

DISCUSSION DRAFT

SB 1425 (Stern)

Open Space Element Update

Technical Advisory

GENERAL PLAN TECHNICAL SERIES

DISCUSSION DRAFT VERSION: Oct. 6, 2025



Technical Advisory Agency Information

Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation

1400 10th Street | Sacramento, CA 95814

www.lci.ca.gov

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1 Purpose.....	5
1.2 Importance of Open Space Planning in California.....	6
1.3 Document Outline	7
2. Regulatory Context	7
2.1 SB 1425.....	7
2.2 State Policy and Regulatory Framework.....	9
2.3 Relationship to Other General Plan Legislation.....	10
3. Engagement and Partnerships	11
3.1 Meaningful and Place-Based Engagement.....	11
3.2 Interdepartmental Coordination	12
3.3 Engaging External Partners and Agencies.....	12
3.4 Tribal Consultation.....	13
4. Legislative Consistency Review.....	15
4.1 Legislative Consistency Worksheet	15
5. Assessment to Inform Policy Development	19
5.1 Conducting an Assessment.....	19
5.2 Regulatory Overview and Data Analysis.....	21
5.3 Key Mapping and Analysis	24
5.4 Comparative Analysis	26
5.5 Identifying Constraints and Opportunities.....	27
6. Developing or Refining Policies	28
6.1 Synthesize Findings.....	29
6.2 Engage Interested Parties and Community for Input	29
6.3 Draft Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions.....	29
6.4 Integrate Policies into the General Plan	30
6.5 Refinement and Integration	31
7. Implementation.....	31
7.1 Building Partnerships	31

7.2 Funding.....	32
7.3 Tools/Frameworks	36
7.4 Quantifying and Monitoring Implementation	38
8. References.....	40
9. Appendices	43
<i>A: Definitions</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>B: Policy Examples</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>C: Legislative Tables</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>D: Best Practices Examples: Plans and Policies.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>E: Data Sources.....</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>F. Community Partner Summarized Feedback.....</i>	<i>76</i>

Note to Readers

This technical advisory was developed as a discussion draft to gather perspectives and feedback from all community partners, including California Native American Tribes, in a respectful and meaningful way. We are sharing this draft to provide an opportunity for input, ensuring that Tribal and community perspectives and priorities help shape the direction of the final document. It is intended as a starting point for dialogue, not a final product, and is meant to support transparent planning while affirming our commitment to meaningful Tribal and community involvement in shaping the final content.

To support this process, The Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) will be providing Tribal input opportunities during the public comment draft period of this document in the form of a virtual input session, one-on-one meetings, and the opportunity to provide written comments. These opportunities are designed to create space for open dialogue, identify opportunities to improve our approach, and ensure Tribal perspectives are considered in the final document.

We also acknowledge that the term “rewilding” carries historical, colonial associations with a false notion of “wilderness” that erases Tribal presence and stewardship. Rewilding in the context of this legislation is defined as “...the opportunities to preserve, enhance and expand an integrated network of open space to support beneficial uses, such as habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and Tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics.” It is the goal and policy of LCI to pursue these opportunities in a way that honors and centers Tribal stewardship, cultural relationships to land, and Tribal self-determination.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This planning guide is one in a series of technical advisories provided by LCI as a service to professional planners, land use officials, and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) practitioners.

This technical advisory provides guidance on updating the Open Space Element in general plans by Jan. 1, 2026, in response to Senate Bill (SB) 1425 (Stern) (Chapter 997, Statutes of 2022) as codified in Gov. Code § 65565.5. The goal of this technical advisory is to provide local jurisdictions and planning practitioners with robust guidance on reviewing and updating local open space plans to further social, economic, and racial equity, climate resilience, and rewilding opportunities as specified under SB 1425. To accomplish this goal, local jurisdictions can develop and incorporate effective policies and implementation programs in their local open space plans (General Plan Open Space Element) and align these with their environmental justice, land use and safety elements as required by SB 1425.

The guidance in this advisory was developed through a collaborative, research-based process, including a review of statutory requirements, best practices in conservation and equity planning, and consultation with subject-matter experts, planners, and community-based organizations.

To support local implementation, *Appendix A* of this technical advisory includes working definitions of key terms, including equity, climate resilience, and rewilding. Jurisdictions are encouraged to interpret these definitions in alignment with their community needs and engagement efforts.

1.2 Importance of Open Space Planning in California

Open space planning plays a critical role in shaping healthy, equitable and resilient communities across California. Open space lands, ranging from natural habitats and agricultural areas to neighborhood parks and greenways, support essential community benefits. These include opportunities for recreation and physical activity, improved mental and physical health, biodiversity and wildlife conservation, aesthetic and cultural value, agricultural viability, flood risk reduction, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Historically land use and infrastructure decisions in California have not benefited all communities equally. Many communities have experienced disinvestment, exclusionary zoning, and a lack of public investment in parks and open space. These structural inequities have led to disparities in access to safe, healthy and climate-resilient environments. As a result, many communities continue to lack access to open spaces that support well-being and provide protection from hazards such as extreme heat, flooding and poor air quality. For the intents and purposes of this document, the term *historically underrepresented communities* is used to encompass a range of groups that have been systematically excluded from land use decision-making and equitable public investment. This includes but is not limited to Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) as defined by Senate Bill (SB) 1000 (Leyva, 2016) (Chapter 587, Statutes of 2016), as codified in Government Code § 65302), as well as low-income communities, vulnerable communities and equity-priority communities. While each of these terms has distinct policy relevancies and community origins, we use *historically underrepresented communities* as a unifying phrase to emphasize structural exclusion and the need for inclusion in open space planning.

Today, as California faces intensifying development pressures and climate-related risks, open space planning is more important than ever. It offers a framework to balance conservation with housing, transportation, and energy needs while also redressing historical inequities - ensuring a California for all. Open space planning is not simply about land preservation - it is a lever for achieving environmental justice, public health, and long-term climate resilience.

1.3 Document Outline

The document is organized into the following sections:

1. **Introduction:** This section introduces the purpose and scope of the technical advisory, the importance of open space planning in California, and the objectives of SB 1425.
2. **Regulatory Context:** This section outlines the legal and policy background of SB 1425, including relevant statutes, executive orders, and alignment with other general plan requirements.
3. **Engagement and Partnerships:** This section outlines the best practices for inclusive community engagement, meaningful Tribal engagement, and collaboration with external partners.
4. **Legislative Consistency Review:** This section provides a step-by-step methodology for evaluating existing plans and identifying gaps to ensure compliance with SB 1425.
5. **Assessment to Inform Policy Development:** This section offers guidance on conducting an assessment to inform policy development or updates to ensure compliance with SB 1425.
6. **Developing or Refining Policies:** This section provides guidance on using assessment findings to draft or revise goals, policies, and implementation actions that fulfill SB 1425 requirements.
7. **Implementation:** This section describes strategies for implementation, tracking progress, building partnerships, securing funding, and leveraging tools such as greenprints and conservation plans.
8. **References:** This section lists the sources, research and statutory materials cited throughout the document to support the technical advisory.
9. **Appendices:** This section includes definitions, policy examples, data sources and community feedback to support implementation efforts.

2. Regulatory Context

2.1 SB 1425

California Government Code § 65565.5 Requirement for General Plan Open Space Element – Update*(a) Every city and county shall review and update its local open-space plan by Jan. 1, 2026. The update shall include plans and an action program, as required by Section 65564, that address all of the following:*

- (1) Access to open space for all residents in a manner that considers social, economic and racial equity, correlated with the environmental justice element or environmental justice policies in the General Plan, as applicable.*
- (2) Climate resilience and other co-benefits of open space, correlated with the safety element.*
- (3) Rewilding opportunities, correlated with the land use element.*

(b) For purposes of this section, “rewilding opportunities” may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Opportunities to preserve, enhance, and expand an integrated network of open space to support beneficial uses, such as habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and Tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics.*
- (2) Establishing a natural communities conservation plan to provide for coordinated mitigation of the impacts of new development.*

SB 1425 explicitly requires that open space plan updates address equity, climate resilience, and rewilding in coordination with related general plan elements:

- **Equity and the Environmental Justice Element:** SB 1425’s emphasis on equitable access to open space aligns with **SB 1000 (2016)**, which requires jurisdictions with DACs to adopt environmental justice policies in their general plans, either as a standalone Environmental Justice Element or through updates to other elements. Integrating open space with environmental justice ensures that historically underrepresented communities’ benefit from parks, green infrastructure, and natural resources, and that planning processes are inclusive and community driven.
- **Resilience and the Safety Element:** Open space is a critical tool for building local climate resilience. Laws such as **SB 379 (2015)**, **SB 1035 (2018)**, and **AB 2684 (2024)** require climate adaptation strategies within the safety element. These include responses to extreme heat, flooding, drought, and wildfire. SB 1425 reinforces these requirements by encouraging jurisdictions to leverage open space for nature-based hazard mitigation, ecosystem services, and long-term adaptation planning. This includes preserving and restoring landscapes that buffer communities from climate threats while enhancing public health and environmental quality.
- **Rewilding and the Land Use Element:** As defined in SB 1425, *rewilding* refers to the protection, enhancement, and expansion of open spaces to support habitat connectivity, recreation, cultural and Tribal community resources, water management, and other beneficial uses. It encompasses both local and regional strategies, such as Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs), to offset development impacts and promote ecological integrity. Rewilding supports the state’s biodiversity and climate goals, as established under **Executive Order N-82-20** and **AB 1757 (2022)**, and should be grounded in local ecological context, community values, and compatible land uses. It applies to all jurisdiction types, whether urban or rural, and can range from small-scale efforts, such as planting native species in landscape buffers, to large-scale conservation initiatives. Tools may include land acquisition, ecological restoration, habitat conservation plans, and stewardship partnerships.

Together, these connections underscore SB 1425’s promotion of a holistic approach to open space planning, where climate action, environmental justice, and ecological conservation are mutually reinforcing.

Given the expansive scope of the law, local agencies may pursue a variety of approaches to meet statutory requirements. For example, jurisdictions may consider how restored and rewilded ecosystems, such as riparian corridors, grasslands, and urban forests can support climate resilience by sequestering and storing carbon, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, mitigating urban heat, improving air and water quality, and buffering communities from flood, fire and drought hazards. These nature-based solutions also provide opportunities to restore cultural practices, enhance community access to nature, and redress long-standing disparities in environmental benefits.

2.2 State Policy and Regulatory Framework

California has established a comprehensive policy foundation to guide climate action, equitable access to natural resources, and ecological restoration at both the State and local levels. These directives provide essential context for SB 1425 and underscore the importance of integrating equity, climate resilience, and rewilding into local open space planning.

Executive and Strategic Policy Directives

A series of executive orders and Statewide strategies provide a long-term vision for nature-based solutions and resilient land use:

Executive Order B-30-15 (2015)

Directs all State agencies to incorporate climate adaptation and resilience into planning and investment decisions, prioritizing actions that reduce climate risk and enhance community resilience.

Executive Order N-82-20 (2020)

Outlines a comprehensive and results-oriented agenda to expand nature-based solutions across California. It advances biodiversity conservation as an administration priority and elevates the role of nature in the fight against climate change.

The Outdoors for All Strategy (2023)

Establishes an equity-centered approach to expand parks and nature access in communities with little outdoor space, support programs to connect people who lack access, foster a sense of belonging for all Californians in the outdoors, and more broadly expand outdoor access across the State.

The Pathways to 30x30 (2022)

Outlines 10 pathways to meet California's goal of conserving 30% of its lands and coastal waters by 2030. Land and coastal water areas conserved under 30x30 are durably protected and managed to sustain functional ecosystems, both intact and restored, and the diversity of life that they support.

Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy (2022)

Provides a foundation for understanding the climate benefits of healthy ecosystems, identifies priority nature-based solutions to deliver climate benefits across all of California's diverse landscapes, and guides state programs and investments.

Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets (2024)

Are comprehensive, science-based targets for 2030, 2038 and 2045 that contribute to California's goals of achieving carbon neutrality no later than 2045 and protecting Californians from the climate crisis.

California Climate Adaptation Strategy (2021)

Is about protecting people and nature from the impacts of climate change and is the state's roadmap to building climate resilience and provides six overarching priorities, including to "Accelerate Nature-Based Climate Solutions and Strengthen Climate Resilience of Natural Systems."

Climate Change Scoping Plan (2022)

Is the state's roadmap to achieving California's greenhouse gas reduction goals and carbon neutrality. For the first time in the 2022 Scoping Plan, the state conducted a detailed analysis to understand how natural and working lands greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration support the state's climate goals and set a carbon stock target for these lands.

Together, these efforts frame SB 1425's focus on equitable access, climate resilience and rewilding not as isolated objectives but as interdependent planning priorities.

2.3 Relationship to Other General Plan Legislation

SB 1425 is related to several existing general plan requirements and creates an opportunity for jurisdictions to take a coordinated, multi-benefit approach or opportunities to planning.

AB 1889 (2024)

Introduces new requirements to identify and protect wildlife movement and habitat connectivity areas in the conservation element, goals that directly align with SB 1425's emphasis on rewilding through preserving and enhancing integrated open space networks and supporting regional habitat linkages. Addressing both at the same time allows jurisdictions to integrate habitat connectivity into open space planning and ensure transportation infrastructure does not compromise ecological function.

SB 1000 (2016)

Requires the identification of DACs and targeted environmental justice policies. Identifying DACs can inform SB 1425's equity analysis, helping jurisdictions prioritize open space investments that address historic disparities in access to nature and exposure to environmental harms.

SB 379 (2015)

Mandates climate adaptation in the safety element, is closely aligned with SB 1425's emphasis on climate resilience. Open space planning under SB 1425 can directly support SB 379 compliance by enhancing natural systems that reduce climate risks such as wildfire, flooding and extreme heat. Aligning these efforts results in a more cohesive, equitable and climate-resilient general plan.

3. Engagement and Partnerships

Effective and inclusive engagement is foundational to developing open space policies that are equitable, implementable and reflective of local needs and values. Open space planning presents unique opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and place-based outreach. While this section outlines key considerations and best practices specific to open space planning, many jurisdictions will address SB 1425 requirements through broader general plan updates that respond to multiple legislative mandates.

In such cases, engagement strategies should align with the broader community engagement guidance provided in the General Plan Guidelines to ensure consistency and efficiency across all elements. For stand-alone updates to the Open Space Element this section can serve as a focused resource to support meaningful and inclusive outreach.

3.1 Meaningful and Place-Based Engagement

Open space planning can benefit from innovative and place-specific engagement strategies that go beyond traditional outreach. Meaningful engagement ensures that residents, particularly those from historically underrepresented communities, have a voice in shaping the vision, priorities and outcomes of local open space policies. Early and sustained participation helps build trust, improves plan relevance, and enhances implementation outcomes.

Best practices include:

- Hosting engagement activities directly in parks, open space areas, or community gathering places
- Partnering with community-based organizations to co-lead outreach in historically underrepresented areas
- Partnering with Tribal communities to build respectful, reciprocal relationships based on mutual understanding and shared goals
- Using creative tools such as storytelling, mapping, mobile workshops and youth-led engagement
- Compensating community members for time and expertise when co-developing plans or serving on advisory bodies

3.2 Interdepartmental Coordination

Jurisdictions should proactively engage multiple departments to ensure that open space planning reflects the diverse expertise and operational responsibilities across local government. Differences in departmental priorities, workflows and resources can influence how planning decisions are made.

Key dynamics to consider include:

- **Planning Departments** typically lead long-range visioning, land use policy, and CEQA compliance
- **Parks and Recreation Departments** often manage facility programming, open space maintenance, and public access
- **Public Works Departments** are responsible for infrastructure design, implementation and stormwater management
- **Fire Districts or Departments** may seek wildfire resilience actions in open space

Bringing these departments together early allows for alignment on shared goals such as green and living infrastructure, recreational access, climate adaptation, and equitable funding strategies. Establishing interdepartmental working groups or coordinating committees can facilitate collaboration and reduce fragmentation.

3.3 Engaging External Partners and Agencies

In addition to public community partners, jurisdictions should engage a broad set of external partners who bring valuable expertise, regional perspective, and capacity to open space planning. These partners can provide technical input, support community engagement, contribute to long-term stewardship, and strengthen implementation. Recommended partners include, but are not limited to:

- **Tribal Communities** (federally recognized and non-federally recognized)
- **Identified historically underrepresented communities** and their representatives
- **Open Space Managers** (e.g., regional park districts, joint powers authorities)
- **Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs)**
- **Land Conservancies and Land Trusts**
- **Fire Safe Councils** and **Firewise Communities**
- **Homeowners Associations (HOAs)**
- **Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)**
- **Watershed Councils** and collaborative watershed partnerships
- **California State Parks, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Coastal Commission** (where applicable)
- **U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bureau of Land Management** (where applicable)

- **Private Landowners and Local Residents** (farmers, ranchers, etc.).

Early coordination and partnership with these entities can ensure that open space planning is well integrated with emergency response, biodiversity goals, land stewardship practices, and climate resilience efforts.

3.4 Tribal Consultation

Tribal consultation is a formal process of respectful engagement between Tribes and local jurisdictions, grounded in government-to-government relationships. It is both a legal requirement and a best practice for developing inclusive, culturally respectful, and ecologically informed open space plans. It includes the meaningful and timely process of seeking, discussing and considering carefully the views of Tribes, in a manner that is cognizant of all parties' cultural values and, where feasible, seeking agreement. In alignment with the goals of SB 1425, particularly around equity, climate resilience, and rewilding, local jurisdictions must ensure that Tribal communities are engaged early in the planning process and provided meaningful opportunities to shape open space policies and outcomes.

This section is intended to support meaningful Tribal engagement efforts within both general plan updates and standalone open space planning processes. While SB 1425 sets a statutory deadline of Jan. 1, 2026, it is important to recognize that Tribal community consultation is an ongoing government-to-government responsibility that extends beyond compliance timelines.

Consultation should never be treated as a procedural checkbox. It is a process rooted in trust, respect, and Tribal sovereignty. Whether undertaken now or in future updates, jurisdictions are encouraged to initiate outreach early, meaningfully engage Tribal communities, and integrate Tribal stewardship and priorities across planning and stewardship efforts.

3.4.1 Legal Requirements

Local jurisdictions are required by Government Code § 65352.3 and SB 18 (2004) to initiate early and meaningful consultation with California Native American Tribes prior to updating or amending their general plans. This includes specific procedural steps such as:

- Contacting the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) to obtain a list of Tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area
- Providing formal written notice to those Tribes at key planning milestones
- Providing Tribes with adequate time to review materials, prepare and engage in consultation before decisions are finalized. *Note: The minimum requirements as identified in SB 18 does not realistically allow for enough time to work through these processes. Jurisdictions are largely recommended to establish on-going working relationships with Tribes to assist in this process, engage early and often, and provide at least 60-90 days for Tribes to respond with initial engagement.*

Consultation must be conducted in good faith, consistent with the government-to-government relationship between Tribal communities and local jurisdictions.

3.4.2 Opportunities Under SB 1425

SB 1425 presents new opportunities for Tribes to co-lead open space planning efforts, especially related to:

- Protection of Tribal community cultural landscapes, sacred sites, and natural heritage areas
- Stewardship and restoration of ancestral lands through co-management or cultural easement agreements
- Integration of Indigenous land stewardship practices into climate resilience and rewilding strategies
- Coordination on emergency preparedness, evacuation planning, and land conservation

Early engagement allows Tribal communities to shape open space policies related to cultural resource protection, biodiversity, public access, wildfire risk reduction, and climate resilience – ensuring that efforts are place-based and culturally aligned.

3.4.3 Tribal Communities and Stewardship

Open space planning efforts must respect Tribal sovereignty and the diversity governance structures of Tribal communities. Many Tribes maintain robust emergency management frameworks and stewardship protocols embedded in their constitutions, ordinances, and land management plans. Jurisdictions should acknowledge and align with these protocols where possible. Jurisdictions should also recognize that not all Tribes have the same resources or capacity to engage and should tailor their consultation approach to reflect these differences while upholding equity and sovereignty.

3.4.4 Recommended Actions for Jurisdictions

Local jurisdictions are encouraged to:

- Initiate consultation early in the General Plan update or open space planning process
- Use the LCI Tribal Consultation Guidelines (SB 18) to structure respectful, inclusive consultation practices. *Note to reader: The SB 18 Consultation Guidelines are currently being updated through a robust Tribal Consultation process and new guidance will be released in conjunction with the General Plan Guidelines in 2027)*
- Coordinate across departments to ensure consistent Tribal community engagement across planning, parks, and emergency management functions
- Support long-term partnerships that advance Tribal community priorities and restore access and land stewardship

Where appropriate and led by Tribal community interest, jurisdictions should explore collaborative tools such as co-management agreements, cultural conservation easements, and land return initiatives (“Land Back”) to recognize Tribal communities ties to place and promote Tribal sovereignty and stewardship.

4. Legislative Consistency Review

4.1 Legislative Consistency Worksheet

This section provides a step-by-step methodology for identifying gaps and opportunities to support compliance with SB 1425. The steps outlined are not required by statute but are intended to help jurisdictions streamline and strengthen implementation.

Step 1: Understand legislation and definitions

Review the requirements outlined in *Chapter 2: Regulatory Context* to gain a clear understanding of SB 1425 and its legal implications. Review *Appendix A: Definitions* to understand terminology used in SB 1425 or other related laws, policies or guidance documents.

Step 2: Compile existing plans and programs

Begin by reviewing relevant existing local and regional jurisdictional documents, such as general plans, specific plans, climate action plans, local coastal plans, park master plans, habitat management and conservation plans, Regional Flood Management and Integrated Regional Water Management Plans, and open space management plans. Summarize the influences of existing plans and programs on the Open Space Element. (Column 1: *Table 1 - Legislative Consistency Worksheet*)

Step 3: Evaluation for compliance

3a. Analyze compliance of existing plans/programs.

Evaluate and document how each relevant plan or program meets or addresses the legislative mandate. Reference specific strategies, goals, policies, action actions, or implementation sections within each plan.

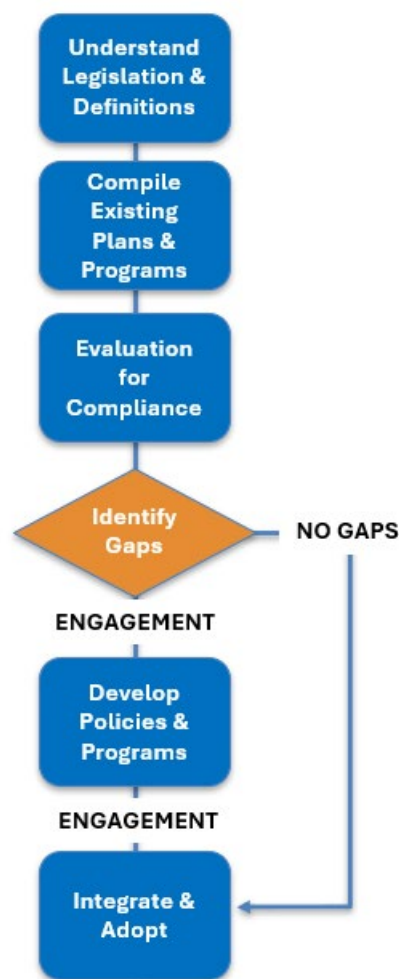


Figure 1: SB 1425 Legislative Consistency Review Diagram

This can be completed by filling out columns 2 through 3 of the suggested *Table 1 - Legislative Consistency Worksheet*, found below. Examples and best practices for SB 1425 compliance are found in *Chapter 6: Developing and Refining Policies*, and *Appendix D: Best Practices Examples: Plans and Policies*, can be used for reference when identifying relevant goals, policies, implementation actions, or sections.

3b. Conduct technical assessment. As needed, conduct technical analysis to better understand existing and planned conditions to assess your jurisdiction's compliance with SB 1425. See *Chapter 5.1: Conducting an Assessment*, for sample assessment questions.

Multi-benefit assessment:

When assessing legislative consistency, identify and detail projects or strategies within existing plans that simultaneously address multiple policy objectives for habitat, equitable public access, outdoor recreation, natural resources, historic and Tribal community resources, water management, and aesthetics. Include projects or strategies that offer social, economic, and environmental benefits that align with equity and climate resilience goals.

Step 4: Identify gaps

Clearly identify any requirements of SB 1425 that are not addressed adequately by existing plans or programs. If using the *Legislative Consistency Worksheet*, note gaps in column 3. Specify actionable recommendations and concrete next steps necessary to achieve compliance.

If gaps are identified proceed to Step 5b. If no gaps are identified proceed to Step 5a.

Step 5: Pathways to compliance

Step 5a: Integrating into general plan by reference.

If no gaps are identified, this may serve as the final step to integrate SB 1425 compliance into your general plan by reference:

Reference plans

Clearly and succinctly summarize each relevant existing plan in the updated general plan. Provide direct URLs or references to facilitate easy access and transparency.

Ensure consistency

Cross-reference the relevant plans with general plan policies to confirm alignment and prevent potential policy conflicts or overlaps.

Summarize compliance

Provide a concise narrative illustrating how the referenced plans, individually or collectively, ensure compliance with SB 1425.

Adoption by Resolution

Under Government Code § 65356, the jurisdiction's legislative body shall adopt or amend a general plan by resolution, which resolution shall be adopted by the affirmative vote of not less than a majority of the total membership of the legislative body.

Step 5b: Update or draft new policies, programs, goals, and implementation actions.

If gaps are identified the jurisdiction cannot rely on existing plans and must develop or update policies. In this case, include any additional information or policies in the General Plan needed to fully comply with the requirements of SB 1425, such as those identified below. You can use column 4 of the *Table 1 - Legislative Consistency Worksheet*, to note any update. See *Chapter 6: Developing or Refining Policies* for a recommended step-by-step process to develop new goals, policies, or implementation actions.

Step 6: Document compliance

Document how the General Plan has been/will be updated for compliance with SB 1425. If using the *Table 1 - Legislative Consistency Worksheet* below, you can document this by updating the worksheet.

Table 1: Legislative Consistency Worksheet

Access to open space for all residents in a manner that considers social, economic, and racial equity, correlated with the environmental justice element or environmental justice policies in the General Plan, as applicable

Relevant Plan/Program	Existing Strategy, Goal, Policy, Action Item, and Implementation	Compliance Description (including gap assessment)	Proposed Action
<i>Plan name and URL</i>	<i>Identify the specific goal, policy, implementation action, or section</i>	<i>Briefly describe how the requirement is met, or describe gaps in meeting the requirement</i>	<i>Describe recommended action to achieve compliance, if applicable</i>

Table 1: Legislative Consistency Worksheet continued

Climate resilience and other co-benefits of open space, correlated with the safety element

Relevant Plan/Program	Existing Strategy, Goal, Policy, Action Item, and Implementation	Compliance Description (including gap assessment)	Proposed Action
<i>Plan name and URL</i>	<i>Identify the specific goal, policy, implementation action, or section</i>	<i>Briefly describe how the requirement is met, or describe gaps in meeting the requirement</i>	<i>Describe recommended action to achieve compliance, if applicable</i>

Table 1: Legislative Consistency Worksheet continued

Rewilding opportunities, correlated with the land use element

Relevant Plan/Program	Existing Strategy, Goal, Policy, Action Item, and Implementation	Compliance Description (including gap assessment)	Proposed Action
<i>Plan name and URL</i>	<i>Identify the specific goal, policy, implementation action, or section</i>	<i>Briefly describe how the requirement is met, or describe gaps in meeting the requirement</i>	<i>Describe recommended action to achieve compliance, if applicable</i>

Table 1: Legislative Consistency Worksheet continued

Internal consistency in each element

Relevant Plan/Program	Existing Strategy, Goal, Policy, Action Item, and Implementation	Compliance Description (including gap assessment)	Proposed Action
<i>Plan name and URL</i>	<i>Identify the specific goal, policy, implementation action, or section</i>	<i>Briefly describe how the requirement is met, or describe gaps in meeting the requirement</i>	<i>Describe recommended action to achieve compliance, if applicable</i>

5. Assessment to Inform Policy Development

This chapter provides more in-depth guidance of Step 3b and 4 of the process outlined in *Chapter 4: Legislative Consistency Review*. This section is meant to act as a “how to” guide for when jurisdictions must create new or update policies and/or require more comprehensive updates to ensure compliance with SB 1425. This chapter is intended as a recommended process rather than a requirement.

5.1 Conducting an Assessment

5.1.1 Purpose and Use of the Assessment

Conducting an assessment to inform policy development under SB 1425 enables local jurisdictions to create open-space policies that meet legal requirements while advancing equity, climate resilience, and ecological health. It bridges the gap between existing conditions with long-term integrated policy goals that benefit both people and nature. The assessment should focus on the following but not limited to:

- Correlating with the environmental justice, safety, and land use elements and aligning with other general plan elements

- Gathering local data on access to open space, climate vulnerabilities, and community needs
- Identifying key ecological and community assets
- Mapping climate vulnerabilities and equity gaps
- Creating space for meaningful engagement, especially with historically underrepresented and Tribal communities
- Highlighting who currently lacks access or representation in open space decisions

To streamline planning efforts, jurisdictions are encouraged to use existing public data tools (see *Appendix E: Data Sources*) and coordinate this assessment with updates under SB 1000 (Environmental Justice), SB 379 (Climate Adaptation), and AB 1889 (Habitat Connectivity).

5.1.2 Key Assessment Questions

The following questions can assist jurisdictions identify where open space, ecological conditions, and community vulnerabilities intersect, locating the areas with the greatest need and opportunity for action. Centering planning efforts around these questions allows local jurisdictions to develop open space policies that are informed by data, locally relevant, and aligned with the core priorities of SB 1425: equity, climate resilience, and rewilding.

These questions guide jurisdictions to:

- Identify gaps in access to nature and ecological connectivity
- Recognize communities most impacted by environmental and climate-related stressors
- Highlight opportunities for multi-benefit solutions that advance climate resilience, public health, and habitat restoration

Equity: Expanding Access, Benefits and Participation

- Can nature-based solutions in open space areas also benefit historically underrepresented communities? If so, how?
- How can Tribal communities be meaningfully engaged that leads to genuine participation?
- How can Tribal communities be supported in land use planning and ecological restoration?
- Who and where are the historically underrepresented communities such as DACs identified through SB 1000, CalEnviroScreen, or other local equity frameworks?
- Are there opportunities for co-stewardship/co-management or the return of land to local Tribes?
- How do environmental burdens, such as heat exposure, air pollution, or flood risk, disproportionately affect specific populations?
- Are there barriers to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant access to parks, trails or open space features in historically underrepresented communities?

Climate Resilience: Adapting to Environmental Change

- What are the most significant climate hazards expected to impact the planning area (e.g., wildfire, drought, extreme heat, flooding, sea-level rise)?
- How can open space be used strategically to reduce risk and buffer vulnerable areas, for example, through green infrastructure, natural floodplains, or shaded corridors?
- Where are there opportunities to use nature-based solutions (e.g., wetland or riparian restoration, reforestation, regenerative agriculture) to address both human and ecosystem vulnerabilities?
- Which communities are least equipped to adapt to climate stressors, and how can open space investments build adaptive capacity?
- How can open space policies support the integration of climate adaptation goals across general plan elements such as land use, housing and safety?

Rewilding: Restoring Ecological Integrity and Function

- What are the current and historic habitat types in the planning area, and where are these habitats most at risk?
- Where are ecologically significant areas, such as corridors, riparian zones, or migration routes, that can be restored or reconnected?
- Are there listed species, sensitive habitats, or rare plant communities that require enhanced protection or targeted restoration?
- How can policies promote urban rewilding, for example, by converting underused land into native habitat or incorporating ecological features into urban landscapes?
- How can local jurisdictions meaningfully engage with Tribal communities to draw inspiration from Tribal land stewardship practices, and support their leadership in ecological restoration?

Integrated and Cross-Cutting Questions

- How can jurisdictions partner with Tribal communities to support shared goals in open space preservation, cultural stewardship, and ecological enhancement in ways that respect Tribal sovereignty?
- What types of multi-benefit projects can simultaneously address environmental justice, biodiversity restoration, and climate adaptation?
- How can jurisdictions collaborate with landowners, community-based organizations, and regional agencies to advance shared goals for open space preservation, access and long-term?
- What tools, data sources, and planning processes can be used to ensure that open space decisions are transparent, participatory and aligned across policy areas?

5.2 Regulatory Overview and Data Analysis

Following the assessment questions, jurisdictions should analyze and interpret available data through the lens of equity, climate resilience, and rewilding. This ensures that land use decisions

and open space policies are informed by legal requirements, ecological science, and community needs. The following guidance helps jurisdictions identify key regulatory resources, legal frameworks, and mapping tools to support this analysis.

5.2.1 Equity: Ensuring Inclusive Access and Avoiding Disproportionate Impacts

Equity assessments should include an analysis of how environmental regulations and land use policies affect historically underrepresented communities, including their access to nature, exposure to environmental burdens, and participation in open space planning. Mapping and evaluating sensitive resources alongside demographic data ensures that ecological protections also promote environmental justice.

Focus Areas:

- Overlap between ecological and climate-sensitive areas and historically underrepresented community populations
- Historic underinvestment in green space or environmental protection
- Potential displacement or exclusion from benefits of new open space policies
- Opportunities for inclusive stewardship, community science, and co-management with Tribal communities

Regulatory and Policy Considerations:

- SB 1000 (Environmental Justice in General Plans)
- Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Local environmental justice policies, zoning, and land use ordinances
- Tribal consultation requirements (SB 18 (2004) and AB 52 (2014), Governor’s Executive Orders N-82-20, which elevate Tribal community engagement in land stewardship and conservation)

5.2.2 Climate Resilience: Mitigating Risk and Supporting Adaptation

In support of climate resilience, jurisdictions should assess how sensitive resources, and open spaces can reduce exposure to climate hazards such as wildfire, drought, extreme heat, sea-level rise and flooding. These assessments help ensure open space investments serve as natural infrastructure that protects communities and ecosystems alike.

Focus Areas:

- Wetlands, riparian corridors, and floodplains that absorb excess stormwater and reduce flood risk
- Defensible space and greenbelts that buffer against wildfires and extreme heat
- Urban forests and tree canopy coverage that provide cooling and air quality benefits
- Soil and vegetation types that sequester carbon and improve watershed health

Regulatory and Policy Considerations:

- Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act
- General Plan Safety Element Requirements (SB 379, SB 1035)
- Regional water and flood management plans
- Local climate adaptation plans and climate resilience strategies

5.2.3 Rewilding: Protecting and Restoring Ecological Integrity

To advance SB 1425's goal of rewilding, jurisdictions should identify areas that support increased biodiversity, native habitat restoration, and improved ecosystem health across both sensitive natural areas and the broader urban landscape. Rewilding opportunities, while essential for protecting key ecological and biological resources like those listed below, can also be integrated into parks, urban open spaces, rights-of-way, and other underutilized spaces. Rewilding can occur at a variety of different scales and jurisdictions are encouraged to think creatively about how smaller and urban sites can contribute meaningfully to ecological restoration, habitat connectivity, and community well-being.

Focus Areas:

- Special-status species:
 - Federally and State-listed: Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and the California Endangered Species Act (CESA)
 - Fully Protected Species, Species of Special Concern, Watch List species
 - Locally designated sensitive species
- Sensitive habitats identified by the CDFW
- Jurisdictional waters, wetlands, lakes, and streambeds
- Wildlife corridors, migration routes, and key movement areas
- Historic and Tribal community resources
- Locally protected natural areas and ecological reserves
- Urban biodiversity in urban parks, greenbelts, and community gardens,

When considering how proposed land use changes or open space actions might affect these resources, jurisdictions should be aware of applicable federal, state and local regulatory frameworks.

Regulatory and Policy Considerations:

- FESA
- CESA
- Clean Water Act (CWA)
- California Fish and Game Code (CFGF)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
- Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act
- California Coastal Act, where applicable

- Local ordinances and general plan policies (AB 1889, 2024)

Data and maps should be used to characterize existing and projected conditions. Recommended tools are listed in *Appendix E: Data Sources*.

5.3 Key Mapping and Analysis

To support the development of open space policies that advance equity, climate resilience, and rewilding, jurisdictions should conduct spatial analyses and mapping to identify opportunities, risks, and priorities across their planning area. These efforts should build on data and regulatory review findings to create actionable, map-based strategies.

Recommended resources (see also *Appendix E: Data Sources*):

- CalEnviroScreen
- California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB)
- Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS)
- Wildlife corridors and green infrastructure maps
- Regional Climate Adaptation Planning tools
- Open space equity analyses and access maps

5.3.1 Equity: Mapping Access, Needs and Disproportionate Impacts

Mapping for equity ensures that open space planning addresses disparities, improves access, and centers the needs of communities historically underrepresented or burdened by environmental harms.

Recommended Mapping Tasks:

- Map historically underrepresented communities using:
 - CalEnviroScreen
 - Healthy Places Index
 - California Climate Investments Priority Populations Map
 - Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (DUCs) Mapping
 - AFFH Data Viewer (State HCD)
 - Regional Equity Tools
 - Equity-Priority Communities (EPCs) – Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)/Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)
 - Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Environmental Justice Screening Tool
 - San Diego Area of Governments' (SANDAG) Regional Equity Index
 - Local indicators of environmental justice or community vulnerability
- Overlay open space, parks, and tree canopy data with demographic data to identify gaps in access and benefits

- Consult with Tribal communities to supplement mapping tools, which often do not adequately represent Tribal lands, governance or community needs.
 - Work with Tribes to identify culturally significant open spaces, environmental concerns, and access barriers that may not be captured in state or regional datasets.
- Identify communities facing cumulative environmental burdens or climate vulnerabilities
- Map opportunities for investment in underrepresented communities, including:
 - Reclaimed or underutilized parcels
 - Areas needing expanded green infrastructure
 - Connections to regional trails or natural assets
- Reference SB 1000 and the Environmental Justice Element Guidelines to ensure consistency with broader general plan updates

5.3.2 Climate Resilience: Mapping Hazards, Stressors, and Natural Infrastructure

Mapping for climate resilience should identify how and where open space can mitigate climate risks, protect vulnerable areas, and serve as adaptive infrastructure.

Recommended Mapping Tasks:

- Map climate-related hazards affecting open space and adjacent communities (If not already included in the safety element, climate adaptation plans, or local hazard mitigation plans):
 - Wildfire: fire hazard severity zones, wildland-urban interface (WUI)
 - Flooding: floodplains, stormwater risk areas, sea-level rise zones
 - Extreme heat: urban heat islands, tree canopy gaps
 - Groundwater vulnerability: recharge zones, subsidence risk
- Use climate projections from CalAdapt, California's Climate Change Assessments, and Ocean Protection Council Sea Level Rise Guidance
- Identify open space areas that offer climate adaptation potential, such as:
 - Natural floodplains, wetlands and coastal buffers
 - Urban cooling corridors and green stormwater infrastructure
 - Fire-resilient greenbelts and defensible space areas
- Evaluate environmental stressors on ecological systems, including projected development, land use change, and climate shifts

5.3.3 Rewilding: Mapping Ecological Integrity and Restoration Potential

Mapping and analysis should focus on identifying areas for habitat conservation, restoration, and ecological connectivity, including within urban environments. This supports policies that promote rewilding and long-term ecosystem health.

Recommended Mapping Tasks:

- Map current and historic habitat types, including riparian areas, wetlands, oak woodlands, grasslands, and other key vegetation communities
- Identify regulated ecological resources, such as jurisdictional wetlands, waters of the U.S., sensitive natural communities, and special-status species habitat
- Map wildlife movement corridors, migration routes, and urban-to-wildland interface zones.
- Analyze barriers to habitat connectivity (e.g., roads, urbanization) and identify restoration opportunities to improve ecological function
- Map and assess tree canopy cover, and potential urban rewilding sites (e.g., vacant parcels, utility corridors, underused open space)

5.4 Comparative Analysis

After completing the assessment purpose, key questions, regulatory and data review, and spatial analysis, jurisdictions should overlay and compare multiple data layers to understand where needs, vulnerabilities, and opportunities converge. This is also an ideal point to re-engage with Tribal communities and community partners to identify any gaps in the data and tools used. These steps are essential to translating technical analysis into policy direction, prioritization and investment strategies that fulfill the intent of SB 1425.

By layering ecological data, climate projections, and social vulnerability indicators, jurisdictions can uncover cumulative conditions that require targeted action, particularly where equity, climate resilience, and rewilding goals overlap. The following categories help structure the synthesis process:

5.4.1 Equity: Advancing Equitable Access to Open Space

Overlay demographic and access data with open space characteristics to determine where historically underrepresented communities face gaps in availability, quality, or accessibility.

Key Analysis Metrics:

- Walking distance to usable open space (e.g., 10-minute walk standard)
- Access to parks via public transit or active transportation networks
- Quality and availability of amenities (e.g., restrooms, shade, play areas, safety lighting)

This analysis helps identify communities most in need of new or improved open spaces and informs investment priorities that address environmental justice and SB 1000 requirements.

5.4.2 Climate Resilience: Understanding Risks and Adaptive Capacity

Overlay climate hazard data with ecological and social vulnerability indicators to identify areas where open space can mitigate climate impacts and strengthen adaptive capacity, especially for historically underrepresented communities.

Key Analysis Metrics:

- Exposure to climate hazards: wildfire risk zones, floodplains, extreme heat areas, sea level rise zones
- Tree canopy distribution and urban heat islands, particularly in high-density or low-income areas
- Air quality, groundwater resilience, and flood risk inequities across neighborhoods

This analysis reveals where open space can act as natural infrastructure to reduce risk, buffer development, and enhance community resilience to climate change.

5.4.3 Rewilding: Identifying Ecological Restoration and Connectivity Opportunities

Overlay habitat and ecological data to assess landscape integrity, connectivity and restoration potential, including opportunities for urban and peri-urban rewilding.

Key Analysis Metrics:

- Size, condition, diversity and distribution of existing habitat patches
- Proximity and connectivity of habitat areas (e.g., presence or absence of wildlife corridors)
- Urban greening potential, such as tree planting, bioswales, or habitat gardens

This analysis supports the development of policies and projects that restore natural processes, enhance biodiversity, and reconnect fragmented ecosystems, both in rural and urban contexts.

5.4.4 Additional Multi-Benefit Opportunities

Consider qualitative and cultural layers that may not be fully captured by biophysical or demographic data but are essential to inclusive and place-based open space planning.

Key Analysis Metrics and Considerations:

- Sites with potential for spiritual, recreational or educational connection with nature, especially for youth and intergenerational communities
- Lands appropriate for Tribal stewardship can guide restoration or conservation
- Potential for co-management or long-term agreements with Tribal communities or community-based organizations

5.5 Identifying Constraints and Opportunities

After layering and analyzing key data related to ecological conditions, climate vulnerabilities, and community needs, jurisdictions can begin to interpret where constraints may limit open space action, and where opportunities can be leveraged to advance SB 1425's goals.

This stage of the assessment involves translating spatial and regulatory analysis into an understanding of what's feasible, what's at risk, and where meaningful change can occur. It helps decision-makers prioritize where policies, partnerships, and investments will have the greatest impact.

Recognizing Constraints

Many communities face structural and physical barriers that can limit the creation or expansion of open space. These may include:

- Scarcity of undeveloped land, especially in urbanized areas, which restricts the availability of large parcels for new parks or habitat restoration
- Competing land use priorities such as infrastructure expansion, housing development, or industrial use that may conflict with open space goals
- Administrative or capacity challenges, such as limited staff, interagency coordination issues, or unclear land ownership that slow implementation or planning efforts

Recognizing these constraints early allows jurisdictions to plan around them, seek creative alternatives, or advocate for policy or funding solutions to address them.

Identifying Opportunities

Despite constraints, many jurisdictions have untapped opportunities to enhance open space in ways that support equity, climate resilience, and rewilding. These may include:

- Leveraging regional conservation frameworks, such as Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) or Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), to align local goals with broader ecological strategies
- Pursuing urban greening or rewilding initiatives, such as converting underutilized spaces, like flood control channels, utility corridors, right-of-way landscape buffers, or vacant lots, into restored habitat corridors or community-accessible natural spaces
- Creating or supporting cultural easements and Indigenous stewardship projects that combine ecological restoration with cultural revitalization
- Taking advantage of state and federal funding sources for nature-based solutions, green infrastructure, and park equity (see *Chapter 7.2: Funding*)

By identifying and organizing these opportunities, jurisdictions can develop open space policies and implementation strategies that reflect local context, respond to community voices, and deliver co-benefits across sectors.

6. Developing or Refining Policies

This chapter provides in-depth guidance of Step 5 of the process outlined in *Chapter 4.1: Legislative Consistency Worksheet*.

Following the assessment of existing conditions (*Chapter 5.1 – Conducting an Assessment*), jurisdictions should use the findings to develop or refine goals, policies and implementation actions that align with the requirements of SB 1425. This section provides a structured approach for drafting these components to address the three core focus areas of the statute: equitable access, climate resilience, and rewilding.

6.1 Synthesize Findings

- Review *Chapter 4: Legislative Consistency Review* to clearly identify which requirements of SB 1425 are already satisfied and which remain unmet
- Integrate insights from assessments of existing conditions, resources, and local characteristics to understand local context, priorities and constraints
- Use these assessments to identify areas best suited for achieving SB 1425 objectives through targeted goal, policy and action development

6.2 Engage Interested Parties and Community for Input

(See *Chapter 3: Engagement and Partnerships* above for more details):

- Facilitate early and meaningful engagement sessions with Tribal communities, community leaders, policymakers and community members to gather feedback and build consensus around proposed goal, policy, and implementation action changes
- Incorporate relevant input to ensure goals, policies, and implementation actions reflect community values and practical feasibility. *Note: This should be done at the beginning, middle, and end of the policy development stage.*

6.3 Draft Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions

- Clearly articulate vision and goal(s) for equity, climate resilience and rewilding. Which may address:
 - Expanding equitable access to open spaces for all residents, especially those in historically underrepresented communities
 - Enhancing community resilience through nature-based solutions, green infrastructure, natural buffers and climate-responsive land use
 - Restoring and reconnecting natural ecosystems through rewilding, habitat corridors or ecological restoration
- Clearly articulate specific existing updates needed, policies and implementation actions to develop, to address gaps identified in the consistency analysis
 - Prioritize multi-benefit approaches that align with broader community goals, including equity, climate resilience, habitat conservation, recreational access, and cultural resources

Key Focus Areas and Best Practices:

(The examples below are illustrative and not intended to be comprehensive. Additional Policy Examples can be found in Appendix B)

Equity and Access to Open Space

- Prioritize park access and open space amenities in historically underrepresented communities
- Set service standards (e.g., 10-minute walk to park; park acreage per 1,000 residents)
- Ensure ADA-compliant access to all parks and open space facilities, including pathways, restrooms, playgrounds and programming, to promote inclusive use by people of all abilities
- Expand amenities that address cultural relevance, safety and comfort (e.g., lighting, signage, inclusive and free/low-cost amenities or programming)

Climate Resilience

- Use open space for flood control, wildfire buffers, heat reduction and drought resilience
- Restore wetlands and riparian zones to absorb stormwater and enhance biodiversity
- Encourage tree planting and canopy expansion in historically underrepresented communities to mitigate extreme heat

Rewilding and Ecological Health

- Restore native vegetation (when appropriate), reconnect fragmented habitats, and daylight streams
- Partner with Tribal communities and community-based organizations for co-stewardship
- Design ecological corridors and buffers around urban development
- Hardscape removal and increasing urban permeability for groundwater replenishment and filtration

Multi-Benefit Opportunities

- Incorporate multiple benefits for open space, for example, to also serve as:
 - Emergency gathering or evacuation areas
 - Tribal community uses for cultural practices
 - Cultural heritage sites
 - Community gardens or urban farms

6.4 Integrate Policies into the General Plan

- Determine where the new or updated goals, policies and actions will be located:

- In a standalone Open Space Element
- Correlated with the Environmental Justice, Safety, and Land Use Elements
- Ensure internal consistency across the General Plan (Gov. Code § 65300.5)
- Update relevant maps, standards and figures as needed to reflect new policies

6.5 Refinement and Integration

- Refine goals, policies and implementation action proposals based on input.
- Formally integrate refined goals, policies and implementation actions into the General Plan through amendments or comprehensive updates, clearly linking them back to SB 1425 mandates.
 - Develop an implementation strategy based on final goals, policies and implementation actions:
 - Outline specific actions, timelines and responsibilities for policy implementation
 - Identify resources, funding mechanisms, and necessary coordination among agencies to facilitate successful execution of policies. Refer to *Chapter 7: Implementation*
 - Establish Monitoring and Reporting Framework:
 - Set clear targets and metrics and regular reporting intervals to track the effectiveness and implementation progress of new or updated policies
 - Use monitoring outcomes to make adaptive adjustments as needed

7. Implementation

After refinement and integration of policies, the next step is to move from planning to action. Implementation focuses on the carrying out adopted strategies, building partnerships, securing funding, and maintaining alignment with SB 1425. This phase also includes establishing clear roles, timelines, and performance measures to ensure that open space goals are achieved and progress is regularly evaluated.

7.1 Building Partnerships

Beyond acquisition, the long-term success of open space planning depends on the development of strong partnerships, collaborations, and creative financing mechanisms. Many of these are in response to the long-term demands on sustainable management and oversight of open spaces. Partnerships with local groups, Tribal communities, public agencies, land trusts and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) are often critical to support the long-term preservation of open spaces. A sample list of common partners is listed in *Table 5* below, and examples of common funding programs are listed in *Table 6* below. An additional table of organizations can be found in the *Appendix E: Data Sources*

Table 2: Common partners for open space planning

Partner	Role
Tribes – Land Back	Tribal communities play a vital role in land stewardship through traditional ecological knowledge, co-management agreements, and cultural land practices. Partnerships may include support for land return efforts (e.g., Ancestral Land Return), cultural easements, or collaborative restoration of ancestral lands.
Land Trust	A nonprofit organization that works to conserve land, often in partnership with private landowners and community partners.
Parks District	A local special purpose district for providing public parks and recreation in or near its jurisdictional boundaries.
Resource Conservation District	A special district created to conserve soil and water, control runoff, prevent and control soil erosion, manage watersheds, protect water quality, and develop water storage and distribution.
Habitat Conservancy	An organization that works to preserve, restore, and manage natural ecosystems to benefit wildlife and humans. Conservancies can be set up to implement NCCPs and HCPs.
Open Space Authority/District	A public agency that works to preserve open space, including land or water that is undeveloped or used for agriculture. Funding can be secured through tax increment or bonds that voters approve.
Open Space Trust	A nonprofit organization that preserves open space, such as parks, farms and other natural areas. Easements can be granted to manage open spaces in perpetuity. Funding can be secured through endowments and donor bases.
Water Districts	A public agency responsible for managing local water supply, delivery and quality. Water districts may partner on open space projects that support groundwater recharge, watershed protection, and multi-benefit green infrastructure.

7.2 Funding

Land trusts, open space districts, and parks districts within a jurisdiction often help identify and secure funding for open space acquisition and public land management. Support for grant applications and coordination with willing property sellers can also be sourced from local partners. Maintaining an up-to-date open space map that includes priority acquisition areas can be helpful to identify parcels that provide multiple benefits across climate resilience, rewilding and equity goals. However, once acquired, jurisdictions are often not able to provide long-term maintenance of open spaces, which may involve long-term restoration, pests/invasives management, fire management, public safety, and other facilities maintenance costs. Grants to support land acquisition often do not fund these ancillary costs. As a result, agreements to transfer ownership,

to facilitate open space/conservation easements, or to develop co-stewardship agreements with Tribes, local communities and NGOs are needed to ensure the long-term viability of open space lands.

Note: Many of the programs listed below were funded through recent State budget allocations (at the time of publishing), bond measures, or time-limited appropriations. Continued availability is subject to future budget decisions, and some programs may no longer have active funding. Jurisdictions should verify current program status before applying.

Table 3: Sample list of State funding resources to support open space preservation and ecosystem restoration.

Funding Source	Description	Relationship to SB 1425
<u>California Department of Conservation (DOC) Farmland Conservancy Program</u>	A Statewide grant program that supports local efforts to establish agricultural conservation easements and land improvement projects for the purpose of preserving important agricultural land resources and enhancing sustainable agricultural uses.	The program can help meet SB 1425 goals for climate resilience and conserving working lands through long term conservation easements.
<u>DOC Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program</u>	The program supports increases in regional capacity to repurpose agricultural land to reduce reliance on groundwater while providing community health, economic wellbeing, water supply, habitat, and climate benefits.	The program aligns with SB 1425's goals of integrating climate resilience, equity and habitat restoration/rewilding into land use planning.
<u>DOC and Strategic Growth Council (SGC) Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC)</u>	The program supports agricultural land conservation, economic growth, and sustainable development by providing grants for three types of projects: (1) land use planning; (2) agricultural conservation acquisition; and (3) capacity and project development.	The program supports SB 1425 by advancing resiliency through sustainable land use planning and agricultural conservation.
<u>SGC Transformative Climate Communities Program</u>	Program empowers the communities most impacted by pollution to choose their own goals, strategies, and projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and local air pollution.	The program advances SB 1425's equity and climate action mandates through community-driven planning and implementation.
<u>CDFW various grants for</u>	There are several grant programs to assist in funding NCCPs and Habitat Conservation Plans	The program directly supports SB 1425 habitat

<u>NCCPs and HCPs</u>	(HCPs). These include the NCCP Local Assistance Grant (LAG) Program, NCCP 30x30 Grant Program, and the federal ESA Nontraditional Section 6 Grant Programs.	connectivity and rewilding goals through the creation of natural communities conservation plans.
<u>CDFW Proposition 68 Grant Program</u>	The program provides funding to CDFW to award grants to projects that improve a community's ability to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change; improve and protect coastal and rural economies, agricultural viability, wildlife corridors, or habitat; and etc.	The program supports SB 1425 climate resilience, community benefit, habitat connectivity, and biodiversity goals in open space planning projects.
<u>California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)</u>	The HSP Incentives Program provides financial assistance for implementation of conservation management that improve soil health, sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.	The program supports SB 1425's climate resilience and rewilding goals by supporting conservation management that reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
<u>California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB)</u>	WCB provides funding for habitat conservation, land acquisitions, and public access improvements, with a focus on equitable distribution.	The program aligns with SB 1425's goals for equitable access to nature and conservation of natural lands.
<u>California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)</u>	CNRA offers grants through programs like the Urban Greening Program and Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program. Focuses on projects that enhance green spaces in urban and historically underrepresented communities.	The program supports SB 1425's equity and equitable access goals by enhancing urban open space and environmental justice outcomes.
<u>Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFC)</u>	RFFC establishes infrastructure in fire-prone areas to implement the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, aiding California's goal of treating a million forest acres annually. It enhances wildfire mitigation by empowering local knowledge and leadership.	The program supports SB 1425 climate resilience goals and open space stewardship in fire-prone regions.
<u>CNRA's Tribal Nature Based Solutions Program</u>	Provides funding and support for California Native American Tribes to implement nature-based projects that advance climate resilience, cultural revitalization, and environmental stewardship on Tribal community lands.	The program supports SB 1425's emphasis on climate resilience and equity through culturally relevant conservation and

Tribal community co-stewardship.

<u>California State Coastal Conservancy Grants</u>	California State Coastal Conservancy Grants fund projects that protect, restore, and enhance coastal resources and public access along California's coast and San Francisco Bay Area in alignment with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan.	The program supports SB 1425's open space preservation and equitable access objectives, specific to coastal areas and the San Francisco Bay Area.
<u>Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grants</u>	The Sierra Nevada Conservancy offers grants to support watershed health, forest resilience, and community sustainability within the Sierra Nevada Region through planning and implementation projects.	The program helps implement SB 1425's conservation and climate resilience goals within the Sierra Nevada Region.
<u>Cool California Database</u>	The Cool California Database shows public and private funding available for climate action and sustainability projects.	The program supports SB 1425 implementation by assisting community partners in identifying funding for climate-resilient projects.
<u>CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Program</u>	Funds tree planting, urban greening, and forestry planning efforts to reduce heat and improve public health in urban areas.	The program aligns with SB 1425's goals for rewilding and resiliency, specifically in urban areas.
<u>CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant Program</u>	Supports forest health projects including reforestation, prescribed fire, and fuel reduction to reduce wildfire risk and improve ecosystem function	The program supports SB 1425's climate resilience and rewilding goals by restoring and managing forests, specific to reducing wildfire risk.
<u>Delta Conservancy Grant Program</u>	Funds restoration, water quality, and climate adaptation projects in the Sacramento, San Joaquin Delta region	The program supports SB 1425's equity and climate resilience goals specific to the San Joaquin Delta region.
<u>DOC Climate Smart Land</u>	Funded by the Budget Act of 2022 (AB 179, 2022), to implement projects or develop plans that increase climate action on California's natural and working lands and are consistent	The program advances SB 1425's alignment with equity, climate resilience, and rewilding by

Management Program

with the State's Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy.

enhancing natural and working lands.

7.3 Tools/Frameworks

A variety of tools and frameworks, including Greenprints and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs), are available to help jurisdictions plan, implement and sustain open space policies that meet SB 1425 requirements while advancing long-term goals for equity, climate resilience and ecological health.

7.3.1 Natural Community Conservation Plans

In California, NCCPs are voluntary, long-term conservation plans authorized under the California Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (Fish & Game Code § 2800 et seq.) are designed to protect and restore regional biodiversity by conserving large, interconnected areas of habitat while allowing for compatible development. NCCPs go beyond project-by-project mitigation by taking a landscape-scale approach to protecting multiple species and natural communities, coordinating conservation efforts across jurisdictions, and integrating ecological goals with land use planning.

As such they represent a key strategy for jurisdictions seeking to meet the rewilding provisions of SB 1425. Under Government Code § 65565.5(b), “rewilding opportunities” may include, but are not limited to, “[p]reserving, enhancing, and expanding an integrated network of open space to support beneficial uses,” and “[e]stablishing a Natural Community Conservation Plan to provide for coordinated mitigation of the impacts of new development.”

NCCPs serve as both a compliance pathway and a best practice under SB 1425. They offer a regional, science-based framework for conserving biodiversity, protecting habitats, and supporting landscape connectivity while enabling sustainable development. When properly implemented, they can help jurisdictions fulfill SB 1425’s directive to integrate rewilding into the General Plan’s Open Space Element in coordination with the land use element.

If a jurisdiction falls within the boundaries of an existing NCCP or HCP, it is essential to identify, summarize and evaluate relevant provisions to ensure that any proposed open space actions under SB 1425 align with existing conservation commitments. This includes confirming that rewilding strategies, such as habitat restoration, corridor expansion, or passive land management, do not conflict with already-approved mitigation programs or conservation easements. If no NCCP, HCP, or other regulated conservation framework applies to the planning area, this should be clearly stated to maintain transparency and reduce uncertainty during environmental review and plan updates.

To align conservation planning with SB 1425, jurisdictions should consider the following best practices:

Define Goals and Engage Community partners:

- Clearly outline the objectives of the conservation plan and involve local communities, government agencies, and environmental organizations in the planning process

Inventory and Analyze Resources:

- Collect and assess data on natural resources, including plants, animals and ecosystems, to understand current conditions and identify areas needing protection or restoration

Develop and Implement Strategies:

- Create specific conservation actions, ensure legal compliance, secure funding and establish monitoring systems to adapt strategies as needed
- Promote public awareness and education to gain support and encourage community involvement

7.3.2 Greenprints

Greenprints are highlighted here due to their alignment with key priorities of equity, climate resilience and rewilding. Greenprints are concrete planning frameworks that provide user-friendly spatial data and analysis that can inform local decision-making, especially in communities with limited technical capacity.

A greenprint is a spatial planning tool or strategy, often map-based, that identifies:

- Existing natural and working lands
- Conservation priorities
- Recreational opportunities
- Ecosystem services
- Gaps in access to open space

Greenprints strongly align with SB 1425's emphasis on prioritizing conservation, restoration, and access improvements. Greenprints can support assessments of ecological conditions, identify gaps in access, and guide multi-benefit strategies that align with equity, climate resilience and biodiversity goals.

Table 4: Greenprint examples

Name	Description
Santa Clara Valley Greenprint	A strategic conservation plan that guides land protection, natural resource management, and sustainable development in Santa Clara Valley.
Bay Area Greenprint	A mapping and data tool that helps integrate natural and agricultural resource conservation into planning and development across the San Francisco Bay Area.

It is important to note that Greenprints are just one of many available resources. Jurisdictions are encouraged to explore and use the tools that best fit their local context, capacity and planning objectives. A broader list of available tools and datasets is provided in Appendix E: *Data Sources*.

7.4 Quantifying and Monitoring Implementation

To demonstrate meaningful progress, support adaptive management, and identify best practices, jurisdictions are encouraged to include an Implementation Chapter that outlines measurable indicators for evaluating the success of open space policies. This may be included within the Open Space Element itself or, as is common in many general plans, integrated into a consolidated implementation section that addresses programs and actions across all elements. This is essential not only for accountability but also for guiding course corrections and maximizing the effectiveness of open space policies in advancing equity, climate resilience, and ecological integrity.

Regular progress reporting, ideally aligned with general plan update cycles or implementation reviews, can help jurisdictions stay on track and continuously improve the effectiveness and equity of their open space planning efforts.

Metrics to Consider

Jurisdictions should consider incorporating the following performance indicators:

Equitable Park and Open Space Access Standards

Measure proximity to parks and open spaces by income level, historically underrepresented populations, and equity-based community designation. Consider setting equity-centered targets such as access within a reasonable walking distance to a park or open space.

Tree Canopy Coverage

Track increases in urban tree canopy including number of trees planted, as a metric for heat mitigation, air quality improvement, and equitable greening, particularly in historically under-canopied neighborhoods.

Environmental and Ecological Stewardship Programs

Track the number and demographic reach of stewardship programs, such as community science, workforce development programs, youth habitat restoration programs, and volunteer ecological monitoring.

Restored Habitat Acreage

Total area restored or rehabilitated through rewilding, conservation easements, and other restoration efforts.

Stewardship of Working Lands

Document practices that enhance habitat, soil health, and water conservation on agricultural and rangelands, including participation in conservation incentive programs and partnerships with farmers, ranchers and Tribal communities.

Native Species Reintroduction

Count and track species successfully reintroduced and sustained within the planning area.

Ecological Health Improvement

Track the total number of acres that demonstrate measurable improvements in ecological health (e.g. native vegetation cover, soil quality, biodiversity, etc.)

Community Engagement & Equity Metrics

Document the number of outreach events, participation rates by community type, accessibility improvements, and qualitative feedback from historically underrepresented communities.

Climate Resilience Metrics

Include indicators such as urban heat island reduction, flood risk mitigation, and water storage.

Monitoring Platforms and Tools

To ensure transparency and effective adaptive management, jurisdictions can consider investing in or partnering with agencies and organizations to develop or use monitoring platforms, data dashboards, and Geographic Information System (GIS) tools. These platforms can:

- Centralize data collection and display spatial and temporal trends
- Enable public access and foster community trust
- Track co-benefits of nature-based solutions across equity, health and climate categories
- Inform annual or biannual progress reports and allow for recalibration of goals and strategies

8. References

- California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA). (2022). *Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy*. https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Expanding-Nature-Based-Solutions/CNRA-Report-2022---Final_Accessible.pdf
- California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA). (2024). *California's Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets*. <https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Expanding-Nature-Based-Solutions/Californias-NBS-Climate-Targets-2024.pdf>
- Carey, J. (2016). *Rewilding*. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(4), 806–808. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1522151112>
- Carroll, C., & Noss, R. (2021). *Wildlife corridors and connectivity: A conservation strategy for biodiversity*. *Conservation Biology*, 35(3), 765–778.
- Carver, S., Convery, I., Hawkins, S., Beyers, R., Eagle, A., Kun, Z., van Maanen, E., Cao, Y., Fisher, M., Edwards, S. R., Nelson, C., Gann, G. D., Shurter, S., Aguilar, K., Andrade, A., Ripple, W. J., Davis, J., Sinclair, A., Bekoff, M., ... Soulé, M. (2021). *Guiding principles for rewilding*. *Conservation Biology*, 35(6), 1882–1893. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13730>
- Donlan, J. (2005). *Re-wilding North America*. *Nature*, 436(7053), 913–914. <https://doi.org/10.1038/436913a>
- Fabos, J. G. (2004). *Greenway planning in the United States: Its origins and recent case studies*. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 68(2-3), 321–342.
- Gardali, T., Dybala, K. E., & Seavy, N. E. (2021). *Aquifer recharge and water sustainability through rewilding approaches*. *Water Resources Research*, 57(4), e2021WR030310.
- Gökçeoğlu, C., & Kincal, C. (2023). *Assessment of emergency gathering points and temporary shelter areas for disaster resilience in Elazığ, Turkey*. *ResearchGate*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375422816>
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). (2021). *Rewilding and sustainable land management: A framework for conservation*. IUCN Publications.
- Larson, L. R., Jennings, V., & Cloutier, S. A. (2016). *Community-based approaches to urban green spaces: Enhancing accessibility and social benefits*. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 18, 1–10.
- Lehmann, S. (2021). *Urban rewilding: Strategies for preserving natural landscapes and reducing urban sprawl*. *Journal of Urban Design*, 26(5), 567–583.

Lorimer, J., Sandom, C., Jepson, P., Doughty, C., Barua, M., & Kirby, K. J. (2015). *Rewilding: Science, practice, and politics*. Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 40(1), 39–62.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-102014-021406>

Maruani, T. (2007). *Environmental education and awareness: Engaging underserved populations in conservation efforts*. Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, 50(2), 345–362.

Nature-Based Climate Solutions. (2024). *Mitigating climate impacts through open space buffers and fire-resistant landscapes*. Climate Policy Journal, 42(1), 122–135.

OPR. (2025, January 6). *General Plan Guidelines and Technical Advisories*. Retrieved from Governor's Office of Planning and Research: <https://opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/guidelines.html>

Perino, A. (2019). *Community engagement in rewilding: Fostering sustainable land stewardship and ecological restoration*. Restoration Ecology, 27(6), 1322–1331.

Pettorelli, N., Barlow, J., Stephens, P. A., Durant, S. M., Connor, B., Schulte to Bühne, H., Sandom, C. J., Wentworth, J., & du Toit, J. T. (2018). *Making rewilding fit for policy*. Journal of Applied Ecology, 55(3), 1114–1125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13082>

Power, M. E., Tilman, D., Estes, J. A., Menge, B. A., Bond, W. J., Mills, L. S., Daily, G., Castilla, J. C., Lubchenco, J., & Paine, R. T. (1996). *Challenges in the quest for keystones*. BioScience, 46(8), 609–620. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1312990>

Seddon, P. J., Griffiths, C. J., Soorae, P. S., & Armstrong, D. P. (2014). *Reversing defaunation: Restoring species in a changing world*. Science, 345(6195), 406–412.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1251818>

Soulé, M. E., & Noss, R. (1998). *Rewilding and biodiversity: Complementary goals for continental conservation*. Wild Earth, 8(3), 18–28.

State of California. (2024, December 3). Gov. Code § 65565.5. Retrieved from California Legislative Information:
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=65565.5&lawCode=GOV

State of California. (2024, December 3). Gov. Code § 65564. Retrieved from California Legislative Information:
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=65564&lawCode=GOV

State of California. (2024, December 3). Gov. Code § 65352.3. Retrieved from California Legislative Information:

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=65352.3&lawCode=GOV

State of California. (2024, December 3). Gov. Code § 65300.5. Retrieved from California Legislative Information:

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=65300.5&lawCode=GOV

State of California. (2024, December 3). Gov. Code § 65565.5(b). Retrieved from California Legislative Information:

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=65565.5&lawCode=GOV

Svenning, J.-C., Pedersen, P. B. M., Donlan, C. J., Ejrnæs, R., Faurby, S., Galetti, M., Hansen, D. M., Sandel, B., Sandom, C. J., Terborgh, J. W., & Vera, F. W. M. (2016). *Science for a wilder Anthropocene: Synthesis and future directions for trophic rewilding research*. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 113(4), 898–906. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1502556112>

Wolch, J. (2014). *Greening cities: Prioritizing urban open spaces for climate resilience*. Environmental Research Letters, 9(6), 065002.

Yang, B., & Li, S. (2013). *Green infrastructure design for stormwater runoff and water quality: Empirical evidence from large watershed-scale community developments*. Water, 5(4), 2038–2057. <https://doi.org/10.3390/w5042038>

9. Appendices

A: Definitions

Table 5: Key definitions

Term	Definition	Reference
Access (Refer to Equitable Access)	Access to open space for all residents in a manner that considers social, economic, and racial equity.	Gov. Code § 65565.5(a)(1)
Action Program	Specific programs which the legislative body intends to pursue in implementing its open-space plan.	Gov. Code § 65564
Adaptation	An action or set of actions that reduce physical climate risk.	California Climate Adaptation Strategy
Ancestral Land Return	The act of returning ancestral lands to Tribal community ownership in excess of State needs, and support California Tribes' co-management of and access to natural lands within a California Tribe's ancestral land.	CNRA Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program
Best Practice	A technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has been proven to reliably lead to a desired result, while recognizing that alternative techniques or methodologies are open to users.	California Code of Regulations, Title 2, Section 13(d)
Biodiversity	A component and measure of ecosystem health and function. It is the number and genetic richness of different individuals found within the population of a species, of populations found within a species range, of different species found within a natural community or ecosystem, and of different communities and ecosystems found within a region.	Pub. Res. Code § 12220, 1001 (2024)
	The biodiversity of California is comprised of the plants, animals, including humans, and fungi that reside within the State, as well as its rivers, lakes, beaches, deserts, forests, mountain ranges, and other natural landscapes.	Pub. Res. Code § 1001 (2024)

Biological Resources	Living components of the environment including plants, animals, and their habitats, particularly those considered sensitive, rare, or endangered.	CEQA Appendices G
California Native American Tribes	"...a Native American tribe located in California that is on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission for the purposes of Chapter 905 of the Statutes of 2004."	Pub. Res. Code § 21073 (2014)
Climate Hazard	Potentially harmful physical events or trends resulting from climate change, such as extreme heat, wildfires, sea level rise, or flooding.	CA Adaptation Planning Guide (2020)
Climate Resilience	<p>The ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organization, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change.</p> <p>The ability to prepare for threats and hazards, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from adverse conditions and disruptions. More specifically, climate resilience is the capacity of interconnected social, economic, and ecological systems to cope with a climate change event, trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure.</p> <p>Describes a State of readiness to face climate risks.</p>	LCI General Plan Guidelines (2017) Fifth National Climate Assessment (2023) Appendices 5. Glossary CA Climate Adaptation Strategy
Climate-smart Practices	Management strategies that simultaneously advance climate adaptation, greenhouse gas reduction, and ecosystem health.	CA Natural and Working Lands Strategy (2022)
Co-benefits	The ancillary or additional benefits of policies that are implemented with a primary goal, such as climate change mitigation, acknowledging that most policies designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions also have other, often at least equally important, benefits (e.g., energy savings, economic benefits, air quality benefits, public health benefits). Also referred to as "multiple benefits".	EPA Co-benefits

Cultural Resources	Archaeological sites, historic buildings, cultural landscapes and sacred places that have significance to a cultural group, including Tribal communities.	CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5; Public Resource Code § 21074
Disadvantaged Community	“...an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code or an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.”	Gov. Code § 65302(h)(4)(A)
Ecological Resilience	The capacity of ecosystems to absorb disturbances and reorganize while undergoing change to retain essentially the same function, structure and feedback.	CA Biodiversity Collaborative
Ecological Restoration	“... the practice of actively assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed through human intervention, aiming to renew and restore its natural functions and biodiversity to a healthy State.”	Society for Ecological Restoration
Element	Topics required in a general plan with equal legal standing and internal consistency requirements.	Gov. Code § 65302, 65300.5
Environmental Justice	the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.	Gov. Code § 65040.12(e)(1)
Equitable Access	“...means that all people can experience and enjoy California’s outdoors regardless of who they are or where they live. It also means that everyone can experience the outdoors in a way	CNRA’s Outdoors for All

that is safe, welcoming, convenient, affordable, and culturally relevant. “

“...to ensure that all Californians have equitable opportunities to safe and affordable access to nature and the benefits of nature, and to prevent and minimize the intentional and unwarranted limitation of sustainable public access to public lands, where appropriate, including, but not limited to, local, regional, State, and federal parks, rivers, lakes, beaches, forests, mountain ranges, deserts, and other natural landscapes.”

[AB 30 \(2022\)
Equitable Outdoor
Access Act](#)

Equity	“...achieving fair outcomes for all groups, while fully acknowledging and addressing unequal starting points...”	CNRA’s Outdoors for All
Equity Priority Communities	“...census tracts that have a significant concentration of historically underrepresented communities...”	ABAG Equity Priority Communities
Goal	A general expression of community values and direction, expressed as ends (not actions)	LCI General Plan Guidelines (2017)
Green Infrastructure	An approach to water management that protects, restores, or mimics the natural water cycle, often through vegetation, soils, and natural processes.	EPA Green Infrastructure
Greenprints	A science-based, regional conservation plan that maps natural resource values, identifying opportunities for land conservation and stewardship.	SoCal Greenprint
Habitat Connectivity	The degree to which landscapes facilitate or impede movement of species and ecological flows between habitat patches.	Wildlife Conservation Board
Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)	A plan prepared under the federal Endangered Species Act that allows for economic development while protecting habitat for endangered or threatened species.	Endangered Species Act § 10(a)(1)(B)
Habitat Fragmentation	The process by which large and contiguous habitats are divided into smaller, isolated sections, negatively affecting biodiversity and ecological function.	CDFW Habitat Connectivity

Habitat Patch	A contiguous area of habitat that supports a population of one or more species and contributes to ecological function within a landscape.	Wildlife Conservation Board
Historically Underrepresented Communities	Refers to populations or groups lacking historical or current representation in decision-making or aspects of economic, social, or civic life. “...used to encompass a range of groups that have been systematically excluded from land use decision-making and equitable public investment. This includes but is not limited to Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) as defined by SB 1000, as well as low-income communities, vulnerable communities, and equity-priority communities. While each of these terms has distinct policy relevance and community origins, we use “historically underrepresented communities” as a unifying phrase to emphasize structural exclusion and the need for inclusion in open space planning.”	2023 California State Hazard Mitigation Plan, Volume 2 LCI’s SB 1425 Open Space TA (2025)
Implementation Action	Specific tasks, programs or procedures carried out to achieve a goal or policy within a general plan.	LCI General Plan Guidelines (2017)
Low-income Communities	“...are census tracts with median household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with median household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093.”	California Health & Safety Code § 39713
Multi-benefit opportunities	Approaches that address multiple objectives, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving public health, conserving natural resources, and enhancing economic vitality.	LCI General Plan Guidelines (2017)
Native Vegetation	Plant species that are Indigenous to a given area in geological time, including plants that have developed, occur naturally, or existed for many years in an area.	California Native Plant Society

Natural and Working Lands	<p>“Working lands” means lands used for farming, grazing, or the production of forest products.</p> <p>“Natural lands” means lands consisting of forests, grasslands, deserts, freshwater and riparian systems, wetlands, coastal and estuarine areas, watersheds, wildlands, or wildlife habitat, or lands used for recreational purposes such as parks, urban and community forests, trails, greenbelts, and other similar open-space land.</p>	Pub. Res. Code § 9001.5.(d)
Nature-based Solutions	<p>“...describe actions that work with and enhance nature to help address societal challenges. This term is an umbrella concept being used across the world to describe a range of approaches that protect, sustainably manage, and restore nature to deliver multiple outcomes, including addressing climate change, improving public health, increasing equity, and protecting biodiversity.”</p>	California Natural Resources Agency, Climate Smart Lands Strategy (2022)
Natural Community Conservation Plan	A regional plan under the NCCP Act that conserves species while allowing compatible land uses.	California Fish & Game Code § 2800 et seq.
Open Space	<p>Any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to open space use.</p> <p>Such uses can encompass preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety, military installations, and protection of places, features, and objectives, with the latter specifically referring to Native American historical, cultural and sacred sites.</p>	<p>Gov. Code § 65560(b)</p> <p>Gov. Code § 5097.9</p>
Open Space Plan	“Local open-space plan” means the open-space element of a county or city general plan adopted by the board or council, either as the local open-space plan or as the interim local open-space plan adopted pursuant to Section 65563.”	Gov. Code § 65560(g)

Policy	A specific Statement that guides decision-making and implies a clear commitment to a particular course of action.	LCI General Plan Guidelines (2017)
Procedural equity (process):	Inclusive, accessible, authentic engagement and representation in decision-making processes regarding programs and policies – particularly when involving priority communities.	SGC Racial Equity Action Plan (2023-2025)
Protected and Special Status Species	Species that are federally or State listed as endangered, threatened, candidate, or otherwise protected due to rarity or sensitivity.	CA Fish and Game Code / Endangered Species Act
Protected Areas	Geographic spaces recognized and managed through legal or other effective means to achieve the long-term conservation of nature.	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
Racial Equity	The condition where race no longer predicts life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved.	Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)
Rewilding	<p>“Rewilding is a conservation strategy that aims to restore the natural processes of an ecosystem and increase biodiversity. It involves reducing or stopping human activity and reintroducing plant and animal species, especially keystone species. Rewilding can also involve connecting protected areas through corridors.”</p> <p>“[T]o maintain, or increase, biodiversity, while reducing the impact of present and past human interventions through the restoration of species and ecological processes [...] Rewilding projects involve a range of practical components—such as passive management, reintroduction, and taxon substitution—some of which have attracted criticism.”</p>	<p>Jepson, P., & Blythe, C. (2022)</p> <p>IUCN 2021</p>
Social Equity	Ensuring fair access to resources and opportunities, especially for those who have been historically and systematically excluded.	LCI General Plan Guidelines (2017)
Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)	Species of wildlife that are indicative of a regions biological diversity and have the greatest need for conservation.	California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Transferrable Development Rights (TDR)	TDR is a voluntary, market-driven growth management tool that permits higher intensity development in designated “receiving” areas in exchange for land or resource preservation in designated “sending” areas. This mechanism allows communities to direct growth away from sensitive areas and toward locations better suited for development.	American Planning Association (APA)
Tribal Resources	Cultural sites, landscapes, practices, and knowledge significant to a California Native American Tribe, often legally protected under CEQA and other laws.	Public Resources Code § 21074
Urban Forestry	The cultivation and management of native or introduced trees and related vegetation in urban areas for their present and potential contribution to the economic, physiological, sociological, and ecological well-being of urban society.	Pub. Res. Code § 4799.09(g)
Vulnerable Communities	“Vulnerable communities experience heightened risk and increased sensitivity to climate change and have less capacity and fewer resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from climate impacts. These disproportionate effects are caused by physical (built and environmental), social, political and/or economic factor(s), which are exacerbated by climate impacts. These factors include, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, income inequality and disability. People facing multiple forms of marginalization and inequality will confront more intense climate change impacts and barriers to recovery.”	ICARP - Climate Equity and Vulnerable Communities
Water Quality	The chemical, physical and biological characteristics of water in relation to its suitability for a particular purpose.	Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act
Water Resources or Waters of the State	Any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state.	California Water Code §13050(e)

Wildland-Urban Interface	“The WUI is the zone of transition between unoccupied land and human development. It is the line, area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.”	U.S. Fire Administration
---------------------------------	---	--

B: Policy Examples

Open space plan updates and policies should correlate with the corresponding general plan elements or policies. Specifically:

- Social, economic and racial equity goals with the environmental justice element and related policies
- Climate resilience and open space co-benefits with the safety element.
- Rewilding opportunities with the land use element

This section provides illustrative policy examples that demonstrate how these topics can be integrated into relevant general plan elements and help inform the development of open space policies and programs.

Please note: These examples are for inspiration only. Local jurisdictions should assess and adapt them carefully to ensure consistency with statutory requirements for compliance with SB 1425.

Equity aligned with the environmental justice element

Ensure Equitable Access to Parks and Open Space

- Facilitate safe, walkable access to quality parks and open spaces within a half mile of all residents, prioritizing investments in historically underrepresented communities
- Connect open spaces to accessible, affordable and frequent transit options to ensure that residents without vehicles can reach recreational and natural areas
- Expand trail networks and pedestrian infrastructure to improve connections between homes, schools, parks and public services, with attention to safety and accessibility
- Prioritize park and open space investments in communities lacking adequate acreage per 1,000 residents, using tools such as the Park Access Tool, Healthy Places Index, or CalEnviroScreen to identify gaps

Center Community Voices in Open Space Planning

- Engage historically underrepresented community members from the outset of the planning process, using multilingual outreach, community-based facilitators, and accessible meeting formats

- Partner with community-based organizations to co-design and co-manage open spaces, ensuring that investments reflect cultural practices, recreational needs and community priorities
- Involve residents in the stewardship and maintenance of parks and green infrastructure, including through community maintenance programs, cultural stewardship and environmental education initiatives

Design for Inclusion, Health, and Cultural Relevance

- Design parks, trails and recreational facilities to be culturally relevant, age-inclusive and universally accessible, addressing the needs of children, seniors, people with disabilities and multilingual communities
- Support community gardens, cultural easements, and urban farms in open space plans, especially in food deserts and low-income neighborhoods, to improve food access and community cohesion
- Incorporate art, signage and programming that reflect the languages, traditions and identities of local communities, and protect culturally significant landscapes in open space planning

Maximize Multi-Benefit Outcomes in Historically Underrepresented Communities

- Use parks and open spaces as tools to reduce the urban heat island effect, especially in historically underrepresented and heat-vulnerable communities
- Integrate green infrastructure at larger and small scales in urban areas. Such as tree canopy, bioswales, and native habitats, improving air quality, stormwater management, and mental health
- Leverage public-private partnerships to expand park access and programming in historically underrepresented communities
- Support environmental education and youth engagement programs that connect historically underrepresented communities with nature and green careers

Advance Accountability and Implementation

- Require equity impact assessments for new open space investments or plans, including an analysis of who benefits and who is burdened
- Monitor and report on access, quality and utilization of parks in historically underrepresented communities
- Establish dedicated funding streams and grant criteria that prioritize equity outcomes, ensuring sustained investment in historically underrepresented communities

Climate resilience aligned with the safety element

Protect and Restore Ecological Functions

- Protect areas vital to water supply, water quality and natural hydrological processes, such as wetlands, and riparian corridors, and recharge zones, through land use designations, conservation easements, or zoning overlays
- Restore degraded ecosystems with high potential for rewilding, prioritizing lands that can support biodiversity, aquifer recharge, and long-term ecosystem recovery
- Enhance soil health and native biodiversity by rewilding marginal, underutilized, or abandoned agricultural lands, especially where they border habitat areas or watercourses
- Use rewilding projects to stabilize eroded slopes, reduce sedimentation, and support watershed health, particularly in post-fire landscapes and drought-prone regions

Promote Habitat Connectivity and Landscape Resilience

- Connect fragmented open spaces using greenways, easements, and habitat corridors, focusing on key linkages for wildlife movement across jurisdictional boundaries
- Establish permanent buffers or greenbelts between urban and rural areas, using rewilded landscapes to define urban edges, prevent leapfrog development, and reduce infrastructure strain
- Design regional habitat networks in collaboration with NCCPs, and other conservation strategies, ensuring consistency with state and regional ecological goals

Rewilding aligned with the land use element

Preserve Working Lands with Rewilding Potential

- Protect agricultural and grazing lands from urban conversion, recognizing their potential for long-term food production, carbon sequestration, and eventual rewilding in areas of low productivity or ecosystem importance
- Support regenerative and low-impact agriculture adjacent to rewilded areas, encouraging practices that restore soil carbon, protect pollinators, and reduce water use

Advance Multi-Benefit Land Use and Ecosystem Services

- Use rewilded open spaces to enhance aquifer recharge, manage stormwater, and regulate local climate, especially in floodplains, groundwater basins, or peri-urban zones
- Integrate rewilding into green infrastructure plans, leveraging native vegetation to provide shade, cooling, carbon sinks, and erosion control
- Incorporate rewilded areas into open space networks that provide passive recreation, nature interpretation, and educational opportunities, while preserving ecological integrity

Center Equity and Community Stewardship

- Engage local communities, Tribes, and youth groups in rewilding projects, ensuring cultural relevance, ecological education, and shared stewardship of natural resources

- Partner with community-based organizations and conservation nonprofits to co-manage rewilded lands and ensure long-term sustainability
- Prioritize rewilding projects in historically underrepresented communities, where ecological restoration can also address climate justice, public health and access to nature

Align Rewilding with Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience

- Manage native vegetation in rewilded areas to reduce fire fuel loads and mitigate wildfire risks, using prescribed burns, grazing or thinning as appropriate
- Incorporate fire-smart and drought-tolerant native plant palettes into ecological restoration efforts, particularly in WUI areas

Advance Urban and Small-Scale Rewilding

- Incorporate pocket parks, vacant lots, utility corridors, and roadside medians into rewilding strategies that expand habitat connectivity and green infrastructure within urban areas
- Encourage native vegetation, pollinator gardens, and green roofs that provide ecological benefits while improving air quality, shading and stormwater management
- Support neighborhood-led rewilding projects in schoolyards, community gardens, and public housing landscapes to build local ownership, cultural connection, and ecological literacy
- Connect small-scale rewilded sites to larger open space and habitat corridors, ensuring that urban ecological restoration contributes to regional climate resilience and biodiversity goals
- Focus urban rewilding efforts in historically underrepresented communities where restored green space can address climate justice, public health and access to nature

C: Legislative Tables

Table 6: State laws that directly influence general plan policies in relationship to SB 1425

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Directly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
SB 379 (Jackson, 2008)	Requires local jurisdictions to update their safety element to address climate adaptation and resiliency strategies applicable to that city or county	Equity, Climate resilience	Climate vulnerability	General plan safety element	Ensure Open Space Element policies are consistent with Safety Element and other climate-related policies.
SB 1000 (Leyva, 2016)	Requires local jurisdictions to include an environmental justice element to their general plan.	Equity	Environmental justice	General plan environmental justice element	Ensure open space access policies prioritize equity and environmental justice populations
AB 747 (Levine, 2019)	Requires local jurisdictions to review and update their safety element to include evacuation routes.	Climate resilience	Evacuation Planning	General plan safety element	Ensure Open Space Element policies are consistent with Safety Element and other climate-related policies.
AB 2684 (Bryan, 2024)	Requires an update to the safety element to address extreme heat	Climate resilience	Extreme heat	General plan safety element	Ensure Open Space Element policies are

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Directly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
	hazards, on or after Jan. 1, 2028.				consistent with Safety Element and other climate-related policies.
SB 18 (Burton, 2004)	Requires California cities and counties to consult with California Native American Tribes before the adoption or amendment of general plans or specific plans that may affect Tribal community cultural places.	Equity	Tribal consultation	General plan	Ensure Tribal community consultation before the adoption of Open Space Element if it will affect Tribal community cultural places.
AB 52 (Gatto, 2014)	Requires lead agencies to consult with California Native American Tribes during the CEQA process if a project may impact Tribal cultural resources. Tribal cultural resources must also be considered in environmental review documents.	Equity	Tribal consultation	General plan, CEQA	Ensure coordination between Open Space Element updates and CEQA review processes involving Tribal cultural resources, including early

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Directly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
					consultation under AB 52.
AB 1889 (Friedman, 2024)	Requires local jurisdictions to incorporate considerations for wildlife movement and habitat connectivity into their conservation elements.	Climate resilience, Rewilding	Habitat connectivity	General plan conservation element	Ensure Open Space Element policies are consistent with the Conservation Element and other habitat and wildlife movement policies.
SB 1035 (Jackson, 2018)	Requires local jurisdictions to include and update climate adaptation and resilience strategies in general plan housing or safety element updates.	Climate resilience	Climate adaption	General plan housing or safety elements	Ensure Open Space Element policies are consistent with the Housing and Safety Elements and other climate related policies.

Table 7: State laws that indirectly influence general plan policies in relation to SB 1425

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Indirectly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
AB 1757 (C. Garcia, 2022)	Requires the setting of targets for nature-based solutions (NBS) climate targets for 2030, 2038, and 2045 that contribute to California's goals of achieving carbon neutrality no later than 2045 and protecting Californians from the climate crisis. Codified in Health and Safety Code § 38561.5.	Equity, Climate resilience , Rewilding	Carbon Sequestration, Climate Resilience, and Nature-Based Solution Targets	Climate Action Plans	See nature-based solution targets to develop policies and potentially local targets to help achieve State-wide targets.
AB 32 (Nunez, 2006)	Requires California to reduce its GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, a reduction of approximately 15 percent below emissions expected under a "business as usual" scenario.	Equity, Climate resilience , Rewilding	GHG Reductions	Climate Action Plans	Supports inclusion of GHG reduction benefits in open space and rewilding strategies.

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Indirectly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
SB 246 (Wieckowski, 2015)	Established the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) to coordinate local and regional efforts with State climate adaptation strategies.	Climate resilience	Climate Adaption Coordination	Climate Action Plans	Aligns open space adaptation policies with regional/State adaptation priorities and promotes cross-sector coordination.
AB 1482 (Gordon, 2015)	Requires the release of a State Climate Adaptation Strategy every three years. Required State agencies to maximize specified objectives such as promoting the use of natural system and infrastructure.	Climate resilience	Climate Adaptation Strategy	General plan safety element	Requires local plans to integrate natural infrastructure and open space as climate resilience tools, reinforcing co-benefits.
AB 2800 (Quirk, 2016)	Requires all State agencies to consider future climate impacts in all aspects of infrastructure planning, investment, and maintenance.	Climate resilience	Infrastructure Resilience	Climate Action Plans	Promotes infrastructure that integrates green/open space for flood, heat, and climate

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Indirectly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
					resilience functions.
SB 859 (2016)	Established the Urban Greening Program, which aims to fund and develop green infrastructure projects in urban areas that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing multiple community benefits like improved air quality, reduced heat islands, and enhanced public spaces	Equity, Climate resilience	Green Infrastructure	Climate Action Plans and general plan environmental justice elements	Supports creation of green corridors, urban forests, and nature-based amenities in historically underrepresented communities
AB 398 (Garcia, 2017)	Identified climate adaptation and resilience as a priority expenditure category using cap-and-trade auction revenue.	Climate resilience	Cap and trade investments	Climate Action Plans	Promotes use of cap-and-trade revenues to fund multi-benefit open space projects with climate resilience co-benefits.
SB 901 (Dodd, 2018)	Enacted initiatives to support adaptation and resilience efforts	Climate resilience	Wildfire resilience	Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs), general plan	Encourages open space as defensible space, wildfire buffer zones,

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Indirectly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
	to increasingly frequent and extreme wildfires.			safety Elements.	and green infrastructure in fire-prone areas.
SB 1320 (Stern 2020)	Requires the development of California Climate Assessments every five years and recognizes climate vulnerable communities.	Climate resilience , Equity, Rewilding	Climate Vulnerability Assessments	Climate Action Plans	Provides data to inform targeting of open space and rewilding efforts in climate vulnerable communities.
EO N-82-20	Outlines a comprehensive and results-oriented agenda to expand nature-based solutions across California. It advanced biodiversity conservation as an administration priority and elevated the role of nature in the fight against climate change.	Equity, Climate resilience , Rewilding	30x30 Land and Coastal Water Conservation , Nature-Based Solutions	General plan conservation elements	Encourages land acquisition and open space expansion aligned with biodiversity and equity goals.
SB 1 (Atkins, 2021)	Requires addressing sea level rise along coastal zones through better	Equity, Climate resilience	Sea Level Rise Planning	Local Coastal Programs, Coastal Commission guidance,	Integrates open space buffers, natural defenses, and public access

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Indirectly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
	coordination with State agencies and funding mechanisms. Includes grant funding for organizations that address and mitigate the effects of sea level rise in historically underrepresented and disadvantaged communities,			General plan safety elements	strategies into coastal planning.
SB 27 (Skinner, 2021)	Requires the setting of carbon dioxide removal targets and maintenance of a registry of carbon sequestration projects on natural and working lands.	Climate resilience , Rewilding	Carbon Removal Targets, Project Registry	General plan conservation elements	Supports use of open space for carbon removal and long-term conservation, especially on working lands.
SB 790 (Stern 2021)	Authorizes CDFW to approve compensatory mitigation credits for actions that improve wildlife	Rewilding	Wildlife Connectivity	General plan conservation elements	Prioritizes open space corridors and habitat linkages eligible for mitigation credits.

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Indirectly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
	corridors and connectivity.				
AB 30 (Karla, 2022)	Established the Equitable Outdoor Access Act, which sets forth the State’s commitment to ensuring all Californians can benefit from, and have meaningful access to, the State’s rich cultural and natural resources.	Equity	Equitable Outdoor Access	General plan environmental justice elements	Reinforces access equity as a planning goal, guiding investments in inclusive open space policies.
SB 337 (Min, 2023)	Requires the conservation of at least 30% of the State’s lands and coastal waters by 2030 to combat the biodiversity and climate crises. Codified in Public Resources Code § 71450.	Climate resilience , Rewilding	Biodiversity	General plan conservation element	Mandates permanent protection of open space areas to achieve biodiversity, connectivity, and climate resilience targets.
SB 310 (Dodd, 2024)	Allows California State and local agencies to enter agreements with federally recognized Tribes to support	Climate resilience , Rewilding	Cultural Burning, Tribal Community Sovereignty	Local hazard mitigation plan, General plan safety elements	Encourages inclusion of Tribal stewardship, including cultural burning practices, in

State Law	Description	Area of Focus	Policy Topic	Where Legislation is Indirectly Addressed	Influence on Open Space Element Policies
	and permit cultural burning practices without requiring State permits, recognizing Tribal community sovereignty and advancing wildfire resilience.				rewilding and open space fire management strategies.
SB 375 (Steinberg, 2008)	Requires local jurisdictions to create Sustainable Communities Strategies that align transportation, housing, and land use planning to meet State greenhouse gas reduction targets.	Equity, Climate resilience .	Climate vulnerability	General plan environmental justice and housing elements	Promotes compact development and open space preservation through integrated land use strategies that reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and support access to green space.

D: Best Practices Examples: Plans and Policies

Cities, counties, and organizations across California are advancing best practices to integrate equity, climate resilience, and rewilding into open space planning. These efforts include the development of conservation strategies, establishment of open space preserves, and partnerships with leading initiatives and organizations.

To address climate challenges, many regions are pursuing floodplain restoration, designing fire-adapted landscapes, and enhancing natural buffers against extreme weather. Rewilding activities

are restoring native habitats, reintroducing native species, and improving ecosystem function. Simultaneously, equity-focused approaches are working to ensure open spaces are accessible, inclusive, and beneficial to historically underrepresented communities, advancing environmental justice goals.

Through integrated planning and collaboration, these initiatives are helping to create open spaces that are more resilient, biodiverse and socially inclusive.

The tables below highlight select plans, projects, and policies that exemplify these practices. However, they are not exhaustive nor confirmed to meet SB 1425 statutory requirements and should be evaluated within the specific context of each jurisdiction’s planning efforts.

Table 8: Best practice examples

Plans and Initiatives		
Name	Description	Area of Focus
Contra Costa County Healthy Lands, Healthy People Plan	County initiative focused on advancing conservation, habitat restoration, and climate resilience while promoting public health, equity and access to nature.	Equity, public health, climate resilience, habitat restoration
Sonoma County Carbon Sequestration Inventory and Potential Study	Integrated planning documents addressing health outcomes and ecosystem restoration through carbon sequestration strategies on natural and working lands.	Public health, carbon sequestration, ecosystem services
South San Francisco General Plan	General plan update that incorporates open space equity, climate resilience, and nature-based solutions through a health and sustainability lens.	Connectivity, urban forestry, and flood channel restoration
Open Space Element of Ventura County’s General Plan	A long-range plan guiding decision-making, establishing development standards, and informing community partners about growth and quality of life in Ventura County through 2040.	Agricultural land and wildlife corridor conservation
The Vital++ Lands Initiative	A comprehensive plan prioritizing land conservation in Sonoma County, focusing on agricultural lands, community identity, healthy communities, water, and wildlife through 2031.	Agricultural land conservation, community health and resilience, water, and wildlife protection.

<u>San Bernardino County General Plan (2020 Update)</u>	Addresses open space as buffers for natural hazards, coordinated habitat planning, and multi-benefit conservation strategies.	Multifunctional open space preservation, sustainable land use and habitat connectivity
<u>Alameda City General Plan (2022 Update)</u>	Incorporates green infrastructure for sea-level rise adaptation, wildlife habitat corridors, and emphasizes equitable access and budgeting.	Sea-level rise adaption and wildlife corridor conservation
<u>Marin County General Plan (January 2023 Update)</u>	Focuses on interconnected ecosystems, social equity, cultural/natural heritage, and nature-based solutions for sea-level rise and biodiversity maintenance.	Nature based sea-level rise solutions and cultural/natural heritage
<u>Glenn County General Plan (2023 Update)</u>	Recognizes designated floodways as open spaces, limiting uses to low-intensity activities like agriculture and habitat preservation.	Agricultural and habitat preservation
<u>Siskiyou County General Plan (2024 Update)</u>	Focuses on habitat connectivity, critical habitats, and species protection.	Habitat connectivity and species protection
<u>San Francisco's Recreation and Open Space Element</u>	Invests in multifunctional existing open spaces, including privately owned public spaces.	Multifunctioning open space, urban open space
<u>San Mateo Conservation, Open Space, and Recreation Element</u>	Guides natural resource conservation, climate adaptation, and sustainable recreation, balancing urban growth with ecological preservation.	Sustainable recreation and ecological preservation
<u>San Diego County Conservation and Open Space Element</u>	Provides a framework for conserving natural resources, promoting biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable land use practices.	Sustainable land use and conservation
<u>Butte County Upper Ridge Community Plan</u>	Focuses on post-wildfire recovery, strengthening community resilience through housing, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability, emphasizing disaster preparedness.	Post wildfire recovery and disaster preparedness
<u>Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan</u>	A regional partnership aiming to protect endangered species and natural resources while streamlining the permitting process for	Protecting endangered species

	development, balancing growth with conservation.	while balancing development growth
South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan	Provides a regional approach to habitat conservation, protecting large-scale habitats while allowing for planned development and infrastructure.	Habitat conservation and strategic planning development
Mariposa Recreation and Resiliency Plan	The plan integrates wildfire resiliency as a key theme throughout and aligns with other county plans, including the Mariposa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan	Wildlife resiliency and protection
Ventura County Ag Plan	A comprehensive policy framework guiding sustainable agricultural practices and land conservation in Ventura County, ensuring long-term viability.	Sustainable agriculture and land conservation
Santa Clara Valley Ag Plan	A strategic plan aimed at supporting agricultural viability, environmental stewardship, and farmland protection in Santa Clara County.	Agricultural land protection
Mariposa Ag Plan	A policy document focusing on promoting sustainable agricultural development while balancing environmental and economic interests.	Sustainable agricultural
Yolo County Climate Action Plan	The Climate Action Plan is designed to address climate change through conservation, sustainability, and carbon sequestration strategies.	Climate change strategies with a carbon negative goal
Pasadena Open Space Element	A policy plan emphasizing the enhancement, preservation, and accessibility of urban open spaces within Pasadena.	Urban open space preservation
Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan	A county-wide initiative plan aimed at managing and protecting habitats for endangered and native species in Yolo County.	Balancing conservation strategies with sustainable development

City of Chico Vegetative Fuels Management Plan	A proactive fire management strategy that focuses on reducing hazardous vegetation to minimize wildfire risks.	Hazardous vegetation reduction
Thousand Oaks General Plan	The plan prioritizes the preservation and expansion of open spaces to protect natural resources, maintain scenic beauty, and provide recreational opportunities while balancing responsible urban development.	Tiered growth recommendations to protect outlying areas and open space
Tiburon General Plan	Focuses on guiding land use, conservation, and community development, balancing growth with environmental preservation.	Coastal land conservation, hillside development regulations, community character preservation.
La Honda Creek Master Plan	A strategic plan for managing La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, focusing on habitat conservation, sustainable recreation, and public access.	Grazing land stewardship, sensitive species protection, sustainable public access.
City of Carpinteria Local Hazard Mitigation Plan	A framework for reducing risks from natural disasters in Carpinteria, emphasizing resilience, emergency preparedness, and environmental protection.	Floodplain management, wildfire defense, tsunami risk reduction.
City of Redding Parks and Trails Element	A component of Redding's General Plan that outlines policies for expanding and maintaining parks, trails, and open spaces for public recreation.	Urban greenways, riverfront access, recreational connectivity.
El Dorado County Conservation and Open Space Element	A section of El Dorado County's General Plan that establishes policies for protecting natural resources, open spaces, and rural landscapes.	Forest preservation, rural land use planning, watershed protection.
City of Carpinteria Dune and Shoreline Management Plan	A coastal management strategy aimed at preserving dunes, mitigating erosion, and enhancing resilience against sea-level rise.	Coastal erosion control, dune ecosystem restoration, beach resiliency.

<u>LA County's Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan</u>	A conservation strategy focused on protecting, restoring, and sustainably managing oak woodlands across Los Angeles County.	Heritage tree protection, fire-adapted landscapes, wildlife corridor connectivity.
<u>County of Riverside's Multipurpose Open Space Element</u>	A policy framework integrating habitat conservation, recreation, and sustainable land use planning in Riverside County.	Desert habitat conservation, groundwater recharge areas, recreation planning.
<u>San Mateo County Trails Master Plan</u>	A countywide blueprint for expanding, maintaining, and enhancing trail networks to support recreation, connectivity, and environmental stewardship.	Coastal trail expansion, equestrian-friendly paths, scenic route enhancement.
<u>Santa Clara County Trails Master Plan</u>	A regional plan that guides the development of interconnected trails, promoting access to nature and non-motorized transportation.	Urban-rural trail integration, wildlife-sensitive design, ADA-accessible routes.
<u>Central Valley Flood Protection Plan</u>	A Statewide initiative aimed at reducing flood risks in the Central Valley through improved infrastructure, land management, and ecological restoration.	Levee modernization, multi-benefit floodplain restoration, groundwater recharge.
<u>City of Chico Fuel Management Plan</u>	A proactive wildfire prevention strategy focused on vegetation management and reducing hazardous fuels to protect communities and open spaces.	Wildland-urban interface fire prevention, prescribed burns, defensible space creation.
<u>Solano County General Plan</u>	A comprehensive land use and environmental policy document guiding growth, conservation, and sustainable development in Solano County.	Delta conservation, agricultural-urban balance, renewable energy zoning.
<u>Mid San Joaquin Regional Flood Management Plan</u>	A coordinated flood risk management strategy for the San Joaquin region,	Riparian habitat restoration, floodplain agriculture, climate-

	emphasizing resilience, water conservation, and habitat protection.	adaptive water management.
Butte County General Plan	A comprehensive policy framework guiding land use, conservation, disaster resilience, and sustainable development to balance growth with environmental protection in Butte County.	Post-wildfire recovery planning, agricultural land preservation, watershed protection, sustainable rural development.
Yosemite Slough Neighborhood Adaptation Plan	A neighborhood plan that aims to develop equitable strategies to protect San Francisco's Bayview Hunters Point community focusing on racial equity, climate resilience, ecological restoration, and community capacity building.	Environmental justice, climate adaption, ecological restoration
State Wildlife Action Plan	A comprehensive, science-based strategy developed by the CDFW to proactively conserve the State's diverse wildlife and habitats, particularly focusing on Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), by identifying key threats and outlining targeted conservation actions to prevent species from becoming endangered.	Habitat conservation and connectivity, climate change resilience, ecosystem-based management

Preserves and Reserves

Name	Description	Area of Focus
Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve	Managed by the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, this conserves critical open space and wildlife habitats, balancing habitat protection, climate resilience, and public enjoyment.	Wildlife connectivity and recreational opportunities
Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve	Located on ancestral Mechoopda Indian Tribe land, managed by Chico State Enterprises, aiming to preserve	Wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, and research

	critical habitats and provide areas for environmental research and education.	
Dos Rios Ranch Preserve	The largest floodplain restoration project in California, transforming former farmland into a dynamic river ecosystem.	River ecosystem restoration
Panorama Vista Preserve	A 1,000-acre nature preserve in Bakersfield, enhancing wildlife habitat along the Kern River and providing educational and recreational opportunities.	Wildlife habitat education
Watsonville Slough Farm	A working farm that integrates sustainable agriculture with conservation practices to protect wetlands and biodiversity.	Sustainable agriculture and wetland preservation
Alexandre Family Farm	A regenerative Eco dairy farm producing organic, pasture-raised milk and eggs on property dedicated to multiple conservation easement programs.	Sustainable and regenerative agriculture
Nur Pon Open Space	A protected natural area focused on wetland restoration, cultural heritage preservation, and providing wildlife habitat while offering public recreational opportunities.	Wetland ecosystem restoration, cultural heritage preservation, wildlife habitat enhancement.
Amigos de los Rios – Emerald Necklace Greenway	A regional green infrastructure initiative in Los Angeles County that connects parks, schools, rivers and communities through urban greening and trail development.	Urban greenways, cultural restoration, and equitable public access
San Francisco Bay Trail	A 500-mile trail network around the San Francisco Bay, enhancing shoreline access, non-motorized transportation, and recreational opportunities.	Regional trail access, shoreline connectivity, and recreation
Bay Area Ridge Trail	A 400+ mile regional trail system linking parks and open space along the Bay Area’s ridgelines, with strong community and environmental benefits.	Regional recreation, open space connectivity, and public access

Rooftop Medicine Farm	A one-acre, urban farm perched atop a Temescal Whole Foods in Oakland, run by the nonprofit Deep Medicine Circle. It grows and donates hundreds of pounds of organic produce weekly guided by Tribal stewardship and distributes it free to low-income communities.	Tribal stewardship and urban ecological restoration
---------------------------------------	---	---

E: Data Sources

Many jurisdictions begin by compiling a comprehensive dataset of priority open space, conservation areas, and existing and potential parkland using their land use mapping tools. These tools typically catalog all open space, agricultural lands, natural lands, parks, and other areas considered “open spaces” in their local zoning. From such basemaps, some jurisdictions apply an overlay, or map layer, to visualize and inform open space planning conversations and decision-making.

Example map layers include:

- Critical habitats for endangered plant and wildlife species (i.e., a biodiversity overlay)
- Corridors for wildlife movement (i.e., a connectivity overlay)
- Areas that are exceptionally vulnerable to flooding, sea level rise, or wildfire disasters (i.e., a risk overlay)
- Spaces that serve particular ecological functions such as wetlands (i.e., a resilience overlay)
- Areas lacking open spaces and parks within a certain radius, socioeconomic and demographic data
- Open spaces that provide easy and affordable access for residents as a health or educational benefit (i.e., an equity overlay)
- Areas that are designated as historically and culturally significant sites (i.e., a heritage overlay)
- Spaces that hold exceptional agricultural potential (i.e., an agricultural overlay)

Jurisdictions are encouraged to customize these layers depending on local priorities. Data for compiling these layers can be drawn from State and Federal agencies shown below:

Data Sources

Federal Resources

[United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service \(USDA NRCS\)](#)

[Web Soil Survey](#)

Provides soil data and information produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

Lists of Hydric Soils

Maintains a list of these soils, categorized by map unit components, available through the Web Soil Survey.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Botanical Inventories for Federally Listed, Proposed, and Candidate Plants

Outlines protocols for conducting and reporting botanical inventories for federally protected plant species.

Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS)

Provides spatial data for proposed and designated critical habitats for threatened and endangered species.

Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC)

A tool for streamlining USFWS environmental review by integrating project planning with environmental data.

National Wetlands Inventory; Wetland Mapper

Interactive mapper for viewing and downloading wetlands data integrated with other geographic information.

U.S. Geological Survey

National Hydrography Dataset

Represents the national water drainage network, including rivers, lakes, and related features. This dataset is no longer maintained but remains accessible.

State Resources

California Department of Conservation

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP)

Provides consistent, nonregulatory data on the status and changes of agricultural land across California.

California Natural Resources Agency

CA Nature

A suite of interactive tools that compile Statewide biodiversity, access, climate, and conservation data in support of 30x30.

CDFW

California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB)

A GIS-based inventory of the status and locations of rare plants and animals in California.

California's Threatened and Endangered Species

Official list of species protected under CESA.

Species of Special Concern Lists and Accounts

Identifies animal species in decline or at risk, though not formally listed under CESA.

Sensitive Natural Communities

Natural communities ranked by rarity and threat, using scientific evaluation and NatureServe's methodology.

Biogeographic Information and Observation System (BIOS)

GIS-based platform for viewing, analyzing, and sharing Statewide biological data.

Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List

Comprehensive list of plant species tracked by the CNDDDB, including rare and endangered plants.

ACE (Areas of Conservation Emphasis)

A mapping tool that identifies priority conservation areas based on biodiversity, climate resilience, and habitat connectivity.

California Native Plant Society

Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants

An online resource for up-to-date information on California's rare, threatened, and endangered plants.

California State Parks

Park Access Tool

An interactive platform identifying gaps in park access to support equitable investment in green and recreational spaces.

Additional resources

CalEPA EJ program

Focuses on addressing environmental disparities by ensuring fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all communities, particularly those disproportionately affected by pollution and environmental hazards.

California Healthy Places Index (HPI)

The Healthy Places Index is a dataset and online tool that maps local factors that predict life expectancy and compares community conditions across the State. HPI provides overall scores and data on specific policy action areas that shape health, such as housing, transportation, education, and more.

[Climate Change & Health Vulnerability Indicators for California \(CCHVI\)](#)

CCHVI can be used by local health partners and planners to identify people and places that are more susceptible to adverse health impacts associated with climate change, specifically extreme heat, wildfire, sea level rise, drought, and poor air quality.

[California Access and Functional Needs \(AFN\) Web Map](#)

Can be used to assist emergency managers and planners to identify Access and Functional Needs Communities.

[The Social Vulnerability Scores from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's \(FEMA\) National Risk Index](#)

The Social Vulnerability Scores can be used to determine susceptibility of social groups to adverse impacts from current and historic natural hazards for each United States county and Census tract.

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Social Vulnerability Index](#)

Database to help emergency response planners and public health officials identify, map, and plan support for communities that will likely need support before, during and after a public health emergency. CDC Social Vulnerability Index | Resources | Community Stress Resource Center | ATSDR

[Habitat Conservation Plans \(HCPs\) and Natural Community Conservation Plans \(NCCPs\)](#)

Help balance development and conservation by protecting habitats while allowing for economic growth, with NCCPs taking a broader ecosystem-based approach.

[Regional Conservation Investment Strategies \(RCISs\)](#)

Provide a science-based framework to guide conservation planning and mitigation efforts, helping prioritize areas for habitat protection and restoration.

[CDFW Habitat Connectivity Viewer in BIOS](#)

Is an interactive mapping tool that visualizes wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity to inform land-use planning and conservation decisions.

[The California State Wildlife Action Plan](#)

Outlines strategies for conserving the State's biodiversity by identifying key threats and priority actions for wildlife and habitat management.

[CDFW's Restoring California's Wildlife Connectivity Report](#)

Assesses barriers to wildlife movement and recommends actions to improve habitat connectivity for species migration and adaptation.

[SC Wildlands Missing Linkages reports](#)

Identify critical habitat corridors essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecological resilience across California's landscapes.

[UCLA Biodiversity Atlas of LA](#)

The Atlas is an interactive resource of maps and documents showing urban biodiversity across Los Angeles to inform conservation efforts. By highlighting the city's diverse ecosystems, it supports habitat protection, ecological research, and community engagement in urban wildlife conservation.

[Accelerate Resilience L.A. \(ARLA's\) Living Infrastructure Field Kit](#)

Is a free, open-source tool designed to assist Los Angeles County communities in collaboratively envisioning and planning multi-benefit projects. The resource integrates built, natural, and social systems to foster resilience and sustainability and assists with obtaining information to apply for funding resources.

[AskNature](#)

Is a free online resource that shares nature-inspired strategies to help innovators design sustainable solutions.

[Tree Equity Score](#)

Is a free, data-driven tool created by American Forests that ranks nearly 200,000 U.S. urban neighborhoods to spotlight inequities in tree cover and guide prioritized investment in canopy infrastructure.

F. Community Partner Summarized Feedback

This appendix summarizes findings from interviews with over 36 local jurisdictions, regional agencies, nonprofit organizations, and consultants conducted in 2024 and 2025 as part of the development of this technical advisory. These interviews helped surface implementation barriers, best practices, and contextual considerations for rewilding, equitable access, and climate resilience in local open space planning. While insights helped shape the advisory, this section presents community partners perspectives in their own terms and does not constitute policy guidance.

1. City Governments

Rewilding and Restoration

Many jurisdictions emphasized restoration efforts over “rewilding” per se, often aligning with flood mitigation, wildfire recovery, or invasive species removal. In some places, rewilding was described as converting degraded land (e.g., former ag fields, roadways) into habitat using native species and passive restoration strategies.

Equity and Access

Built-out cities emphasized active transportation, pedestrian connectivity, and equitable access to coastal and inland open space. Some rural communities noted equity as spatial distribution and

access across dispersed populations, rather than targeting a specific historically underrepresented community.

Planning and Implementation Challenges

Cities noted challenges balancing open space conservation with housing mandates. They expressed the need for clearer harmonization between General Plan law, CEQA, the Coastal Act, and State housing laws.

2. County and Regional Agencies

Habitat and Conservation Planning

Several regional agencies described long-term efforts to implement NCCPs, HCPs, and greenbelt planning, often highlighting land acquisition strategies and multi-jurisdiction coordination.

Funding and Capacity

Many expressed difficulties aligning planning mandates with funding timelines and limited staff capacity.

Multi-Benefit Opportunities

Agencies emphasized the importance of framing open space as serving multiple functions, ecosystem protection, wildfire buffers, flood resilience, and public access.

3. Nonprofit Organizations and Land Trusts

Land Acquisition and Stewardship

Land trusts focused on conservation easements as a preferred tool over fee title ownership due to long-term stewardship and cost.

Rewilding Interpretation

There was general agreement that rewilding should emphasize restoring ecological function with native species, but implementation must consider surrounding land use and community context.

4. Tribal Community Coordination

Some jurisdictions cited emerging partnerships with Tribal communities for interpretive signage and habitat restoration.

However, formal Tribal community engagement on open space planning was often noted as an area for growth, especially in urban areas where Tribal community consultation has historically been limited.

5. Cross-Cutting Themes

Barriers to Implementation

Lack of funding and clarity on legal definitions (e.g., “rewilding,” “equitable access”) were the most frequently cited barriers.

Community Support

In many cases, local support for open space protection was strong, particularly where community-based efforts had led to successful land acquisitions.

Summary of interviews

- Local agencies (cities/counties): **11**
- Regional/joint powers/special districts: **6**
- Nonprofits/land trusts/conservation/reserves: **15**
- Consultants/individuals: **4**