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(Map graphic available at www.BayAreaLands.org or upon request.)

Scientists Complete Sweeping Five-Year Inquiry into Lands “Essential” for Bay Area’s Future

*First-of-its-kind Technology Cross-Referenced over 200
data sets, from red-legged frog habitat to climate change*

(Berkeley, Calif.) — Today the Bay Area Open Space Council announced the completion of a five-year effort to discover the lands “Essential” to the ecological and economic health of the Bay Area. Dubbed the “Conservation Lands Network,” these places are a mix of protected and unprotected landscapes of both wilderness and working lands.

“For the first time, we are able to identify the network of lands needed to protect everything we love about living in the Bay Area,” said Bettina Ring, Executive Director of the Bay Area Open Space Council. “This is the source of our future,” she said.

The Conservation Lands Network was created by the Upland Habitat Goals portion of a trio of regional planning efforts that have been completed, including the Subtidal Habitat and Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Projects. “Together, these projects put

forth innovative recommendations to protect habitat from the bottom of the bay to the tops of our watersheds,” says Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer of the State Coastal Conservancy.

If these places can be protected, they can sustain the “natural infrastructure” of the region — a functioning web of life that provides freshwater, wildlife, local food, clean air and beautiful places. Over 4.3 million acres were studied and over 1,000 variables were considered — from redwood forests to California red-legged frog habitats, from climate change to migratory routes. The project used advanced software and 247-acre hexagonal planning units with over 200 different data sets.

“The Conservation Lands Network takes county land managers out of our bubbles. We’re communicating now in a way we never could before,” Said Don Rocha, Natural Resource Program Supervisor for the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department.

Over 125 organizations and individuals came together to contribute to the project. And because of their time and expertise the Conservation Lands Network exists in a map, web-based interactive mapping tool, and a GIS Database, all of which are available online at BayAreaLands.org.

“Thanks to this collaborative effort,” said Gary Knoblock, program officer of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, “we are now in a state of great discovery, coming to understand critical new information about what land and waters are essential to the Bay Area, even as we face a heightened need for growth and development.”

The two most important types of lands in need of protection to emerge were those that protect freshwater and, working lands owned and managed by ranchers that provide large-scale habitat, migratory connectivity and freshwater retention.

“We’re delighted that this work shows so clearly the value that rangelands bring to our natural world,” said Nita Vail, Executive Director and C.E.O. of the California Rangeland Trust. “We look forward to accelerating our collaborative work with the environmental community in ways that protect both wildlife and ways of life.”

Increasingly, a growing body of work is showing the connection between healthy human communities and healthy ecosystems. “The human benefits are enormous and real. These places bring us fresh water, food and a sense of peace and beauty. What more could we ask for?” said Bob Doyle, General Manager, East Bay Regional Park District.

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The Bay Area Open Space Council is a collaborative of sixty member organizations actively involved in permanently protecting and stewarding important parks, trails and agricultural lands in the ten-county San Francisco Bay Area.

www.bayarealands.org

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