



Legislation Details (With Text)

**File #:** 15-275      **Version:** 1      **Name:** SR Supporting PCA Designations  
**Type:** Staff Report      **Status:** Filed  
**In control:** City Council  
**On agenda:** 5/18/2015      **Final action:** 5/18/2015  
**Enactment date:**      **Enactment #:**  
**Title:** Staff Report for Resolutions Supporting Priority Conservation Area Designations for the San Leandro Creek and the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail  
**Sponsors:** Cynthia Battenberg  
**Indexes:**  
**Code sections:**  
**Attachments:** 1. Exhibit A – San Leandro Creek Map, 2. Exhibit B – San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail Map

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
5/18/2015	1	City Council	Received and Filed	

Staff Report for Resolutions Supporting Priority Conservation Area Designations for the San Leandro Creek and the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A Priority Conservation Area (PCA) designation from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) allows important natural resources, regional recreation areas, agricultural areas, urban greenways, and riparian corridors to be eligible for future regional funding. Two areas in the City should be nominated as PCAs: the San Leandro Creek, including a 200-foot buffer, and the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail. Both of these projects provide natural landscaping, urban greening and regional recreation opportunities. Staff recommends approval of the resolutions that support designating the San Leandro Creek and the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail as Priority Conservation Areas.

**BACKGROUND**

Priority Conservation Areas

The Priority Conservation Area program was initiated in 2007 by ABAG to identify Bay Area open spaces that:

- a) Provide regionally significant agricultural, natural resource, scenic, recreational, and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions;
- b) Are in urgent need of protection due to pressure from urban development or other factors; and
- c) Supported by local consensus.

The PCAs were established at the same time as the locally nominated Priority Development Areas (PDAs). Together, the PDAs and PCAs have informed and will continue to inform the development of Plan Bay Area and implementation initiatives such as the One Bay Area Grant.

There are currently 101 PCAs throughout the Bay Area. Most of the PCAs were nominated by local jurisdictions, park districts, or open space districts. A handful were nominated by non-profit organizations such as land trusts. The majority of the PCAs are natural resource or regional recreation areas, with a smaller number of agricultural areas and urban greenways and riparian corridors. A PCA designation allows those areas to be eligible for future regional funding through ABAG.

In July 2014, ABAG introduced designations to describe the primary function of a PCA. The four designations are:

- Natural Landscapes: areas critical to the functioning of wildlife and plant habitats, aquatic ecosystems and the region's water supply and quality;
- 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;
- Urban Greening: existing and potential green spaces in cities that increase habitat connectivity, improve community health, capture carbon emissions, and address stormwater; and
- Regional Recreation: existing and potential regional parks, trails, and other publicly accessible recreation facilities.

### San Leandro Creek

San Leandro Creek spans 6 miles. Approximately 2.1 miles are located entirely within the City of San Leandro limits and 1.8 miles run along the border of the Cities of Oakland and San Leandro. The remaining 2.1 miles are in the City of Oakland. The San Leandro Creek designation as a PCA is a joint initiative with the City of Oakland under the Urban Greening, Regional Recreation, and Natural Landscapes designations. A 200-foot buffer is proposed to support storm water to the Creek, riparian tree and habitat canopy, and to realize opportunities for creekside supportive green spaces, open spaces, trails, and public access.

The PCA designation supports and builds upon the East Bay Greenway regional project, the proposed creek walk trail between Root Park and the Union Pacific Railroad line west of Alvarado Street, and the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan project currently underway. The San Leandro Creek PCA designation supports the goals of the East Bay Greenway, Creek Walk and the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan project by promoting healthy living, restoring the Creek, and restoring access to the Creek by reconnecting the community with waterways.

### San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail

The San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail (Water Trail) is a regional recreation program bringing health, safety, economic, and educational benefits to the Bay Area for people to recreate on the Bay and its tributaries in non-motorized small boats. The Water Trail was created by legislation (2005, Hancock, AB 1296) and is a voluntary, planned network of access sites, or trailheads, designed to make it easier for people using non-motorized small boats or boards (such as kayaks, sailboards, dragon boats, and stand up paddleboards) to safely enjoy the historic, scenic, cultural, and environmental richness of San Francisco Bay through single and multiple-day trips. The Water Trail program is being implemented under the leadership of the Coastal Conservancy.

The Coastal Conservancy is nominating the Water Trail as a PCA within the nine counties of the Bay Area. The nomination for the Water Trail will include 18 existing and planned potential Water Trail sites in Alameda County, including the San Leandro Marina/Shoreline as a potential Water Trail site.

The Coastal Conservancy has asked each of the nine counties and cities with potential Water Trail sites, including the City of San Leandro to support its PCA application.

### **Analysis**

In 2013 and 2014, the first PCA projects were funded through ABAG's One Bay Area Grant program. \$5 million in funding was offered in a competitive program available for projects in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties. An additional \$5 million in funding was divided between the North Bay county Congestion Management Agencies. As PCAs, the San Leandro Creek and the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail would be eligible to apply for planning and/or construction grants in the next PCA grant round.

In order to become a PCA, supportive resolutions are needed for each area from the local jurisdiction or entity since many of the PCAs cover multi-jurisdictional areas. It should be noted that the PCA designations of the San Leandro Creek and the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail would not put limitations on private or public property owners. The PCA designations have no bearing on legal land-uses.

### **Applicable General Plan Policies**

- This action is consistent with Marina and Shoreline Goal No. 9 of the General Plan, Policy 9.02 General Enhancement and Action 9.02-B Long-Range Planning for the Marina Area
- This action is consistent with San Leandro Creek Goal No. 25 of the General Plan, Policy 25.01 Creek Stewardship, Policy 25.03 Balanced Objectives, 25.05 Habitat Restoration, and Policy 25.08 Watershed Management

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Exhibit A - San Leandro Creek Map
- Exhibit B - San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail Map

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