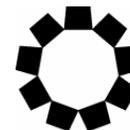


ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS

Representing City and County Governments of the San Francisco Bay Area



ABAG

Date: July 9, 2014
To: ABAG Executive Board
From: Miriam Chion
Planning and Research Director
Subject: **Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Program Update**

Executive Summary

This memo describes a proposed update to the Priority Conservation Area (PCA) program. The update, identified as a priority in Plan Bay Area, is the result of consultation with the ABAG Regional Planning Committee, Administrative committee, and stakeholders. A resolution and supporting materials are attached to the memo.

Recommended Action

Staff respectfully requests that the Executive Board support the recommendations of the ABAG Regional Planning Committee (RPC) by adopting ABAG Resolution No. 12-14 (Attachment D). This addresses the following, which are described in this memo and where necessary in attachments to the memo: a) revised PCA program criteria; b) PCA Designations; c) process for new PCA approvals; d) process for confirming existing PCAs; e) statements of support for expanding funding for the PCA program.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: PCA Designations
- Attachment B: Updated PCA Application
- Attachment C: Map and List of Existing PCAs
- Attachment D: ABAG Resolution 12-14

Background

The Priority Conservation Area (PCA) program was initiated in 2007 to identify Bay Area open spaces that: 1) provide regionally significant agricultural, natural resource, scenic, recreational, and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions; 2) are in urgent need of protection due to pressure from urban development or other factors; and 3) supported by local consensus. The PCAs were established at the same time as the locally nominated Priority Development Areas (PDAs) through the FOCUS program. Together, the PDAs and PCAs have informed the development of Plan Bay Area and implementation initiatives such as the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG).

The PCA program helped spur collaboration between local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations to nominate more than 100 PCAs. Nominations were reviewed by staff, regional committees, and local governments. The ABAG Executive Board adopted the first set of PCAs on July 17, 2008.

The first PCA projects were funded in 2013 and 2014 through OBAG. OBAG provided \$5 million in funding for a competitive program in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties managed by the Coastal Conservancy. Another \$5 million in OBAG funding was divided between the North Bay county Congestion Management Agencies—each of which managed its own program.

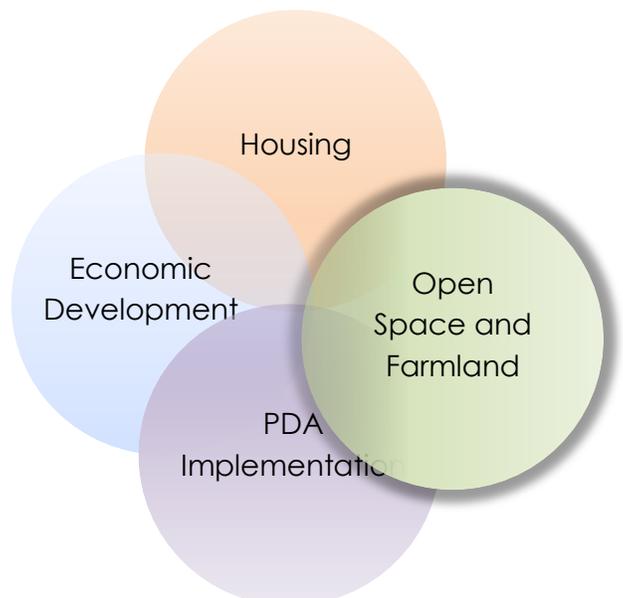
During meetings in 2012 and 2013, the ABAG Regional Planning Committee and Executive Board requested that staff revise the PCA program to provide greater specificity about the qualities and function of different types of PCAs—using an approach more in line with the Place Types utilized to categorize PDAs. In addition, RPC and Executive Board members stressed the importance of urban parks and green spaces. This feedback was formalized in Plan Bay Area, which directs staff to update the program to define the role of different kinds of PCAs and ensure that local jurisdictions are consulted on updates to individual PCAs.

PCA Program Update

As part of the broader Plan Bay Area Implementation effort, over the past six months ABAG staff worked with local jurisdictions, the ABAG administrative committee, the RPC and stakeholders to develop a proposed PCA program update. The update addresses the Open Space and Farmland Plan Bay Area implementation area.

At its April and June 2014 meetings, the RPC reviewed, requested changes to, and recommended for adoption the update presented in this memo and its attachments. The elements of this proposed update are described below.

Figure 1. **Plan Bay Area Implementation Focus Areas**



PCA Program Criteria

The RPC requested that the PCA criteria adopted in 2007 be modified to recognize the importance of urban greening. This proposed change is underlined in the text below:

The intent of the PCA program is to identify Bay Area open spaces that: 1) provide regionally significant agricultural, natural resource, scenic, urban greening, recreational, and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions; and 2) are in urgent need of protection due to pressure from urban development or other factors; 3) and are supported by local consensus.

PCA Designations (Attachment A)

The updated application requires that staff from the nominating agency identify one or more of the PCA designations described in Attachment A. The designations recognize the role of different kinds of PCAs in supporting the vitality of the region's natural systems, rural economy and human health. These include:

- **Natural Landscapes**—areas critical to the functioning of wildlife and plant habitats, aquatic ecosystems and the region's water supply and quality.
Existing PCA Examples: Upper Stevens Creek Watershed Area (Santa Clara County); Napa Valley River Corridor (Napa County); Acalanes Ridge Open Space (Walnut Creek and Lafayette)
- **Agricultural Lands**—farmland, grazing land and timberland that support the region's agricultural economy and provide additional benefits such as habitat protection and carbon capture.
Existing PCA Examples: Suisun Valley (Solano County); Napa County Agricultural Lands and Watersheds (Napa County); Coastal Agriculture area (Sonoma County)
- **Urban Greening**—existing and potential green spaces in cities that increase habitat connectivity, improve community health, capture carbon emissions, and address stormwater. Many existing and likely Urban Greening areas are not within PDAs. *Existing PCA Examples:* East Bay Greenway (Oakland/San Leandro/Hayward/Unincorporated Alameda County); Hercules Waterfront (Hercules); and Palou-Phelps, Bayview park/open space connector (San Francisco)
- **Regional Recreation**—existing and potential regional parks, trails, and other publicly accessible recreation facilities.
Existing PCA Examples: Bay Trail (multi-county, multi-jurisdiction); Boethe-Napa Valley State Park to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park (Napa County); Russian River Access (Sonoma County)

Attachment A also identifies benefits and potential co-benefits for each designation (i.e. wildlife and plant habitat, agricultural economy). New PCA applicants are required to discuss how the PCA provides these benefits—referencing data and maps. As noted above, ABAG will work with staff from the nominating agency of existing PCAs to identify a designation and benefits. ABAG will provide resources (e.g. maps, databases, etc) to assist applicants in this process, drawing upon data published by federal and state sources as well as scientific research.

Process for new PCA approvals (Attachment B)

Attachment B presents an updated PCA application reflecting a revised process for PCA approvals. This requires:

- 1) Adopted resolution of support from the city council, board of supervisors or special district board of the nominating agency
- 2) Map and text describing the general area and boundaries of the PCA
- 3) Selection of one or more PCA designation with text and supporting data
- 4) Copy of public notification of meeting at which resolution was adopted
- 5) Copy of notification sent to all jurisdictions within which the PCA is located

PCA applications may be submitted by jurisdictions or special districts such as open space and park districts. The nominating agency must send notifications to all of the jurisdictions in which the PCA is located. These jurisdictions will have 90 days from receipt of the notification to adopt a resolution of opposition to the PCA. An adopted resolution would invalidate the nomination.

Process for Confirming Existing PCAs

The process for confirming PCAs that have already been adopted by the ABAG Executive Board will involve the following steps:

- 1) ABAG sends a notification to the nominating agency and to jurisdictions in which the PCA is located
- 2) These jurisdictions have 90 days to adopt a resolution of opposition to the PCA. An adopted resolution nullifies the applicable existing PCA
- 3) If no resolution of opposition is submitted to ABAG within 90 days, the existing PCA will be confirmed

In addition to the confirmation process, ABAG staff will work with the nominating agencies to identify the designation applicable to each PCA and the relevant benefits it provides.

Future Funding

The RPC identified the need for additional funding to support the PCA program beyond the previously allocated OBAG pilot program. The RPC requested that the Executive Board adopt a statement of support for expanding funding available to PCA Program.

The RPC also requested that the Executive Board recommend: a) prioritizing future OBAG PCA resources for projects that cannot otherwise be funded with OBAG PDA funds, with the exception of transportation improvements that complete portions of the Bay Trail and other regional trails; and b) prioritize funds dedicated to urban parks for projects within or in proximity to high-need PDAs.

Timeline for PCA Applications and Confirmations

July 2014: Executive Board adoption of PCA application process, confirmation process and designations.

August 1, 2014: Beginning of PCA application and confirmation period.

May 30, 2015: Deadline for PCA applications and confirmations.

June 2015: Following staff review, RPC recommends PCA nominations to the Executive Board for adoption

July 2015: Executive Board adopts PCA nominations recommended for adoption by the RPC.