

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

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Three-year regional project illustrates value of protecting Bay Area's threatened landscapes

San Francisco – Today, a landmark research effort by hundreds of Bay Area land use leaders, working across geographic boundaries and official jurisdictions, culminated in the release of a comprehensive report on the region's green infrastructure.

“Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity: Preserving vital Bay Area lands for all Californians” uses new data to create a regional picture of our important network of open spaces, and the public benefits it provides.

Led by the Bay Area Open Space Council, Greenbelt Alliance, and the Association of Bay Area Governments, with contributions from dozens of land managers, county officials, and scientists, the report is the product of a unique regional collaboration. *Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity* captures local expert knowledge and uses the latest digital technology to identify the Bay Area's most vital and threatened landscapes and create a strategy to protect them.

“Places like Sonoma's redwood forests, Brentwood's orchards, and the slopes of Mount Hamilton provide Bay Area residents with clean water, healthy local food, and unsurpassed recreational opportunities,” said Bettina Ring, Executive Director of the Bay Area Open Space Council. “In this time of climate change, childhood obesity and economic uncertainty, preserving our natural systems could not be more important.”

“The Bay Area's spectacular natural setting attracts the talented workers, the businesses, and the visitors that power our economy,” said Jeremy Madsen, Executive Director of Greenbelt Alliance. “Protecting these lands is an investment in the long-term security and prosperity of our region.”

Specific conservation opportunities profiled in the report include:

- Completing the Blue Greenway, a 13-mile corridor along San Francisco's southeastern waterfront that will bring green space and Bay access to an underserved part of the city.
- Protecting Alameda Creek, the Bay shoreline and their watersheds to increase public access and healthy recreation opportunities, and preserve sensitive aquatic habitat.
- Creating safeguards for the watershed lands that collect, filter, and store water in Santa Clara County to protect the water supply for the Bay Area's fastest-growing county.

“With California's dwindling water supply, conserving our watersheds is more important than ever,” said Rose Jacobs Gibson, Association of Bay Area Governments President and San Mateo County Supervisor. “These lands provide us with fresh food close to home, keep our cities contained and transit-accessible, and absorb greenhouse gases, helping us meet the goals set out in our state's strong global warming laws.”

Adds Madsen, “We are at a critical point where we need to take the long view and secure our natural heritage. Our ‘golden lands’ provide the foundation for the Bay Area's \$400 billion economy; we can't afford to lose them.”

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is the San Francisco Bay Area's advocate for open spaces and vibrant places. Founded in 1958, Greenbelt Alliance has offices in San Francisco, San Jose, Walnut Creek, San Rafael, and Santa Rosa.

is a coalition of public agencies and non-profit land conservation organizations that are responsible for acquiring, restoring and stewarding valuable park, habitat, and agricultural lands in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

Founded in 1961, is the official regional planning agency for the nine counties and 101 cities and towns of the Bay Area and is recognized as the first council of governments in California.