

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT
MEETING DATE: April 13, 2011

ITEM 7

SUBJECT: The Conservation Lands Network, an Initiative of the San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals Project: What It Is and Where It's Headed - Update by Bettina Ring, Executive Director of the Bay Area Open Space Council, and Nancy Schaefer, Project Manager

DISCUSSION: The Conservation Lands Network is a just released five-year science-based study by over 125 organizations and individuals tasked to identify the most essential lands needed to sustain the “natural infrastructure” of the San Francisco Bay Area. 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 two most important types of uplands in need of protection to emerge from the study were those that protect freshwater and working lands owned and managed by ranchers, both of which provide large-scale habitat, migratory connectivity and freshwater retention.

The Conservation Lands Network was created by the San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals Project, one of a trio of on-going regional planning efforts that includes the Subtidal Habitat Goals and Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals projects that the Board has been actively involved with. The Conservation Lands Network identifies a mix of protected and unprotected landscapes of both wilderness and working lands considered essential to preserve both the ecological and economic health of the Bay Area. The Network exists in a map, a web-based interactive mapping tool, and a GIS Database, all of which are available online at bayarealands.org.

Initiated by the Bay Area Open Space Council in 2004, the San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals Project is a science-based planning process designed to recommend the types, amounts and distribution of conservation lands as well as actions needed to sustain diverse and healthy communities of plant, fish and wildlife resources in the nine-county Bay Area. The Open Space Council recognized that the Bay Area has been a leader in open space protection but lacked a scientific vision for biodiversity conservation. The Upland Habitat Goals are intended to serve as a guide for public and private conservation practitioners for selecting lands to be conserved.

Bettina Ring and Nancy Schaefer will update us both on the release of the Conservation Lands Network, how it works, and the next steps for the Upland Habitat Goals Project.

RECOMMENDATION: No action needed – information item.