

PCA Nomination Considerations: Eligibility Criteria and Prioritizing Nominations

PCA Eligibility Criteria

Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) nominations and amendments must meet the location-based criteria outlined in the table below, which vary by PCA type. **Use the [PCA GIS Nomination Tool](#) to submit PCA boundaries and provide supporting details for review.** ABAG/MTC staff will assist throughout the nomination window, helping jurisdictions confirm compliance and offering guidance to address any gaps.

In addition to the criteria outlined in the table below, **PCA nominations cannot overlap with existing PCAs.** If there is a strong desire for a new PCA to cover an area with an existing PCA, the existing PCA must be amended so there is no overlap.

Please note that jurisdictions submitting **PCA nominations encompassing more than 50% of their total jurisdiction's area** are required to provide a written justification explaining the rationale for proposing such a large Priority Conservation Area.

Visit MTC'S GIS data catalog to review [city limits](#) and [urban growth boundaries](#) which are mapping layers that inform eligibility. For information on how eligibility maps were developed for each PCA type, visit the [PCA Refresh GitHub](#) methodology website.

Table 1: Geographic Requirements by PCA Type

PCA Type	Location Requirement	Coverage Requirement	Additional Notes
Natural Land	100% <u>outside</u> city limits or urban growth boundaries	75% coverage with eligibility map	Along the bay shoreline, some special habitats inside city limits are eligible if 100% coverage with the eligibility map is met.
Working Land	100% <u>outside</u> city limits or urban growth boundaries	75% coverage with eligibility map	
Urban Greening	100% <u>inside</u> city limits or urban growth boundaries	75% coverage with eligibility map	
Recreation	Can exist inside or outside city limits or urban growth boundaries	75% coverage with eligibility map	
Climate Adaptation	Can exist inside or outside city limits or urban growth boundaries	75% coverage with eligibility map	Must also be nominated as another PCA type; cannot exist alone.

Considerations for Prioritizing Nominations

Most of the Bay Area meets the eligibility criteria for PCA designation – this was a feature of the [PCA Refresh](#), ensuring local flexibility to nominate most areas. This section offers suggested approaches for prioritizing PCA nominations. Relevant mapping layers are available on the [Online Map Viewer](#).

1. Local Needs and Priorities

- **Focus on Equity Priority Communities (EPCs):** Prioritize new PCAs in or near EPCs to address social and environmental inequities. Remember to check PCA type and eligibility when nominating areas inside city limits or urban growth boundaries.
- **Engage the Community:** Leverage past or new community, stakeholder, or CBO engagement to identify areas that reflect community values and needs.
- **Advance Local Plans:** Review existing plans and policies to connect PCA nominations to local conservation and development objectives.

2. Highest-Value Conservation Areas

- **Identify the Highest Value and Opportunity Locations:** Broad eligibility criteria allow flexibility for local nominations, but nominating all eligible areas can defuse the focus of PCAs. Instead, use data or local knowledge to target areas with the highest conservation value or highest opportunity.

3. Regional Significance

- **Review Regionally Identified Priorities.** ABAG created Regionally Identified Priorities, or "Regionally Identified PCAs," during the PCA Refresh process to pinpoint lands with regional connectivity or significance for each PCA type. These areas serve the same planning and policy purposes as Locally Nominated PCAs but do not qualify for grant funding unless they are also locally nominated (learn more about Regionally Identified PCAs in the [PCA Refresh Final Report, page 16](#)). While Regionally Identified PCAs can help guide the nomination of new PCAs, their absence does not preclude an area from being nominated. View Regionally Identified PCAs in the [Online Map Viewer](#) to strategically align local nominations with regional goals. Jurisdictions are encouraged to nominate Regionally Identified PCAs when in agreement with local priorities.

4. Multi-Benefit Opportunities

- **Consider Areas that Advance Multiple Goals:** Many locations meet criteria for multiple PCA types (e.g. a local stream may be a critical habitat, trail gap, park desert, and flood risk area). Prioritize areas that achieve multiple PCA conservation goals to maximize co-benefits like biodiversity, climate resilience, recreation, community health, and equity.
- **Enhance Connectivity:** Support nominations that link regionally significant habitat corridors and recreation networks.