

# PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREA

# REFRESH

-  STRATEGY EN1  
SEA LEVEL RISE  
ADAPTATION
-  STRATEGY EN4  
URBAN GROWTH  
BOUNDARIES
-  STRATEGY EN5  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS
-  STRATEGY EN6  
PARKS AND  
RECREATION

## PRESENTATION ORGANIZATION

- 1. Introduction and background**
- 2. Overview of PCA challenges and proposed reforms**
- 3. Proposed changes to how PCAs are defined**
- 4. Using data to inform PCAs**
- 5. Next steps**

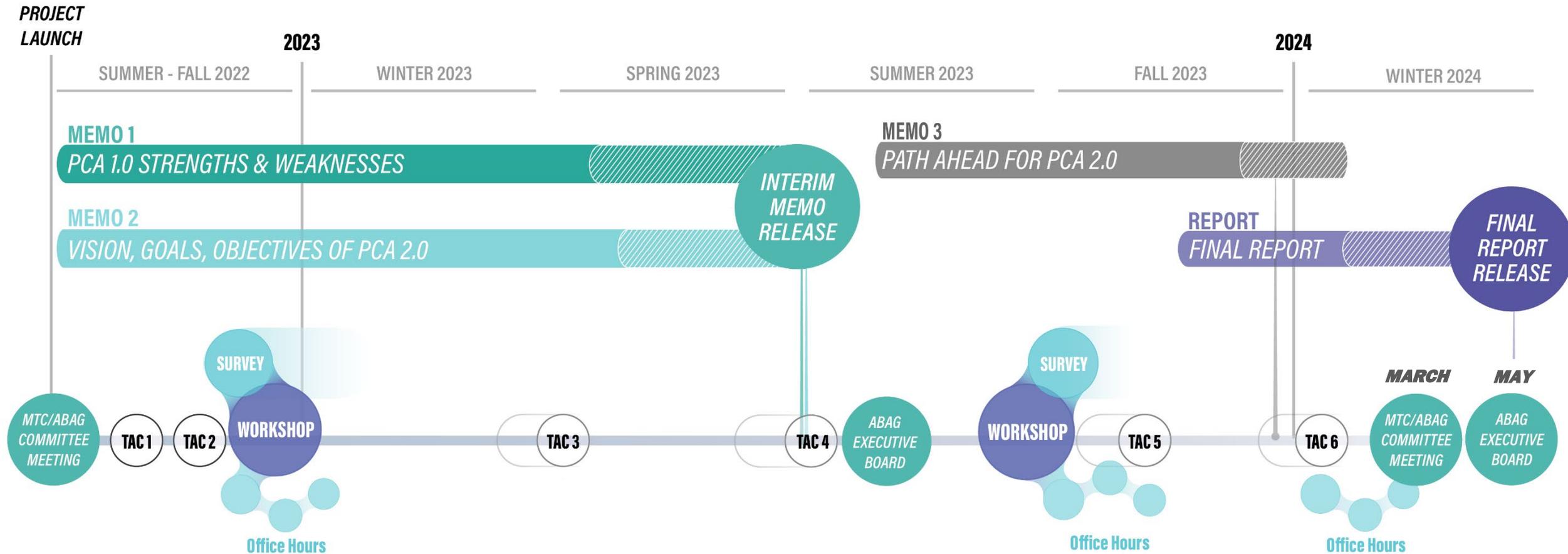


MTC PLANNING COMMITTEE  
Joint meeting with the ABAG Administrative Committee  
MARCH 8, 2024

# PCA Refresh timeline and milestones



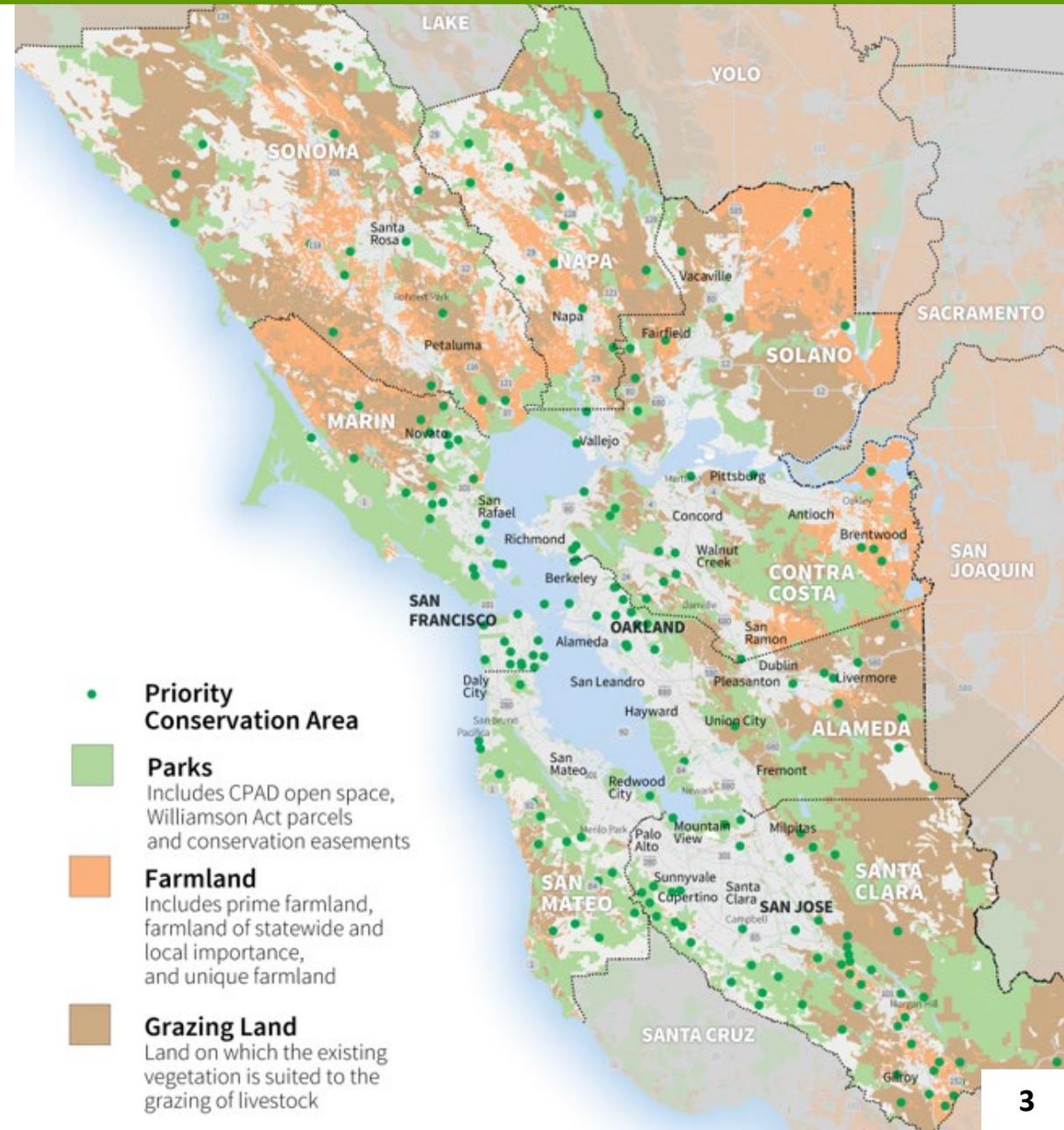
The PCA Refresh began in Fall 2022 and is targeting a final presentation to the ABAG Executive Board in May 2024.



# Background on the PCA Planning Program



- Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) were conceived at the same time as Priority Development Areas (PDAs) as part of a **planning framework established in 2007**.
- PCAs were identified and nominated through a **voluntary, locally-driven** process by cities, counties, and park/open space districts and designated by the ABAG Executive Board.
- Today, the region's **185 PCAs** encompass four primary designations: natural landscapes, agricultural lands, urban greening, and regional recreation.
- MTC and the State Coastal Conservancy administer the parallel PCA Grant Program, which has programmed over **\$30 million** in grants to support PCA projects since 2013.



# How PCAs function today and goals for the future



## PCAs 1.0

How substantially have PCAs been used in the past?

### LIMITED

Primarily due to data limitations and inconsistency.

## PCAs 2.0

How substantially can PCAs be used in the future?

### SIGNIFICANTLY

Consistent PCAs enable incorporation into core work.

### LIMITED

Primarily due to limited use in regional plans and policy.

### MORE THAN PREVIOUSLY

Increased use in regional plans should result in more advocacy.

### MODERATELY

Through OBAG grants program, \$30M has been awarded to PCAs.

### MORE SIGNIFICANTLY

With a goal to advocate for more funding that is better-aligned.

## GOALS OF THE PCA REFRESH

- Implement a regional land use pattern which supports the objectives of Plan Bay Area as well as applicable state and regional conservation strategies.
- Disseminate scientific data regarding conservation and provide platforms for local governments to share best practices and develop shared strategies.
- Provide specific tools and funding analyses for local governments and others.

**REGIONAL  
PLANNING  
& POLICY**

**ADVOCACY &  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE**

**PROGRAM  
FUNDING**

# Proposed PCA reforms



## PCAs 1.0

Too little structure

1



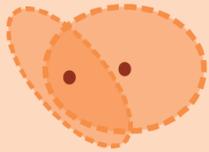
The existing PCA definition is inconsistent with how PCAs are used and funded.

2



Climate adaptation and equity are not directly incorporated into PCAs.

3



PCAs have poorly defined geographic boundaries.

4



PCA types are inconsistently applied in the region.

5



Existing PCAs have incomplete coverage across the region.

6



Existing PCA funding is too restricted and insufficient to meet the needs.

## PCAs 2.0

Data-supported and structured



Redefine PCAs to be clearer and reflect how they are used in practice.



Add climate adaptation as a new PCA type and integrate equity into each PCA type.



Ensure PCAs have accurate and verified geographic boundaries.



Ensure consistency with minimum data standards for PCA types.



Incorporate regionally-identified PCAs to complement local nominations.



The hope is that the product of the other reforms will elevate PCAs for new funding.



## 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.

## 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 regional recreation, urban greening, and climate adaptation needs.

## INTENT BEHIND KEY CHANGES

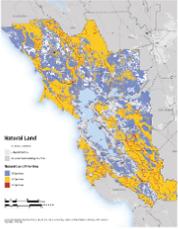
*Biodiversity*, *resilience*, and *equity* are key topics that the Refresh seeks to elevate. The vision acknowledges each with language like: “biodiversity,” “resilient to a changing climate,” “enjoyed by all”.

The prior definition focused PCAs as areas for *protection* only. The updated definition expands to include *enhancement* to match both how PCAs had already been used, as well as how stakeholders would like to see them used.

*Climate adaptation* has been added to the Framework as a fifth PCA type.

# Proposed method to add structure to PCA types



<b>WHERE DOES THIS PCA TYPE EXIST?</b>	 <b>NATURAL LANDS</b>	 <b>WORKING LANDS</b>	 <b>URBAN GREENING</b>	 <b>REGIONAL RECREATION</b>	 <b>CLIMATE ADAPTATION</b>
IN LOCATIONS SUPPORTED BY DATA	●	●	●	●	●
INSIDE CITY LIMITS OR UGB			●	●	●
OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS OR UGB	●*	●		●	●
<b>WHAT ACTIVITY IS SUPPORTED BY THIS PCA TYPE?</b>					
PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION	●	●			
ENHANCEMENT	●	●	●	●	●
<b>WHAT APPROACH IS USED TO INTEGRATE EQUITY INTO PCAS?</b>					
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.)

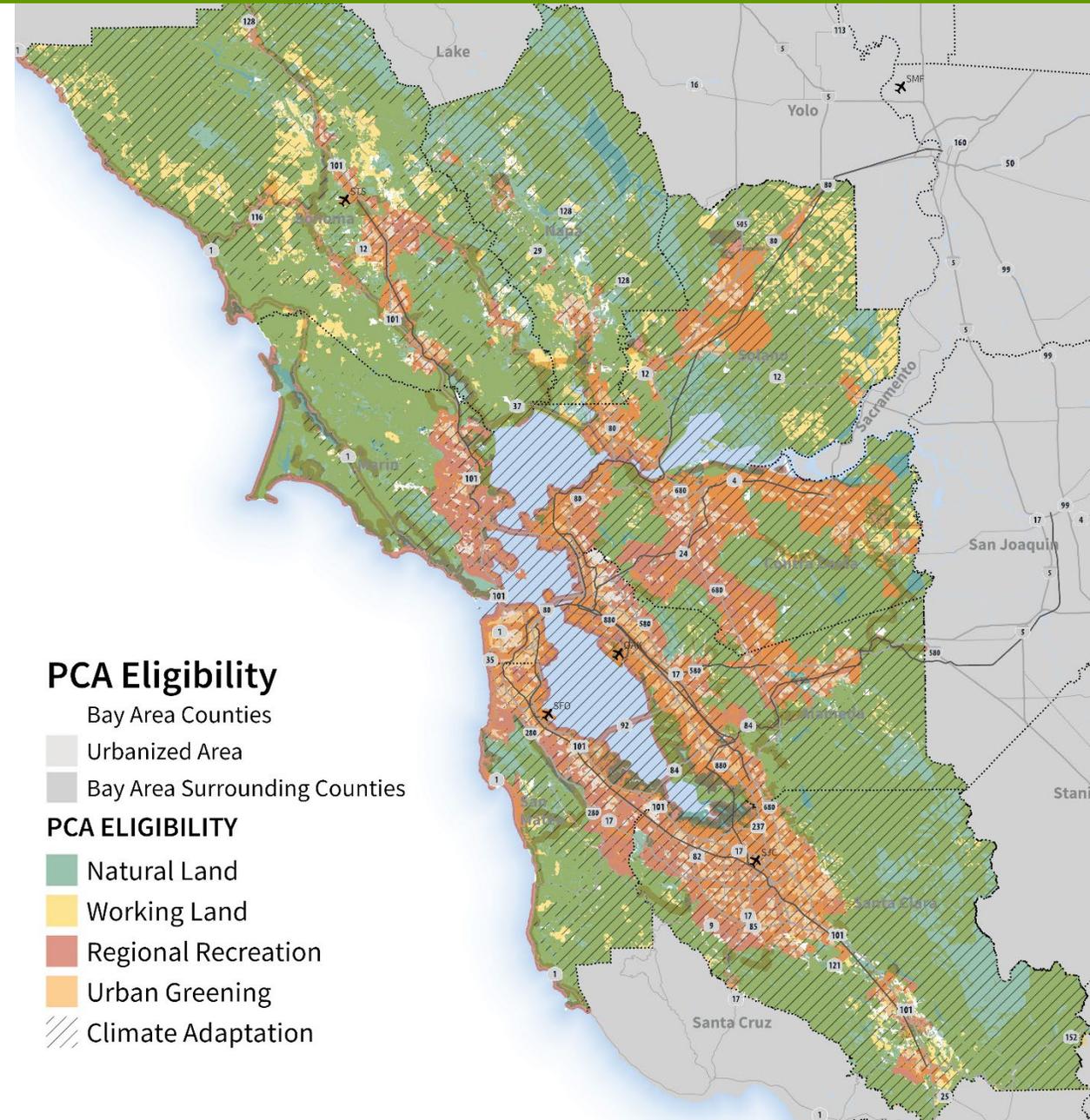
# Map of Draft PCA Eligible Locations



## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE PCA ELIGIBLE MAP

- There is high coverage of PCA eligibility in the region. While most of the region can theoretically be identified by a local agency as a PCA, there will be careful review of which PCA types meet minimum data standards<sup>1</sup>. The approach aims to maintain flexibility for locals to nominate priority areas, while ensuring cohesion across types within the region.
- Importantly, it is not the desire for all eligible locations to be nominated. Future local nominations should continue to prioritize conservation needs, leverage underlying data and local goals, to recommend a subset of eligible areas as PCAs.
- PCAs can be identified as multiple PCA types if they meet the minimum data standards for each type.

<sup>1</sup> Over 30 datasets relevant to PCA type objectives are used to set minimum data standards.



# Map of Draft Regionally-Identified PCA Locations

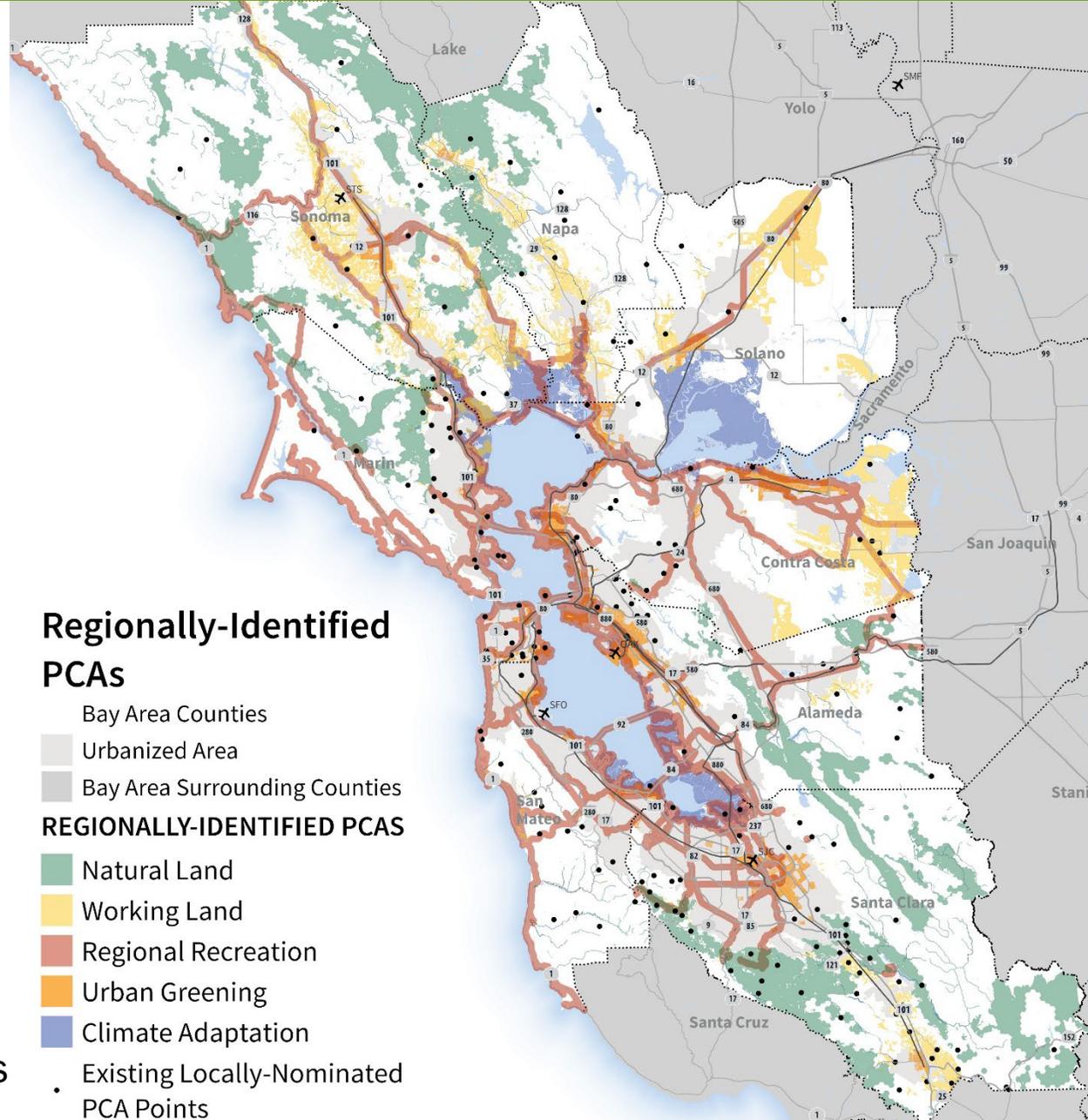


## INTENT BEHIND REGIONALLY-IDENTIFIED PCAs

- Regionally-Identified PCAs are added to the Framework to ensure cohesive coverage across the region. Unlike the PCA eligible map which has high coverage, the regionally-identified PCAs focus more narrowly in areas that are regionally-significant or regionally-connective.
- Locally- and Regionally-Identified PCAs will be treated the same. MTC anticipates sharing a finalized map of regionally-identified PCAs ahead of a future round to locally-nominate new PCAs.

## FOCUS OF REGIONALLY-IDENTIFIED PCAs

- Natural Lands – Wildlife corridors and priority streams.
- Working Lands – Agricultural lands nearest development.
- Regional Recreation – Regional trails.
- Urban Greening – Needs in Equity Priority Communities.
- Climate Adaptation – Tidal habitat with sea level rise impacts



# Upcoming PCA Refresh Milestones



**Staff is seeking approval from the ABAG Administrative Committee to release the draft Final Report for public comment through the end of March.**

- **May 2024** ABAG Executive Board presentation

*Pending Executive Board direction in May*

- **Summer 2024** Launch Phase I Implementation to evaluate and amend existing PCAs
- **Fall 2024** Launch Phase II Implementation to open a call for new PCA nominations

*PCA Grants continue to move forward in the interim*

- **March** Round I grant call for projects
- **Fall/Winter 2024** Round II grant opportunity

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