PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREA **REFRESH**
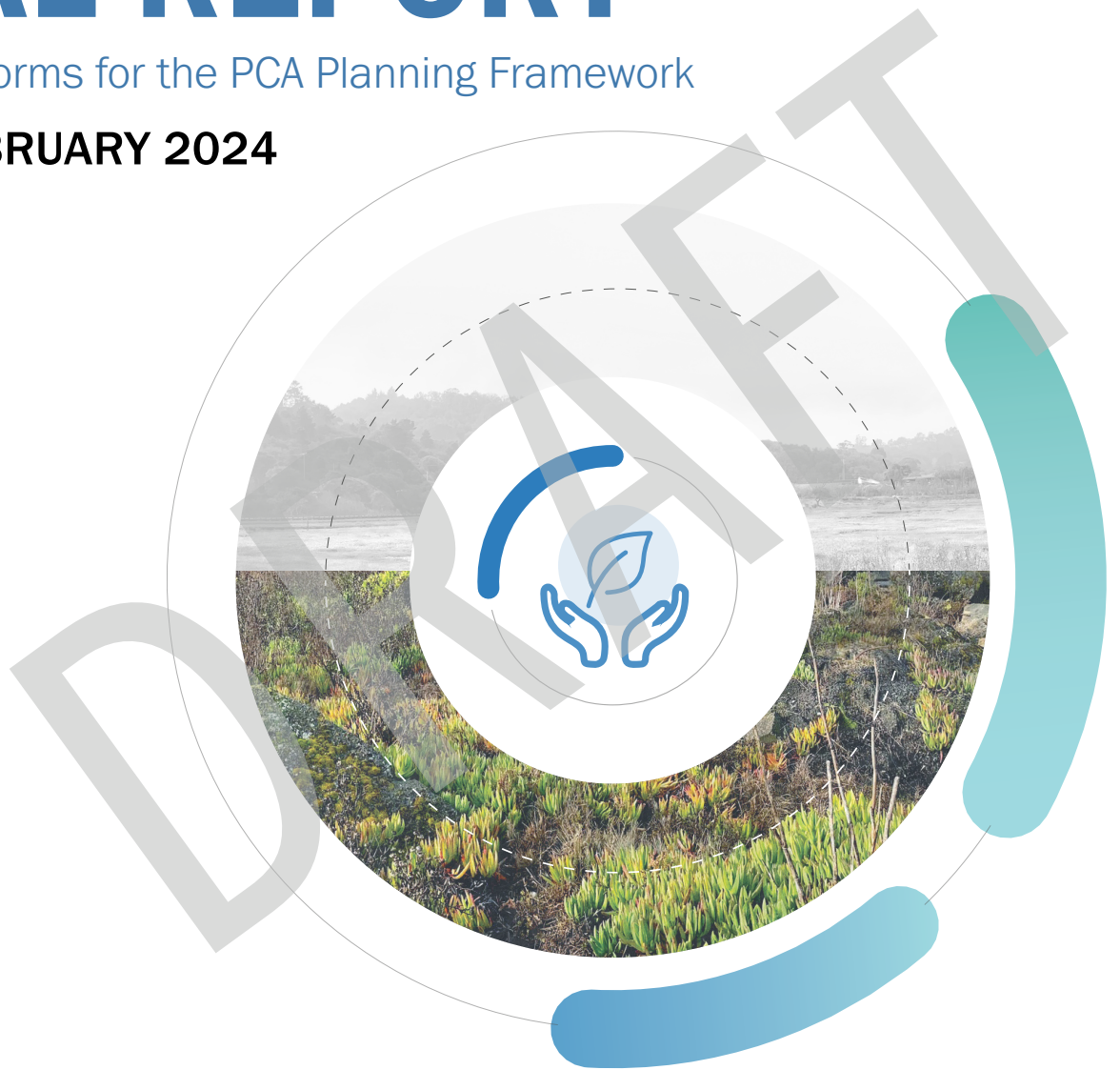
FINAL REPORT

Proposed Reforms for the PCA Planning Framework

DRAFT - FEBRUARY 2024

CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MTC/ABAG STAFF

FUNDING

CONSULTANT TEAM

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01
BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

The natural landscapes, unique microclimates, and varied park options are part of what makes the Bay Area a special place to live. These natural features enable high levels of ecosystem biodiversity, a dynamic local food system, and a variety of recreation options. Recognizing these values, past generations of Bay Area stewards have protected nearly one-third of the region for open space and agricultural uses. Over the decade ahead, state and regional goals aim to further strengthen such protections.

In 2007, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area

Governments (ABAG) developed a regional land use planning framework based upon Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs). Over the past seventeen years, ABAG has designated 185 PCAs over four different nomination cycles, Figure 1 outlines key PCA milestones. With the PDAs going through a major update in 2019 as part of Plan Bay Area 2050, MTC/ABAG committed to update PCAs next.

Like PDAs, PCAs are a set of geographic areas that can be used to target where planning, policy, and implementation activities are needed. To date, PCAs have been used to award grants to support implementation in specific locations. With a refreshed PCA Framework, staff anticipate linking PCAs with Plan Bay Area 2050+ environmental strategies aimed at preserving natural and working lands, ensuring greater access to recreation and nature within cities, and adapting to climate change.

The process to nominate PCAs is also an opportunity to coordinate conservation efforts and forge new partnerships.

In spring 2022, MTC received a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program grant from the California Department of Conservation. The PCA Refresh sought to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current PCA framework, articulate a vision for next-generation PCAs, establish clear goals and objectives for PCAs, incorporate a wider range of policy concerns into the planning framework, and develop data and mapping tools available to program partners. Since fall 2022, MTC/ABAG staff has worked with stakeholders to explore how PCAs have functioned to date, to develop reforms to address the limitations of the existing PCAs, and to create a Framework for PCAs 2.0 that better align with state and regional policy goals.

PCA Inception
2007

PCA Nominations
2008, 2013, 2015, 2019, 2024

Minor PCA Update
Incorporation of Urban Greening
2014

PCA Grants
2014, 2019, 2024

PCA Refresh
2022-2024

FIGURE 1 - TIMELINE OF PCAs
Key milestones of the PCA program.

02
CHALLENGES WITH EXISTING PCAS AND RECOMMENDED REFORMS

The Refresh began by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the existing Framework. The most notable bright spot was the development of the PCA grants as part of the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) Program. These OBAG grants, in partnership with California State Coastal Conservancy funding have invested over $30 million in PCAs to date, with a new round of funding available later this year.

A number of challenges with existing PCAs were identified, many of which limited their use by MTC and ABAG. Inconsistencies and the limited data structure of PCAs have prevented their application in regional planning and limited their use in analyses that could lead to advocacy or technical assistance. Figure 2 highlights how the challenges of the existing framework have limited the use of PCAs and how the reforms
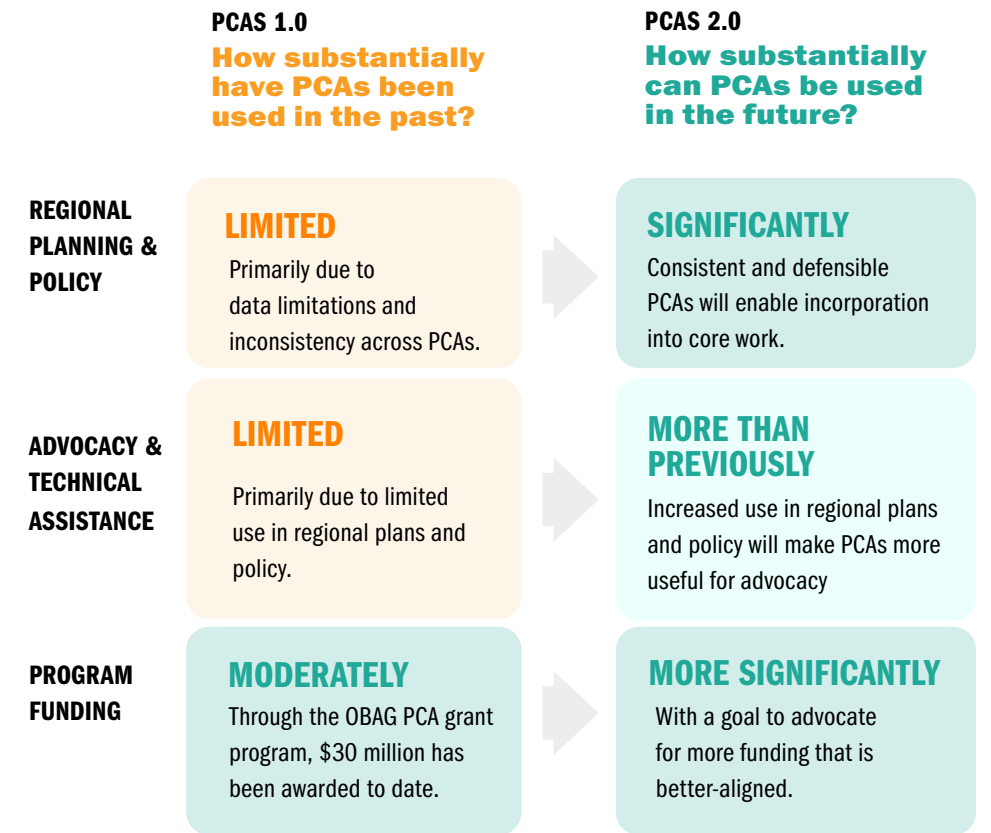
aim to enable their use beyond PCA grants.

The greatest challenge with the prior PCA planning framework was that PCAs were too loosely defined and roughly mapped. The limited structure of existing PCA definitions and geographies has prevented their broader incorporation into regional work. Additionally, key policy priorities, new data, and better coverage of PCAs can help refresh the seventeen-year-old Framework. Figure 3 highlights the six overarching challenges identified by analyzing the existing PCAs and listening to stakeholder feedback. This figure also highlights a matched

set of reforms to address past deficiencies and incorporate new priorities.

The proposed reforms aim to provide clarity and structure that enable broader use of PCAs in a greater array of regional initiatives, while still allowing local flexibility to elevate local conservation priorities like specific species biodiversity or farm-to-market access into the regional conservation fabric. While the reforms are described individually, they are reliant on one another to create the desired structure to fully address the identified challenges. The following sections provide additional details on each reform.

	How substantially have PCAs been used in the past?	How substantially can PCAs be used in the future?
REGIONAL PLANNING & POLICY	**LIMITED** Primarily due to data limitations and inconsistency across PCAs.	**SIGNIFICANTLY** Consistent and defensible PCAs will enable incorporation into core work.
ADVOCACY & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	**LIMITED** Primarily due to limited use in regional plans and policy.	**MORE THAN PREVIOUSLY** Increased use in regional plans and policy will make PCAs more useful for advocacy
PROGRAM FUNDING	**MODERATELY** Through the OBAG PCA grant program, $30 million has been awarded to date.	**MORE SIGNIFICANTLY** With a goal to advocate for more funding that is better-aligned.

FIGURE 2 - USE CASES FOR PCAs
How PCAs have previously been used and how they could be used in the future.

CHALLENGES

- **The existing PCA definition is inconsistent with how PCAs are used and funded.** How PCAs had been designated and funded over the past decade-plus was not fully aligned with a "protect-only" definition for the program. There was also confusion about what it meant for a PCA to overlap with existing communities or growth geographies (e.g. Priority Development Areas).

- **Climate adaptation and equity are not directly incorporated into PCAs.** Starting as feedback during the Plan Bay Area 2050 Implementation Plan, stakeholders desired a PCA Refresh that would emphasize equity and climate adaptation along with biodiversity.

- **PCAs have poorly defined geographic boundaries.** The limited specificity of geographic boundaries makes it difficult to incorporate the lands into analysis, planning, and advocacy efforts. Overlapping boundaries make analysis and summarization a challenge.

- **PCA types are inconsistently applied in the region.** Many

PCAs were simultaneously designated as all four PCA types: Natural Lands, Working Lands, Recreation, and Urban Greening. In some cases, this comprehensive designation may have been appropriate, but when explored regionally, the network of lands within a single PCA type were too varied to be used for planning and analysis.

- **Existing PCAs have incomplete coverage across the region.** Stakeholders recognized that the majority of communities in the region had not nominated PCAs as part of the four prior nomination cycles and that there was inconsistent PCA coverage across the region. While not every jurisdiction needs to nominate PCAs, there was concern key areas were left out of the Framework.

- **Existing PCA funding is too restricted and insufficient to meet the needs.** The amount and flexibility of existing PCA grant funds was shared as a key implementation challenge by stakeholders during early engagement on the PCA Refresh.

REFORMS

- **Refine the PCA definition to be clearer and reflect how they are used in practice.** The revised definition broadens PCAs from a protection-only framework to one that allows enhancement activities as well. This change removes any perceived conflict between PCAs within an existing community and growth geographies. It also ensures farm-to-market access, habitat restoration, or trail improvement enhancement projects continue to be covered by the PCA definition.

- **Add climate adaptation as a new PCA type and incorporate equity into each PCA type.** Climate adaptation and equity were key policy priorities raised from the beginning of the process. They are directly incorporated into the framework to complement biodiversity, which has existed since the first PCA Framework.

- **Ensure PCAs have accurate and verified geographic boundaries.** Having accurate and adjoining PCA boundaries will enable their greater use in regional analysis and planning going forward.

PCAs 1.0
Too little structure

	The existing PCA definition is inconsistent with how PCAs are used and funded.
	Climate adaptation and equity are not directly incorporated into PCAs.
	PCAs have poorly defined geographic boundaries.
	PCA types are inconsistently applied in the region.
	Existing PCAs have incomplete coverage across the region.
	Existing PCA funding is too restricted and insufficient to meet the needs.

PCAs 2.0
Data-supported and structured

	Refine the PCA definition to be clearer and reflect how they are used in practice.
	Add climate adaptation as a new PCA type and incorporate equity into each PCA type.
	Ensure PCAs have accurate and verified geographic boundaries.
	Ensure PCA type consistency with eligibility maps.
	Incorporate regionally-identified PCAs to complement local nominations.
	Elevate PCAs for new funding with the refreshed Framework.

FIGURE 3 - EXISTING PCA CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED PCA REFORMS
Six reforms that add data and structure to PCAs are proposed to address challenges with the existing PCA Framework.

- **Ensure PCA type consistency with eligibility maps.** Eligibility maps for each PCA type were developed to ensure greater consistency within types across the region. In total, over 30 mapping datasets were used to create the five maps, one for each PCA type. An expansive approach was taken when developing the maps, providing sufficient structure to enable the use of PCAs for planning, technical assistance and funding, while also allowing for local flexibility. The eligibility maps are not intended to reduce the coverage

of PCAs, but instead they are included to ensure regional cohesion.

- **Incorporate regionally-identified PCAs to complement local nominations.** Plan Bay Area 2050 broadened the Priority Development Area program to a set of growth geographies that include regionally-identified areas. Mirroring that approach, integrating regionally-identified PCAs will help ensure that regionally-significant and regionally-connective conservation opportunities

are part of the Framework. Regionally-identified PCAs are designed to complement locally-nominated PCAs with both sharing the same use and importance.

- **Elevate PCAs for new funding with the refreshed Framework.** While there is not a specific funding reform within the Framework, we anticipate the structured and consistent approach that leverages the best available data has the potential to improve competitiveness for federal, state, and other regional funds.

03
ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON THE RECOMMENDED PCA REFORMS

ESTABLISHING A PCA VISION AND UPDATING THE PCA DEFINITION

As part of the PCA Refresh, staff developed a vision to reflect the value of biodiversity and natural resources in our open space and agricultural lands. It also highlights the importance of ensuring resiliency and equitable access.

The original PCA definition would be updated to capture the inclusion of climate adaptation as a fifth PCA type, and to broaden PCAs from a "protect only" definition to one that also recognizes the need for enhancement of areas. Examples of enhancement activities include, but are not limited to, habitat restoration, public access improvements, and regenerative agricultural practices or farm-to-market access.

This shift in definition to include enhancement will bring the PCA definition into line with many of the activities the PCA program has supported previously, like habitat restoration or access improvements. The new definition also recognizes all five PCA types and formalizes the inclusion of climate adaptation as a PCA type. While the overarching definition for PCAs is broader than before, significant structure is added to the Framework by setting specific objectives and corresponding data standards for each PCA type, described in the reforms on page 10 and 11.

PROPOSED VISION

By the year 2050, the Priority Conservation Area Program will ensure the region's biodiversity, natural resources, open spaces, agricultural lands, clean water and clean air are resilient to a changing climate and enjoyed by all.

PROPOSED DEFINITION

Priority Conservation Areas are locations nominated by cities, counties, and park/open space districts and designated by ABAG for protection and enhancement of natural lands, working lands, areas of recreation, urban greening, and climate adaptation needs.

Prior Definition
Priority Conservation Areas are locations nominated by cities, counties, and park/open space districts and designated by ABAG for natural habitat protection and open space preservation.

INTEGRATION OF EQUITY, BIODIVERSITY, AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION THEMES INTO THE PCA FRAMEWORK

The Refresh process elicited thoughtful conversations about critical issues facing the Bay Area, the State, and populations living in PCA geographies. There was broad consensus amongst stakeholders that the PCA program must better support broad policy measures. Each issue that follows has influenced PCA definitions and objectives.

EQUITY

Equity emerged as a critical value to inform the PCA Framework and has been embedded across each PCA type. For Urban Greening and Recreation types, the Equity Priority Communities, as defined by MTC, are integrated into the mapped objectives. These are place-based approaches – the mapped interaction between these communities and the location of Urban Greening and Recreation is identified and elevated. In contrast, the Natural Lands and Working Lands PCA types highlight programmatic approaches to achieve equitable outcomes. Programmatic outcomes are not place-based in that they advance equity more broadly. For example, advancing equity factors in Working and Natural Lands may be most impactful by ensuring access between farmworker housing and jobs on Working Lands, or supporting initiatives that work to broaden representation in ownership and land stewardship.

BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity of the state's flora and fauna is facing continued challenges that are exacerbated by climate change. California's 30x30 program sets a mandate for conservation of land for the ecological protection of species. The PCA Refresh recognizes these goals. The Natural Lands PCA type remains the primary conduit for habitat protection and enhancement for greater biodiversity. Biodiversity is also listed as a co-benefit potential across the other four PCA types. On Working Lands, grazing lands can offer incredible habitat potential for a range of species. Urban Greening can advance biodiversity by planting native species and can emphasize riparian corridors through cities. Recreation can be planned in ecosystem sensitive manners, and Climate Adaptation can be advanced in ways that assist species adapting to the changing climate.

CLIMATE

Climate change is bringing immense challenges to the State and region from sea level rise to wildfire threats. A fifth PCA type, Climate Adaptation, is created as an overlay to the other PCA types to identify nature-based adaptation opportunities in different contexts. Natural Lands can pertain to shoreline marsh habitats that buffer upland areas during storm surges. Working Lands can offer support through climate smart agricultural practices that advance climate resilience through land management. Urban Greening can integrate stormwater into parks and reduce heat through increased tree canopy, while Recreation can support trail linkages that unlock carbon free travel.

MAPPING CLEANUP AND ADDING STRUCTURE TO PCA TYPES

PCAs are a set of geographies aimed at supporting broad conservation efforts. In prior PCA nomination rounds, any geographic area could be nominated and designated as any or all PCA types. This flexibility resulted in a Framework with inconsistencies and conflicts when compared with data related to that designation type. A significant element of the recommended reforms is to add structure to the mapping of PCA types to ensure greater consistency at the regional scale, while still allowing flexibility to nominate local priorities. To add structure, mapped datasets have been combined to set boundaries where minimum criteria are met for each PCA type.

When looked at together, the coverage of the mapped minimum criteria for the five PCA types is still expansive; most of the region's lands remain eligible to be nominated as a PCA, as reflected in Map 1. However, when PCA eligibility is looked at by a single type, the mapped extent is more limited. Where a PCA type is eligible is limited by two factors: (1) whether the underlying datasets are supportive and (2) whether the PCA type is inside or outside city limits or urban growth boundaries.

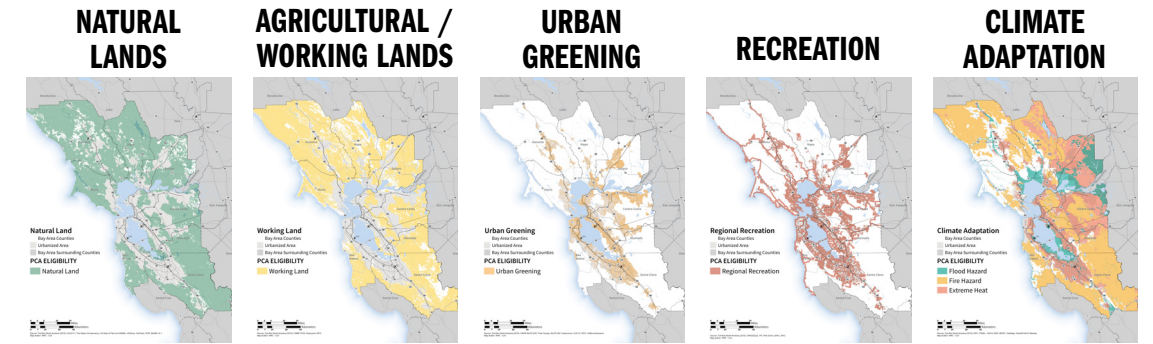The mapped extent of PCA types would be set by:

- Using objective- and science-based data, such as wildlife corridors, prime agricultural lands, tree canopy coverage, park deserts, and wildfire zones. Over 30 datasets are incorporated.
- Delineating PCA types as occuring inside or outside of cities and urban growth boundaries.

The activities associated with a PCA type would be characterized by:

- Defining a type as protective and/or enhancement based, and
- Using programmatic or place-based approaches to advance equity.

Figure 4 summarizes these characteristics for each PCA type. An online PCA mapping viewer enables a clear view of one PCA type at a time and details the underlying data used to develop the eligibility maps. Click to explore the mapping data in greater detail (https://mtc.one/PCAviewer).

The additional structure for PCA types ensures that PCAs are supported by data and importantly draws distinctions about which PCAs are appropriate for urban lands and which PCAs are appropriate in a rural context. Urban PCAs offer opportunity for enhancement activities, while rural areas offer opportunities for acquisition/protection as well as enhancement. The structured PCA types ensure a regionally cohesive Framework that can be used more significantly in regional planning.

	NATURAL LANDS	AGRICULTURAL / WORKING LANDS	URBAN GREENING	RECREATION	CLIMATE ADAPTATION
WHERE DOES THIS PCA TYPE EXIST?					
IN LOCATIONS SUPPORTED BY DATA	●	●	●	●	●
INSIDE CITY LIMITS OR UGB**			●	●	●
OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS OR UGB**	●*	●		●	●
WHAT ACTIVITY IS SUPPORTED BY THIS PCA TYPE?					
PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION	●	●			
ENHANCEMENT	●	●	●	●	●
WHAT APPROACH IS USED TO INTEGRATE EQUITY INTO PCAS?					
PLACE-BASED APPROACHES			●	●	
PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES	●	●			●

* Eligible Natural Lands are inclusive of tidal areas (e.g. tidal wetlands, polder management, and non-urbanized upland migration areas.)
** Where Urban Growth Boundaries exist, they are used; elsewhere, City limits are used. In some rare cases, Urban Service Limits are used.

FIGURE 4 - PCA TYPE CHARACTERISTICS

Criteria for the five PCA types that set where the PCA type exists, what activity is supported by the PCA type, and what approach is used to integrate equity.
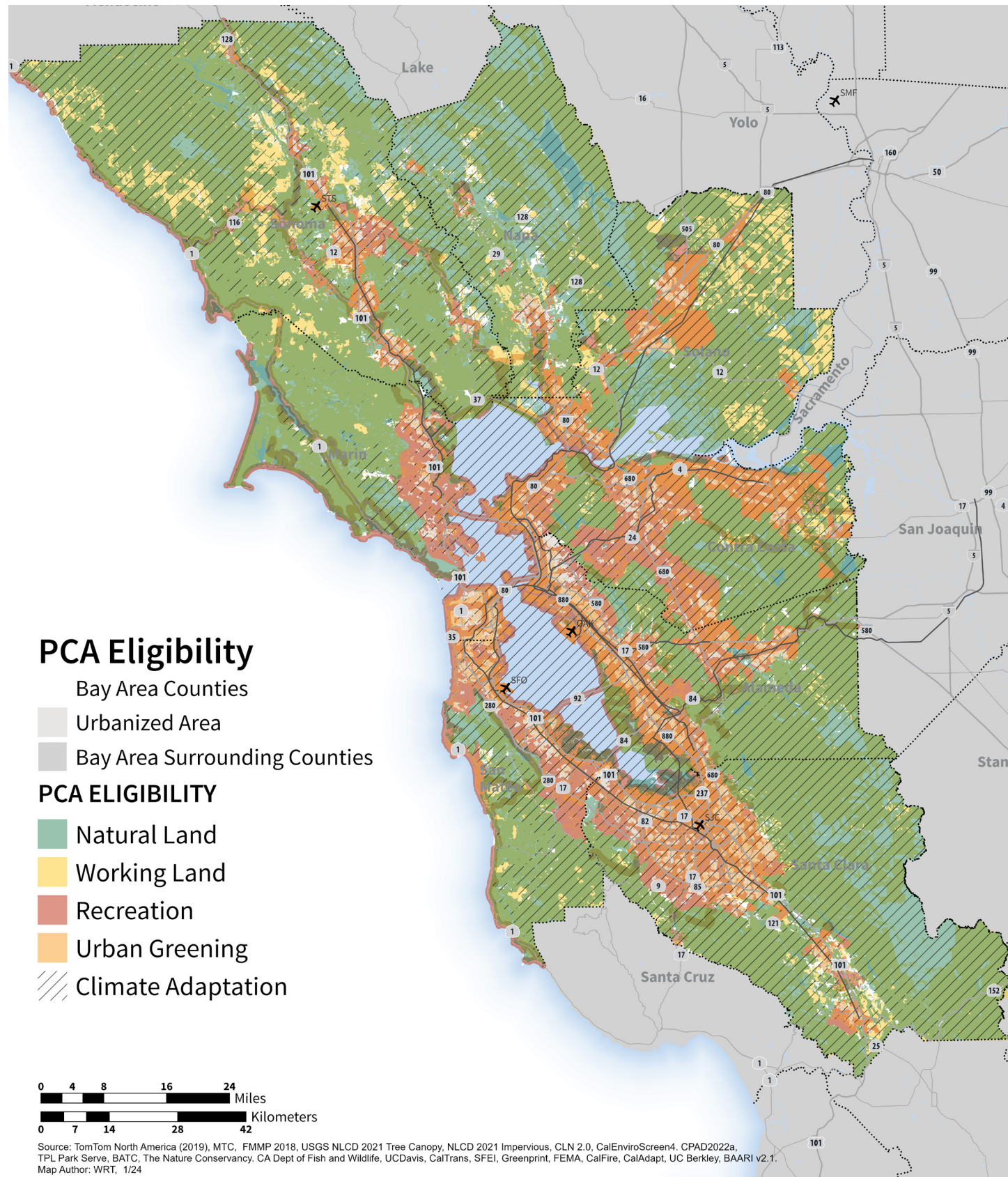
PCA Eligibility

Bay Area Counties
- Urbanized Area
- Bay Area Surrounding Counties

PCA ELIGIBILITY
- Natural Land
- Working Land
- Recreation
- Urban Greening
- Climate Adaptation

Source: TomTom North America (2019), MTC, FMMP 2018, USGS NLCD 2021 Tree Canopy, NLCD 2021 Impervious, CLN 2.0, CalEnviroScreen4. CPAD2022a, TPL Park Serve, BATC, The Nature Conservancy. CA Dept of Fish and Wildlife, UCDavis, CalTrans, SFEI, Greenprint, FEMA, CalFire, CalAdapt, UC Berkley, BAARI v2.1. Map Author: WRT, 1/24

MAP 1 - DRAFT PCA ELIGIBILITY
Most of the region remains eligible to be nominated as a PCA to enable flexibility for local jurisdictions and agencies to nominate priority areas. The added structure to the framework limits which PCA types can be 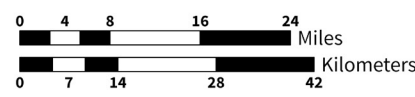nominated in given locations to ensure cohesion within types across the region. PCAs can continue to be nominated as multiple PCA types where eligibility is met for multiple types. For example, there is significant overlap in the eligibility of Natural Lands (teal) and Working Lands (yellow), shown as green on the map.

PCA TYPE OBJECTIVES AND ELIGIBILITY MAPS

The eligibility maps ensure a regionally consistent set of PCA geographies that can be more readily applied to regional plans or deliver a clearer advocacy message to state and federal funders. During the PCA Refresh, two to four written objectives were developed for each PCA type. Each objective was then paired with at least one but often multiple corresponding geographic datasets. Data associated with each PCA type were then combined together to generate the five PCA eligibility maps.

Importantly, it is not the intent for a local agency to nominate all PCA eligible locations. Local nominators are encouraged to use the available underlying data and local goals to prioritize areas to nominate. To keep a reasonable level of flexibility in the process, the eligibility maps are inclusive to allow local agencies to identify priorities.

PCA TYPES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF CITIES AND URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES

In addition to the use of data to set mapped eligibility for each PCA type, the geographic extent of each type is also limited to inside or outside cities and urban growth boundaries. As shown in Figure 4, the Natural Land and Working Land PCA types exist outside of cities and urban growth boundaries, while the Urban Greening PCA types exist inside of cities and urban growth boundaries. Recreation and Climate Adaptation PCA types extend throughout both. Pairing where PCA types are eligible with whether the PCA is protection-focused clarifies the relationship between PCAs and other regional geographies, such as Priority Development Areas, that exist within cities and urban growth boundaries.

One adjustment was made for the Natural Lands PCA type. Because many urban growth boundaries or city limits have boundaries that extend to the bay shoreline or in many cases into the bay, the Natural Lands PCA type was extended inside city limits and urban growth boundaries. This adjustment was

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PCAS AND GROWTH GEOGRAPHIES, INCLUDING PDAS

Like many issues in our complex and diverse region, regional land use frameworks naturally raise some important policy questions. The coastal mountains, bay, and ocean that make the region so special also put significant pressures on the available land between them. The PCA Refresh grappled with these pressures and sought balanced approaches, seeking opportunities to find complementary strategies and areas of synergy whenever possible. By drawing distinctions for each PCA type, the PCA Framework allows for protection and management of key conservation lands in most areas, while identifying a balanced, multi-benefit approach within communities to ensure enough housing is produced to meet the needs of current and future Bay Area residents. Urban Greening, Recreation, and Climate Adaptation PCA types can overlap with growth geographies, recognizing that enhancements advancing goals of each can coexist with thoughtful planning.

made when there was overlap with Natural Land PCA data layers associated with existing marsh, polder management areas, and marsh migration spaces, but not in urban areas or in areas designated as a growth geography. This modification will enable shoreline areas to be nominated as Natural Land PCAs.

PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

Previously, PCAs were described solely as focusing on protection (i.e., acquisition) of lands. Moving forward, enhancement (i.e., habitat restoration, coastal and wildfire resilience, public access) is recognized as an important part of PCA implementation. In the new Framework, Natural Lands and

Working Lands PCA types offer both protection and enhancement opportunity within their definitions. Because these lands are areas outside of city limits or urban growth boundaries, they do not intersect with ABAG/MTC growth geographies. Urban Greening, Recreation, and Climate Adaptation offer enhancement strategies while not being protection focused. These lands may overlap with growth geographies (e.g. Priority Development Areas).

As sea level rise impacts continue to evolve, the changing shoreline is an area that will need refinement over time. MTC/ABAG will continue to work with the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) to integrate outcomes of the Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (RSAP) in the future.

Photo Credit: Karl Nielsen
Napa River and San Pablo Bay

INCORPORATING REGIONALLY-IDENTIFIED PCAS INTO THE FRAMEWORK

Throughout the Refresh process, stakeholders shared that a local nomination process should remain at the heart of the PCA Framework – there are simply too many use cases and needs across the Bay Area's varied and diverse jurisdictions to try and cover through a singular top-down approach. Stakeholders also suggested that a regionally-defined layer be added to help lift up key conservation priorities that were not raised locally.
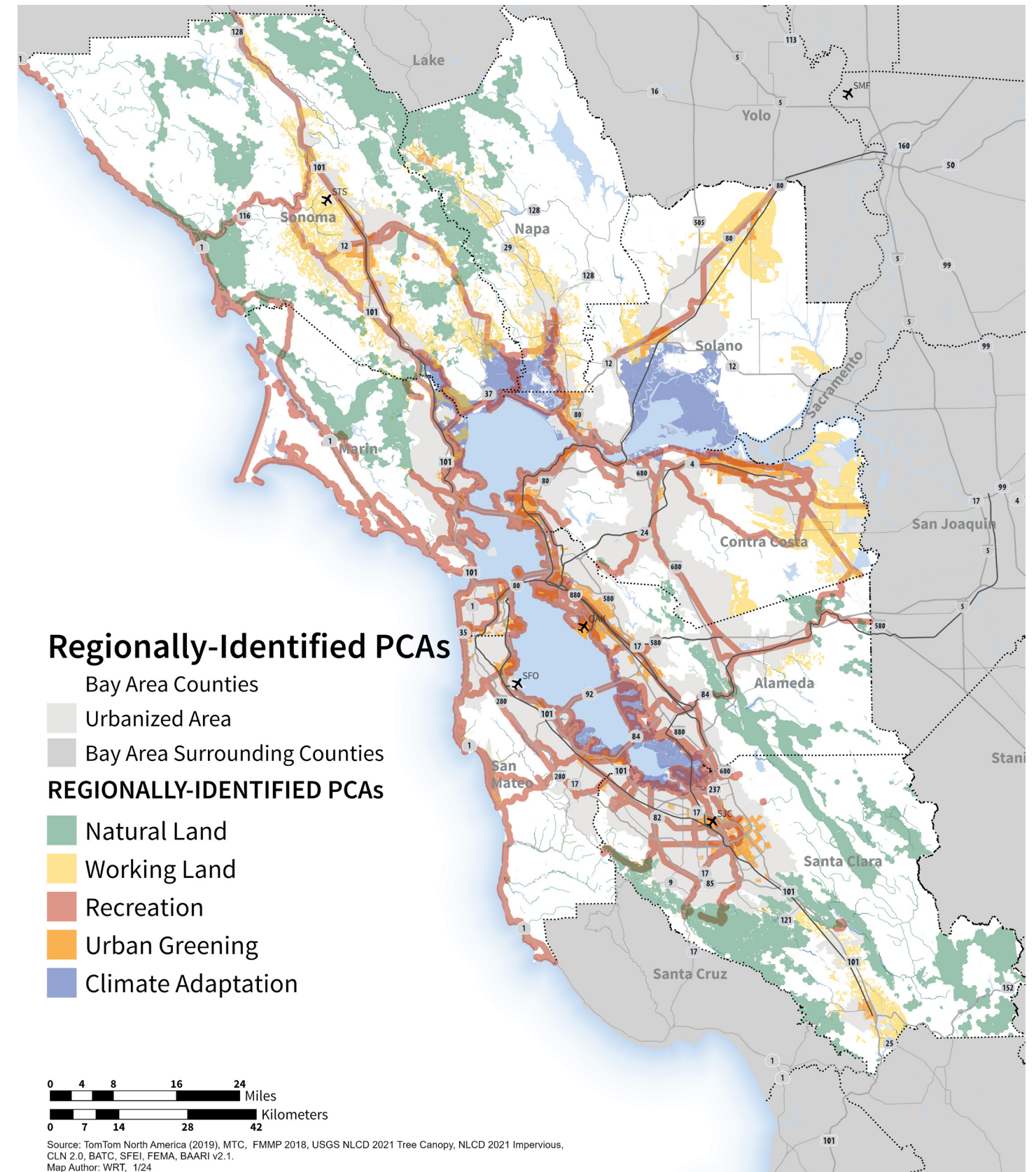
Regionally identified PCAs are recommended to complement local PCA nominations. While the local PCA nomination process is the preferred path to elevate the conservation importance of an area, the regionally identified PCAs are data-driven and of equal importance to ensure a cohesive framework and to ensure communities are not missed. These PCAs, just like

the locally-nominated PCAs, do not have any impact on local land use authority or on property owners – they are meant to inform long-range planning, policy, and technical assistance. Regionally identified PCAs aim to identify regionally-connective or regionally-significant lands for each PCA type. Below are the descriptions of each type, with a resulting draft map of the lands, as shown in Map 2. As part of the next nomination round for PCAs, an updated draft map will be shared with the ABAG Executive Board to designate regionally-identified PCAs at the same time it designates a new round of locally-nominated PCAs.

- Regionally-Identified Natural Land PCAs emphasize areas that advance regional biodiversity connectivity by identifying essential habitats that coincide with wildlife corridors as well as priority streams.

- Regionally-Identified Working Land PCAs emphasize productive agricultural lands nearest urban growth boundaries and city limits most at risk to change.

- Regionally-Identified Urban Greening PCAs emphasize opportunities in Equity Priority Communities where weaving more natural infrastructure can bring the benefits of nature directly to more communities.

- Regionally-Identified Recreation PCAs emphasize regional trails to ensure coverage throughout the region and to unlock their connective potential.

- Regionally-Identified Climate Adaptation PCAs emphasize shoreline marshes, polder management, marsh migration spaces and priority streams at risk of sea level rise outside of existing urban areas.

Together, these regionally-identified priorities cover one-third of the Bay Area. Existing PCAs already cover 43% of the proposed Regionally-Identified PCAs and will remain. At any point as part of a future nomination cycle, a local entity could choose to locally nominate these lands.

Regionally-Identified PCAs

- Bay Area Counties
- Urbanized Area
- Bay Area Surrounding Counties

REGIONALLY-IDENTIFIED PCAS

- Natural Land
- Working Land
- Recreation
- Urban Greening
- Climate Adaptation

Source: TomTom North America (2019), MTC, FMMP 2018, USGS NLCD 2021 Tree Canopy, NLCD 2021 Impervious, CLN 2.0, BATC, SFEI, FEMA, BAARI v2.1.
Map Author: WRT, 1/24

MAP 2 - DRAFT REGIONALLY-IDENTIFIED PCAS

A narrower set of PCA eligible areas are recommended to be included as regionally-identified PCAs to complement local PCA nominations and ensure greater regional cohesion and connectivity in critical areas. Regionally-Identified and Locally-Nominated PCAs will be used the same way for regional planning and analysis. Nearly half of these areas are already designated by existing locally-nominated PCAs which will remain, and local partners will have the opportunity to nominate these areas, if desired, as part of future nomination cycles. Staff anticipate a process later in 2024 to formally adopt Regionally-Identified PCAs.

FUNDING FOR PCAS

Since the PCA inception, MTC and the California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) have jointly disbursed over $30 million in two PCA grant rounds (OBAG 1 and OBAG 2) to support 58 projects in designated PCAs. For OBAG 3, MTC Resolution No. 4505 commits $18 million in federal transportation funds to the Priority Conservation Area Grant Program. Advancing the PCA vision will require expanding funding and partnerships that support the wide range of protection and enhancement activities.

With a refreshed Framework and underlying data supporting PCA types, staff anticipate developing new analyses to support advocacy for state and federal funders – drawing links between PCAs that meet certain funding criteria. PCAs will also be recommended as a tool in directing new funds in the future.

One possible near-term opportunity could connect PCAs to a future regional affordable housing bond measure. As part of the design of a $10 to $20 billion dollar Bay Area Housing Finance Authority bond, the program could support park development in areas with new housing production. If the bond measure is successful in 2024, there would be an opportunity in 2025 to consider how PCAs could help direct resources to new or enhanced parks.

OUTCOMES OF THE SIX REFORMS

Together, the refreshed PCA Framework aims to assist Bay Area governments and agencies in advancing conservation planning efforts, funding projects, and taking action for a healthy, resilient, and equitable Bay Area. The reforms seek to provide clarity and structure that enable the use of PCAs in a greater array of regional planning, policy, technical assistance, and advocacy that aims to result in greater overall investment. The new Framework will:

- Support the implementation of a regional land use pattern which supports the objectives and strategies in Plan Bay Area, as well as applicable state and regional strategies for conservation and climate change adaptation,

- Disseminate scientific information related to conservation that facilitates good policy and planning decisions,

- Enable future analyses that help inform actions to achieve the PCA vision, and

- Leverage the underlying science- and data-supported Framework to connect PCA nominators to funders with shared objectives and priorities.

04
PROPOSED PROCESS TO IMPLEMENT THE PCA REFORMS

Once the proposed reforms receive a final approval from the ABAG Executive Board, staff will work throughout 2024 to implement the changes. To ensure consistent standards across PCAs and address past deficiencies of the current Framework, existing and new PCAs will be evaluated against the new Framework. Evaluation of existing PCAs will be the first step, followed by a phase to work with local partners to amend existing PCAs and update PCA types as needed. After bringing existing PCAs into the new Framework, a nomination round to designate new PCAs will occur. To support these efforts, ABAG/MTC staff will develop mapping viewers and tools to support improved identification and mapping of PCAs. This could include, for example, an online data viewer and template materials, as well as proactive support from MTC/ABAG staff.

PHASE I: EVALUATE AND AMEND EXISTING PCAS

Spring 2024 through Summer 2024

Before opening a call for new PCAs, the existing 185 PCAs will be evaluated with the updated Framework. In some cases, no amendment will be necessary. However, in many cases, limited revisions will be needed to slightly adjust boundaries, while even more significant boundary changes or changes to PCA types may be necessary when circumstances require it. During this phase, MTC/ABAG staff will be available to assist local jurisdictions to identify and develop appropriate amendments.

PHASE II: NOMINATE AND DESIGNATE NEW PCAS

Fall 2024 through Early 2025

After finalizing amendments to existing PCAs in Phase I, MTC/ABAG staff will open a call for new PCA nominations. The same data tool used for amending PCAs will be used to support local partners in exploring PCA opportunities and submitting nominations. Across both phases, MTC/ABAG staff will vet PCA boundaries and PCA Type selections to ensure a consistent Framework and the underlying PCA data is more robust than in previous cycles. As part of this phase, staff will also recommend a set of Regionally-Identified PCAs. The ABAG Executive Board would consider and take action on new PCA nominations at the conclusion of this phase of work.

Visit the ABAG PCA website to track progress on implementing the reforms.