species, thanks to the open space district’s work with the cities of Tiburon and Belvedere to acquire two key areas once slated for development.

Over 45% of North American bird species are found at Point Reyes National Seashore. Many stop there as they migrate along the Pacific Flyway.

Sonoma County

Rural Character Survives With Help From Key Policies

Sonoma County’s diverse landscapes—redwood forests and oak woodlands, rivers and wetlands, vineyards, grasslands, and small farms—are remarkably well preserved. This is largely due to urban growth boundaries around eight of nine cities and an open space district that helps to preserve farms. The keys to maintaining this natural bounty are protecting watershed and greenbelt lands and avoiding subdivision of agricultural lands.

Opportunities

- **Guide growth into existing cities** and prevent inappropriate development to help preserve Sonoma County’s rural character.
- **Support farming** with agricultural easements and policies to ensure local food production and preserve prime farmland.
- **Adopt policies that protect wetlands and forests** from conversion to higher-intensity land uses, to help preserve biodiversity and local water sources.



Population

2005: 479,000 | 2020 projection: 535,000

Conservation in Action

Sonoma County’s agricultural and open space district used conservation agreements connecting six farms and other properties in the Laguna de Santa Rosa to form a protected greenbelt between Santa Rosa and Sebastopol.

Sonoma County’s 470,000 acres of forests and woodlands sequester an estimated 2.3 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year—the equivalent of 400,000 cars.



## Napa County

# Premier Wine Region Values Vineyards, Valley, Biodiversity

Napa put California wine on the world map, and the Valley's grapes regularly draw the state's highest average price per ton. Quick to recognize the value of its vineyards—as well as its exceptional biodiversity and water resources—Napa was the first Bay Area county to establish strong protection for agriculture, which led to today's city-centered growth policies. The challenge now is to preserve the county's natural abundance and expand opportunities for people to enjoy it.

### Opportunities

- **Fund Napa's newly created park district** to take an essential step toward increasing public access to nature.
- **Tighten growth controls** to halt fragmentation and loss of agricultural lands stemming from rural development.
- **Develop trails**, like the Napa Crest and Napa River trails, to provide opportunities for enjoyment and education.



### Population

2005: 134,000 | 2020 projection: 148,000

### Conservation in Action

Napa voters committed to protecting farmlands and natural areas by approving 1990's Measure J, which requires a citizens' vote to develop these lands. In 2008 Measure P extended the policy, protecting 540,000 acres for 50 years.

The wine industry generates \$9.5 billion annually for Napa County, according to a 2005 study by MKF Research for Napa Valley Vintners.

## Solano County

# Wetlands, Farmland, Hills Can Thrive With Focused Action

Oak-studded hills, miles of riverfront, and the Suisun Marsh—which contains more than 10% of California's remaining natural wetlands—give Solano outstanding wildlife habitat and watersheds. It also has abundant productive farmland, thanks in part to county policies that help direct growth into cities. Suburban expansion threatens these resources, however, and the diverse population has little access to open space.

### Opportunities

- **Help farmers** build value-added operations and provide economic incentives to keep farming. These essential steps will preserve Solano's valuable agriculture sector—the county's second-largest economic driver.
- **Create an open space district**—Solano is the only Bay Area county without one—to preserve farm and grazing land and provide much-needed public access to the outdoors.



### Population

2005: 422,000 | 2020 projection: 515,000

### Conservation in Action

Conservation groups are working to acquire easements—with local, state, and federal funding—for prime agricultural lands between Dixon and Davis, protecting a successful economic enterprise while keeping the two cities distinct.

Solano agriculture's value was over \$268 million in 2007, up nearly 15% from 2006, according to the July 2008 Solano County Annual Crop and Livestock Report.



Photo: Scott Hein, www.heinphoto.com



Contra Costa County

Suburban Meets Rural At the Foot of Mt. Diablo

Contra Costa’s intricate landscape ranges from Mount Diablo to a fertile patchwork of farmland and ranchland. Its many watersheds support over 1,100 species, and drain into an aquatic ecosystem that stretches from San Pablo Bay to the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta. Directing growth into existing towns will help preserve these outstanding natural resources.

Opportunities

- **Stop subdivision** and development of farms, ranches, and natural areas to preserve wildlife corridors and agricultural heritage.
- **Prevent development on Delta watershed lands** to protect California’s drinking water and help preserve a fragile ecosystem.
- **Build parks and trails on the North Richmond shoreline** to give underserved residents opportunities to enjoy the Bay.
- **Preserve Concord Naval Weapons Station open space** to protect habitat and enable easy access to nature via BART.



Population

2005: 1.02M | 2020 projection: 1.16M

Conservation in Action

The Environmental Studies Academy in Martinez is creating the next generation of environmental problem solvers with a science-based curriculum for at-risk high school students that includes restoring Alhambra Creek.

Contra Costa’s agricultural core grows 45 crops, including stone fruit, vegetables, olives, wine grapes, and more than enough fresh sweet corn to feed the Bay Area.

Alameda County

Expanding Focus From Hills To Urban Parks, Rural Lands

Alameda County’s long record of successful conservation efforts includes protecting scenic East Bay hills and ridgelines and creating much-loved parks. Among the key needs now are preserving the county’s rural areas—a mosaic of ranchlands, vineyards, and wildlife habitat—and meeting the demand for urban parks in the county’s densely populated west.

Opportunities

- **Curb sprawl in the Tri-Valley area** to preserve habitat for rare and endangered species, conserve working lands, and protect the Livermore groundwater basin and watersheds—especially the rare alkali sink ecosystem.
- **Invest in urban parks** to ensure that all city residents have accessible, clean, safe places to gather and play outdoors.
- **Protect the Bay shoreline**, Alameda Creek, and their watersheds to increase public access and preserve sensitive aquatic habitat.



Population

2005: 1.5 M | 2020 projection: 1.7 M

Conservation in Action

The East Alameda County Conservation Strategy brings together city governments and county, state, and federal agencies to create a conservation blueprint for more than 271,000 acres in the upper Alameda Creek Watershed.

The golden eagle, red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, burrowing owl, and San Joaquin kit fox are among Alameda County’s rare and endangered animals.



Photo: Karl Gohl, Courtesy of MRQSD



## Santa Clara County Diverse Natural Areas Face Growth Challenge

The home of Silicon Valley was originally known for its agricultural abundance. That heritage remains in Gilroy’s famed garlic harvest and the 388,000 acres of rangeland that define Santa Clara County’s landscape, along with urban creek corridors and oak woodlands. The county is the Bay Area’s fastest-growing and is an economic engine for the state—protecting its natural areas is key to maintaining its appeal.

### Opportunities

- **Create an interconnected system of open spaces** to enable wildlife migration, trail connections, and continued farming.
- **Increase public access to open space**, especially near fast-growing areas, to help Santa Clara County continue to attract a talented workforce and ensure that all communities benefit.
- **Protect watershed lands** to safeguard the county’s water supply for a growing population.



### Population

2005: 1.76 M | 2020 projection: 2.08 M

### Conservation in Action

The South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project—the largest tidal restoration on the West Coast, totaling 15,100 acres—will bring back wildlife, provide flood protection, and enhance access to San Francisco Bay.

## San Mateo County Accessible Coast, Forests Sustain People and Wildlife

San Mateo County’s spectacular coastline lies within easy reach of 3 million people. The county is home to old-growth redwood forests, rare species, prime farmland, and four regional north-south trails. With the protection of key corridors and careful stewardship, we can preserve these lands for generations.

### Opportunities

- **Protect the coast** to safeguard watersheds, help complete skyline-to-sea trails, preserve wildlife migration corridors, and support the county’s unique coastal agriculture.
- **Restore baylands and urban creeks** (many now diverted to culverts and pipes) to provide essential habitat.
- **Prevent subdivision and large-lot residential development** to help protect up to 40,000 acres of farmland and natural areas.
- **Fund park maintenance** to keep San Mateo’s natural areas healthy and accessible to the public.



### Population

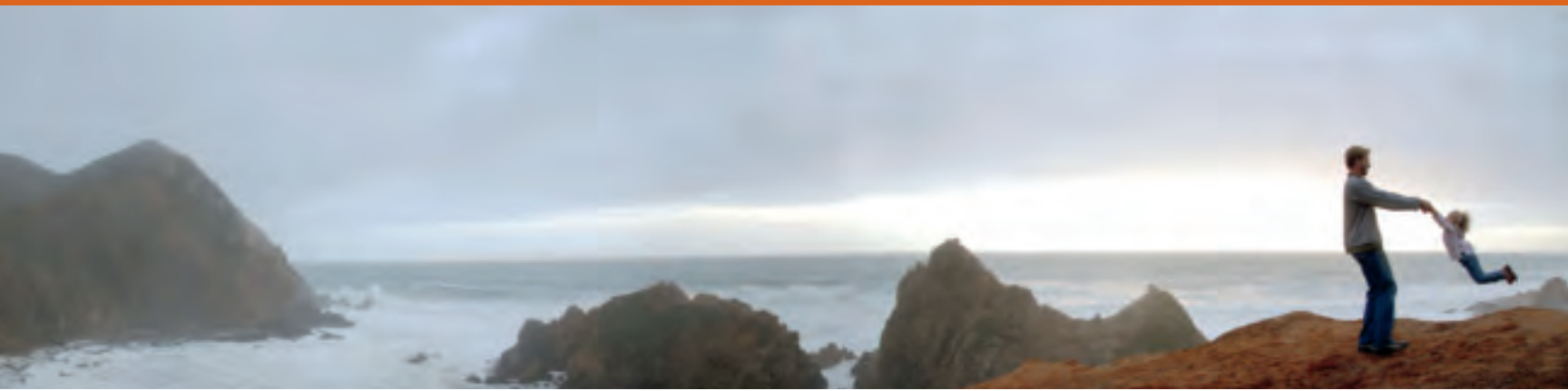
2005: 722,000 | 2020 projection: 801,000

### Conservation in Action

The first habitat conservation plan in the nation, adopted in 1983, protects several endangered and threatened native butterfly species in San Bruno Mountain State and County Park.

Santa Clara County contains 31 of California’s 61 habitat types, from coastal scrub to redwood forests to blue oak woodlands.

San Mateo County parks and open space areas record more than 5 million visits every year.



## Take Action: Preserve Vital Bay Area Lands for All Californians

The Bay Area's vital lands provide clean water, fresh food, inviting places to play, and habitat for wildlife. They define communities; attract businesses, workers, and visitors; and provide a strong economic foundation for the region and the state.

These lands are threatened, and their ability to provide benefits—already unequally distributed—is increasingly compromised. Farmers are having trouble making a living. Plants and animals are losing the places they need to survive. Children are not getting the opportunities they need to get close to nature. And climate change is raising the stakes.

**The message is clear: we need to act now to preserve the irreplaceable natural resources that belong to every Californian.**

The Bay Area is ready to take on the challenge—with the help of legislators and funders. These strategies are essential to success:

### **Ensure that the Bay Area's open space benefits all of the region's residents equally.**

- **Give more people access** to open space by requiring that a park be located no more than 10 minutes by foot or bike from every resident's home.
- **Make sure parks serve community needs** and are well maintained, safe, and clean by increasing stewardship funding and engaging community members.
- **Put nature within reach of all** residents and visitors by providing public transit from cities to beaches, forests, and other recreation areas.

### **Protect and maintain vital Bay Area lands through acquisition, conservation easements, and ongoing stewardship.**

- **Ensure that we can purchase and steward** threatened lands by increasing funding for those purposes. Sources include new and existing bonds, local measures, and budget appropriations at all levels of government.
- **Preserve privately held natural areas** and agricultural lands by increasing funding for conservation easements.
- **Maximize conservation investments** by aligning local initiatives, including mitigation of development impacts, with regional conservation objectives. Coordinate efforts early on to deliver the most value.

### **Adopt strong policies to protect and maintain Bay Area lands.**

- **Protect natural areas and working lands** with local land-use policies and plans that define where development should and should not occur.
- **Preserve local food supplies** and the agricultural economy by supporting strategies to improve the financial health of farms and ranches.
- **Protect water supplies** and reduce flooding by promoting watershed-scale planning.
- **Encourage private owners to preserve** their lands' ecological values through policies and incentive programs that support ongoing stewardship.

**The time to act is now: the health of our families, our communities, and our environment is at stake.**



[info@golden-lands.org](mailto:info@golden-lands.org)

“Preserving Bay Area open space  
is a natural first step to  
fight global warming and build  
better communities for us all.”

– Mary Nichols, California Air Resources Board

“The level of regional collaboration  
that made this work possible will  
ensure that each dollar invested  
in the Bay Area’s vital lands will  
provide maximum benefits—for our  
natural systems and our residents.”

– Michael A. Mantell, Resources Law Group



[www.greenbelt.org](http://www.greenbelt.org)



[www.openspacecouncil.org](http://www.openspacecouncil.org)



[www.abag.ca.gov](http://www.abag.ca.gov)