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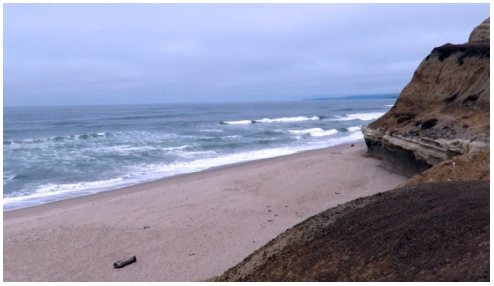

Vibrant Communities and Landscapes

A Vision for California in 2050

Draft for Comment & Discussion

cdfa CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD & AGRICULTURE

CHHS

CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH STATE OF CALIFORNIA

CALIFORNIA natural resources AGENCY

CalEPA California Environmental Protection Agency

BCSH

CalSTA

FOREWARD

Land use decisions, including development patterns, land conservation and protection, and land management practices, play a critical role in the State's future and achievement of its long-term community health, environmental, and economic goals. This vision, and set of actions included to realize it, is the result of a collaborative dialogue and a shared desire to better consider land use in State climate change programs and other initiatives that support the State's long-term environmental goals.

This document was developed with the recognition that land use decisions are inherently difficult decisions that require consideration of many conflicts and trade-offs, and balancing the needs of many constituencies, including disadvantaged communities, businesses, local agencies, developers, and landowners. This document is not intended to reconcile these issues or to remove them from the domain of local governments. Rather, this document is intended to consider land use in the context of the California's climate change policy and how the State can support actions, at all levels of government, to facilitate development and conservation patterns that help to achieve the State's climate goals.

The collaboration included the following agencies: Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency, California Environmental Protection Agency, California Natural Resources Agency, California State Transportation Agency, California Health and Human Services Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Strategic Growth Council, and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

We welcome comments and input on this vision.
Comments can be sent to ca.50m@opr.ca.gov

Vibrant Communities and Landscapes

A Vision for California in 2050

California's history and future are built upon its land and its people. The State is home to the most diverse population in the United States, and its landscapes include productive agricultural areas and spectacular natural beauty – from the shoreline to the mountains to the deserts. This natural beauty, alongside world class cities and thriving communities, draws visitors and residents alike to support the State's innovative economy, spur its entrepreneurial spirit, and sustain its creative culture. Together, California's people, communities, and natural resources support its status as the sixth largest economy in the world.

California has long been a leader in protecting the environment. California is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 40 and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 and 2050, respectively. At the same time, the State's population is projected to grow to 50 million residents by 2050. As the State acts to achieve these emission reductions and support future growth, California has the opportunity to realize critical benefits in public health, natural resource, economic, equity, and resiliency outcomes through thoughtful and comprehensive policy implementation. Realizing this potential requires an integrated vision for how the State develops communities, preserves and protects its landscapes, and ensures that all Californians have equitable access to housing, health care, jobs, and opportunity. This document provides a vision for this future that forms a common foundation for actions related to land use across State agencies and programs.

Integrating Conservation and Development

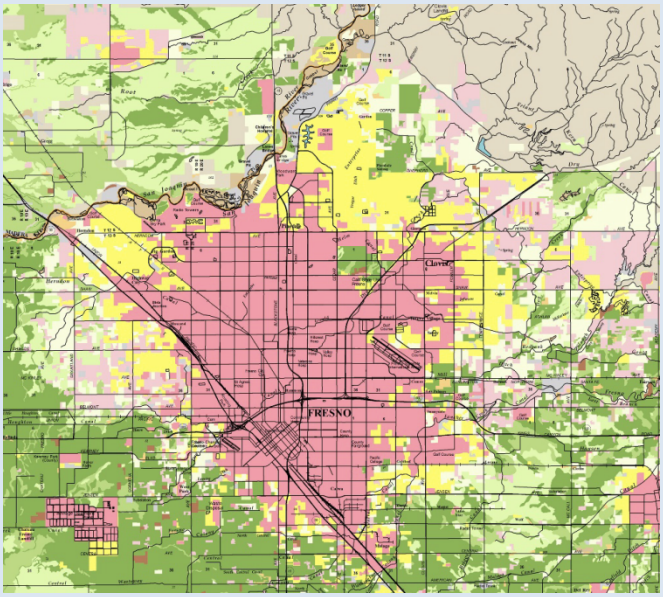

Figure from Department of Conservation. 2015. Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Report.

A comprehensive land use vision considers the sustainable balance between development and conservation in an integrated manner. The picture to the left shows urban growth between 1984 and 2012 in Fresno. Yellow shows the urban land added to the city's footprint over that time. A more infill-oriented development pattern will reduce land converted from agricultural uses or natural states. And, it will also reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and other harmful pollutants, lower infrastructure costs, improve public health through increases in biking and walking opportunities, and leads to numerous other health, economic, and environmental benefits. It also avoids GHG emissions associated with conversion of land.

Vision

As the State works toward its 2030 and 2050 climate change goals, its land base, including natural, working, and developed areas, is recognized as foundational and integral to the State's climate policy, economy, and quality of life. As such, the State plays a meaningful and impactful role in shaping the future communities and landscapes of California. Because of the pivotal role of land use in the State's environmental, economic, health, and related policies, California is taking action to grow in a manner that assures:

- Development and conservation investments and decisions focus on building social equity and supporting thriving and healthy communities with improved access to and supply of affordable housing, transportation alternatives, open space and outdoor recreational opportunities, affordable healthy foods, living-wage jobs, social support, and economic and educational opportunities;
- The land base, including natural, working, and developed areas, is a foundational element of the State's strategy to meet GHG emission reduction targets. This importance is further recognized in other land, energy, and climate change policy documents and decisions, including State, local, and regional planning and investments;
- Land is protected, managed, and developed in a manner that maximizes resilient carbon storage, food security, and other ecological, economic, and health objectives. Natural and working lands are used to build resilience in natural, built, and social systems, and provide buffers against changing climate conditions that will allow for flexible adaptation pathways;
- New development and infrastructure are built primarily in locations with existing infrastructure, services, and amenities (i.e., previously-developed locations), rather than greenfield locations; and
- The value of ecosystem services conferred by natural systems are accounted for and included in State, local, and regional planning and investment decisions, resulting in protection of these services and California's globally significant biodiversity.

Actions

State, local, and regional governments need to work together to achieve this shared vision and to encourage land use and transportation decisions that minimize GHG emissions. While recognizing its focus on urban development and transportation, the State will build on framework and governance structure established by Senate Bill (SB) 375 to achieve deeper GHG emission reductions, and will integrate the protection, conservation, and management of natural and working lands.

A number of current and emerging State planning and policy efforts provide the opportunity to articulate and implement this vision, and provide State leadership through work with local and regional partners. These include the Climate Change Scoping Plan, the Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines, the Sustainable Freight Action Plan, updated General Plan Guidelines, implementation of AB 2087 for regional conservation planning, the State Wildlife Action Plan, the Water Action Plan, and implementation of SB 743 guidelines and other updates to the California Environmental Quality Act.

The State will prioritize the following actions to support regional and local governments and to maximize GHG emission reductions through the conservation and protection of natural and working lands, reductions in vehicle miles traveled, and direct emission reductions associated with compact development patterns:

- **Develop performance metrics for environmental, health, and equity outcomes associated with stronger land use policies:** Working with local and regional governments, the State will develop systems to measure the environmental, health, and equity impacts of land use, infrastructure, and

development policies and programs and will allow all levels of governments to maximize benefits, avoid harm, and measure and track the results. Furthermore, the State will continue to direct resources, infrastructure, services, jobs, training, and technical assistance to communities facing historical disadvantage to improve resource availability, access to services, and quality of life.

- **Establish land conservation targets:** The State will develop quantitative and achievable goals to protect and limit the conversion of the State's most productive farmland, rangeland, and forests, as well as the natural and working lands most critical to preserving California's biodiversity and the ability for Californians to adapt to climate impacts, alongside complementary policies to focus new development in currently developed areas, reduce conflicts among adjacent land uses, and minimize risks to existing land uses and public health and safety.
- **Update regional greenhouse gas reduction targets to achieve 2030 and 2050 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets:** The State will work with local and regional governments to develop stronger GHG emission reduction targets for regional sustainable community strategies under SB 375 and identify opportunities to strengthen implementation success.
- **Develop policies and processes for infrastructure siting that are consistent with the State's conservation, development, and population health goals:** The State will develop supportive policies and tools to help private and public sector partners, including local and regional agencies, to identify sites for infrastructure projects, including renewable energy projects, that are consistent with and support the State's conservation, development, and climate change goals. The State will continue and strengthen policies that facilitate substantial increases in the proportion of investments in transit, active transportation, fix-it-first maintenance of existing infrastructure, and shared mobility infrastructure, as well as increasing and integrating natural and green infrastructure in developed areas, including tree planting, parklets, and other strategies.
- **Explore and develop financing, regulatory, and other tools to support more efficient and more equitable development:** The State will evaluate and develop financing mechanisms, incentives, guidelines, and other tools to substantially accelerate more efficient and equitable development outcomes. This includes: reducing barriers to housing development in infill areas; promoting infill development and necessary infrastructure in existing communities; and implementing strategies to ensure that long-time residents can stay in place as neighborhoods improve.
- **Explore and develop financing, regulatory, and other tools to promote land protection and carbon-oriented land management practices:** The State will examine, evaluate, and develop financial or regulatory compliance incentives to private landowners to promote both permanent and temporary conservation and management for carbon sequestration.
- **Support transportation policies such as priced express lanes, reduced parking requirements for development, and transit commuter incentives that promote infill development and reduce vehicle miles traveled:** The State will implement road user and parking pricing policies, and coordinate these policies with programs to avoid adverse impacts on low-income drivers and with infrastructure investments as described above. Further, the State will invest in technology to improve transportation system efficiency that provide choices that enable people and goods to reach destinations quickly and cleanly.

Benefits of the California 2050 Vision

Research, analysis, and implementation demonstrate the myriad benefits to the State's residents, local and regional governments, and the economy that can result from an integrated approach to land use. These include, among others:

- **Tangible, short- and long-term benefits for disadvantaged communities:** Focusing on infill and compact development patterns and coordinated investments to expand low-cost and low-carbon transportation options encourages investment in existing and underserved communities, reduces

household costs, helps alleviate pollution burdens in the highest-impacted communities, and increases access to economic opportunities.

- **Improved public health:** More compact development patterns, access to parks and green space, and abundant recreational options provide opportunities for active transportation and exercise. Increases in these activities help provide respiratory and cardiovascular health benefits and reduce the burden of chronic diseases such as diabetes, certain types of cancers, and dementia, while improving mental health. Furthermore, an integrated conservation and development strategy will contribute to significant air quality benefits, which improve respiratory and cardiovascular health.
- **Resilience to the impacts of climate change:** Protection of natural systems, expansion of transportation options, and compact development patterns can reduce exposure to the risks of a changing climate, especially in disadvantaged communities. Protected and managed natural systems can mitigate impacts of floods, protect water quality and supply, enhance food security, and protect against other climate impacts. Compact development patterns and integrated transportation and green infrastructure reduce pressures on natural systems and also result in lower water and energy use, both of which contribute to greater resilience.
- **Maintenance of California's global economic leadership:** California's natural resources alongside its urban environments form the very fabric of what attracts businesses and residents to the State and fosters California's leadership in the global economy. Taking an integrated approach to creating attractive living, working, and recreational environments will help the State to remain competitive.
- **Monetary savings for residents, businesses, and governments resulting from lower transportation and energy costs:** More compact development patterns save local municipalities – as well as the State - money by reducing the long-term costs of providing services and infrastructure to low density development. Multi-modal transportation choices enable the efficient movement of people and goods.
- **Promotion of urban-rural connectivity in all regions:** Recognizing the climate change benefits of functioning natural systems and sustainable working lands is necessary for making fully informed land use and resource management decisions, and can serve to drive investment and jobs to rural communities, support urban-rural cohesion, and bolster the economic value of rural lands.
- **Promotion of a sustainable balance between conservation and development across each ecoregion:** Full consideration of conservation and development goals across regions provides an opportunity to integrate economic and community development goals alongside the ecosystem service co-benefits of protecting and managing our natural and working lands and waters.