



April 1, 2008

«Planning\_Director\_FIRST» «LAST»  
 «TITLE»  
 «COMP»  
 «AD1»  
 «AD2»  
 «CITY», «ST» «ZIP»

**RE: FOCUS Priority Conservation Area Update - Initial Staff Recommendations**

Dear «Planning\_Director\_FIRST»,

I would like to update you on the FOCUS Program’s Priority Conservation Area (PCA) process and on the nomination made within your jurisdiction. Local government support is central to advancing a coordinated approach to development and conservation in this region.

The initial staff recommendation on the PCA nomination relevant to your jurisdiction is as follows:

<u>Area</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Nominating Group</u>	<u>Initial Staff Recommendation</u>	<u>Recommendation Notes</u>

This initial staff recommendation will be forwarded on to our regional committees and eventually ABAG’s Executive Board for adoption unless we receive information that would substantially change our evaluation of this area against the nomination criteria. If your jurisdiction does not agree with this initial staff recommendation, please send me a letter detailing why by May 30, 2008. Final staff recommendations for PCA adoption will be presented to ABAG’s Executive Board at its meeting in July, 2008.

**FOCUS Priority Conservation Area Background**

FOCUS is the San Francisco Bay Area’s regional planning strategy for development and conservation led by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in coordination with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), and in cooperation with local governments, and stakeholder groups. As part of the FOCUS Program, areas are being identified as places to target incentives for supporting development in existing communities (priority development areas) and for supporting conservation in natural resource areas (priority conservation areas).

Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) have been nominated by jurisdictions, open space agencies, land trusts, and other land/resource groups for consideration as regional priorities for land conservation funding opportunities in the near-term. Regional adoption of these areas as part of the FOCUS Program can promote conservation by:

- Coordinating conservation opportunities within a regional framework of near-term priorities
- Providing a strong platform on which to leverage public and private resources for the Bay Area
- Building upon prior and existing land protection efforts and investments
- Providing opportunities for forging new partnerships

One example of how these near-term conservation opportunities will help inform the spending of conservation dollars in the San Francisco Bay Area is the distribution of Proposition 84 funds. The State Coastal Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Area Program will be spending \$108 million from Proposition 84 over the next 4-5 years. FOCUS PCAs will inform the Conservancy, other public agencies, and private organizations of near-term (1-5 year) land conservation opportunities (purchases or conservation easements) in the region.

### **Parallel Planning Efforts**

Given the focus of Priority Conservation Areas on near-term conservation opportunities and on local support, it is important to also highlight parallel conservation planning efforts that will complement PCA adoption. These efforts include the Upland Habitat Goals Project, Green Vision 2025, and addressing support for urban parks through FOCUS Priority Development Areas.

#### *Upland Habitat Goals Project*

The Upland Habitat Goals Project is an effort led by the Bay Area Open Space Council that will describe the types, amounts and distribution of upland habitats, linkages, compatible uses and the ecological processes needed to sustain diverse and healthy communities of plant, fish and wildlife resources. Upland Habitat Goals will provide information regarding important habitat values among the Priority Conservation Areas. This information will be particularly useful to land conservation funding entities. Information pertaining to the Upland Habitat Goals Project is slated to be released in June, 2008.

#### *Green Vision 2025*

Green Vision 2025 is a land conservation effort led by the Bay Area Open Space Council and Greenbelt Alliance with a goal of creating a long-term vision for land conservation for the Bay Area. Green Vision will identify strategies for attaining this vision through the identification of policy and land protection needs of this region.

#### *Priority Development Areas and Urban Parks*

The Priority Conservation Areas generally represent large-scale landscapes related to agriculture, natural or scenic resources and recreational areas. The majority of the nominated areas are in unincorporated rural areas. Over 100 Priority Development Areas (PDA) in 50 of the region's jurisdictions were adopted by the ABAG Executive Board in November, 2007. Many of the PDA jurisdictions have identified urban parks and greenspaces as a critical component of developing livable and sustainable neighborhoods near transit. Adoption of the Priority Conservation Areas in July, 2008 provides an opportunity to support and develop a strategy for supporting urban parks within Priority Development Areas. ABAG is working with our partner FOCUS agencies and the State Coastal Conservancy to secure funding for urban parks within the Priority Development Areas.

### **Priority Conservation Area Adoption Process & Timeline**

Nominations for regional conservation funding priorities were received in August, 2007. Since then, ABAG staff has been in communication with applicants, local governments, regional policy bodies, attendees of county-wide workshops, and review panelists. All of these interactions have helped staff learn more about the nominations and shape initial determinations on whether or not an area meets the nomination criteria: regional significance, level of consensus (including policymaker and jurisdictional support), and urgency for protection. Local jurisdictions were contacted to ensure that they did not oppose the nominations made within their boundaries to ensure local support. If a nomination was not supported by a local government or did not meet the other nomination criteria, staff is recommending that the nomination not move forward this year. Future nomination opportunities are expected annually, and applicants will be encouraged to coordinate with local governments in future nomination cycles.

The PCA timeline going forward this year is as follows:

2008	MAJOR ACTIVITIES
Jan to April	Update regional policy bodies on the Priority Conservation Area (PCA) process; Follow-up with applicants and local jurisdictions
May to June	Coordinate PCAs with Green Vision and Upland Habitat Goals and Priority Development Areas with Urban Parks; Present recommendations to JPC and RPC for endorsement; Develop PCA descriptions
July to September	Present recommendations to the ABAG Executive Board for regional adoption of PCAs; Finalize PCA products; Revise nomination materials for 2nd round of nominations
October to December	Make 2nd call for nominations; Hold PCA workshop for funders and applicants

Please do not hesitate to contact «Staff», ABAG Regional Planner, by phone at «Phone» or by e-mail at «Email» with questions or for more information about the PCA process.

Thank you very much,



Kenneth Kirkey  
ABAG Planning Director

Cc: «elected\_official», «Mayor», «City\_Manager», and Nominating Group