

Land Use and Conservation in the Central Valley

Challenges and Opportunities for Land Trusts in California's Heartland



Photos: NASA, 2014; Greening, 2009.

Prepared by Adam Livingston (Sequoia Riverlands Trust, Southern Sierra Partnership) for the 2015 California Council of Land Trusts Conference.

Introduction and Overview

- Context
 - Agriculture
 - Habitat
 - Human population
- Regional challenges
- Opportunities for conservation
 - Land protection
 - Land use planning
 - Land use policy



Photo: SRT, 2005.

The Central Valley in Context

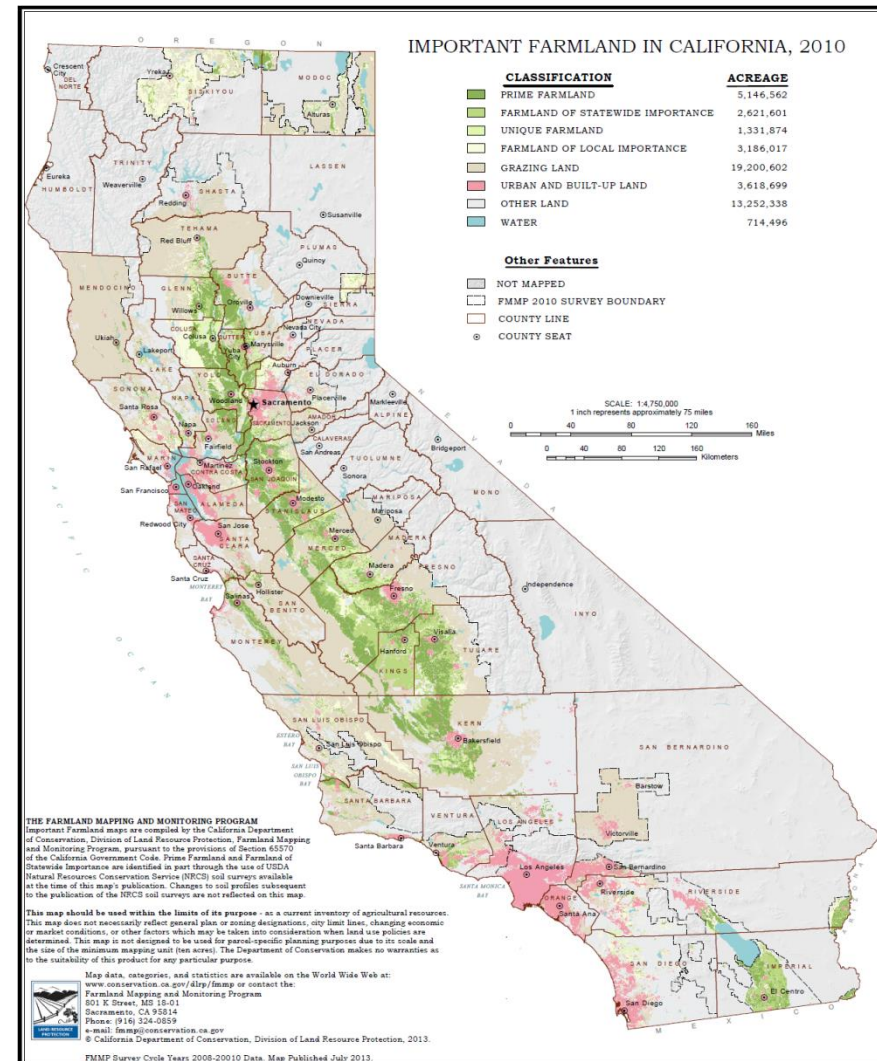
- Some of the most productive farmland on Earth
- Habitat essential to conserving biodiversity as climate changes
- Diverse and rapidly growing human population
- Region's future shaped by land use decisions we're making now



Image: Greening, 2009.

The Central Valley in Context

- 1% of U.S. farmland producing 25% of U.S. table food
- Over 250 crops
- 7 of top 10 farming counties in the state, with over \$30.6 billion in crop receipts



The Central Valley in Context

- Every dollar of farm production adds \$1.90 to local economy
- Counting this multiplier, agriculture in top 7 counties added \$58.2 billion to economy

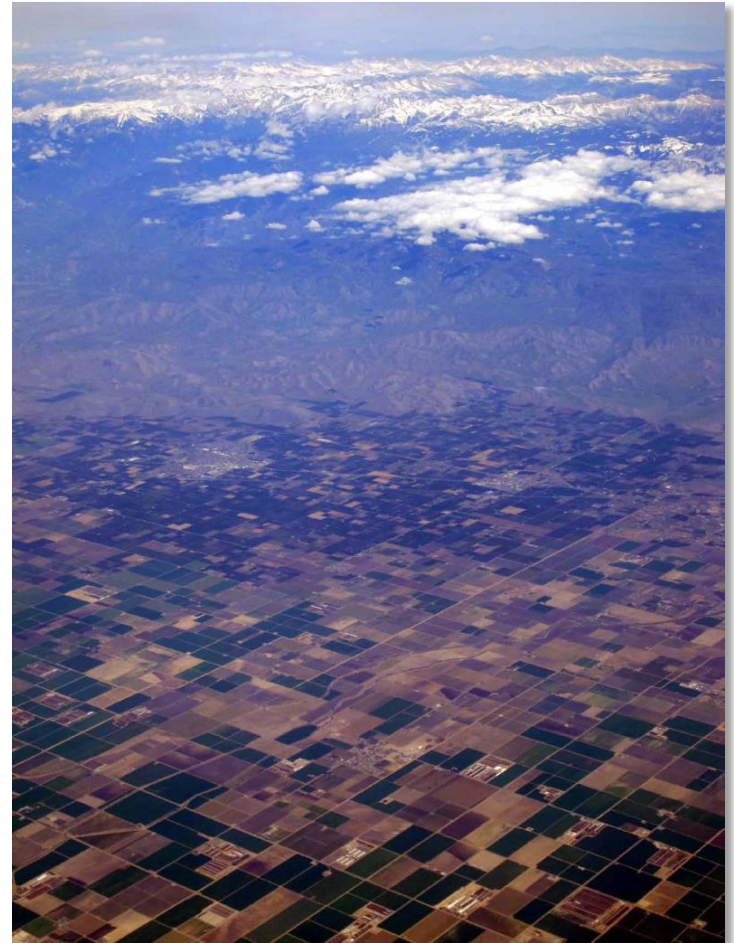
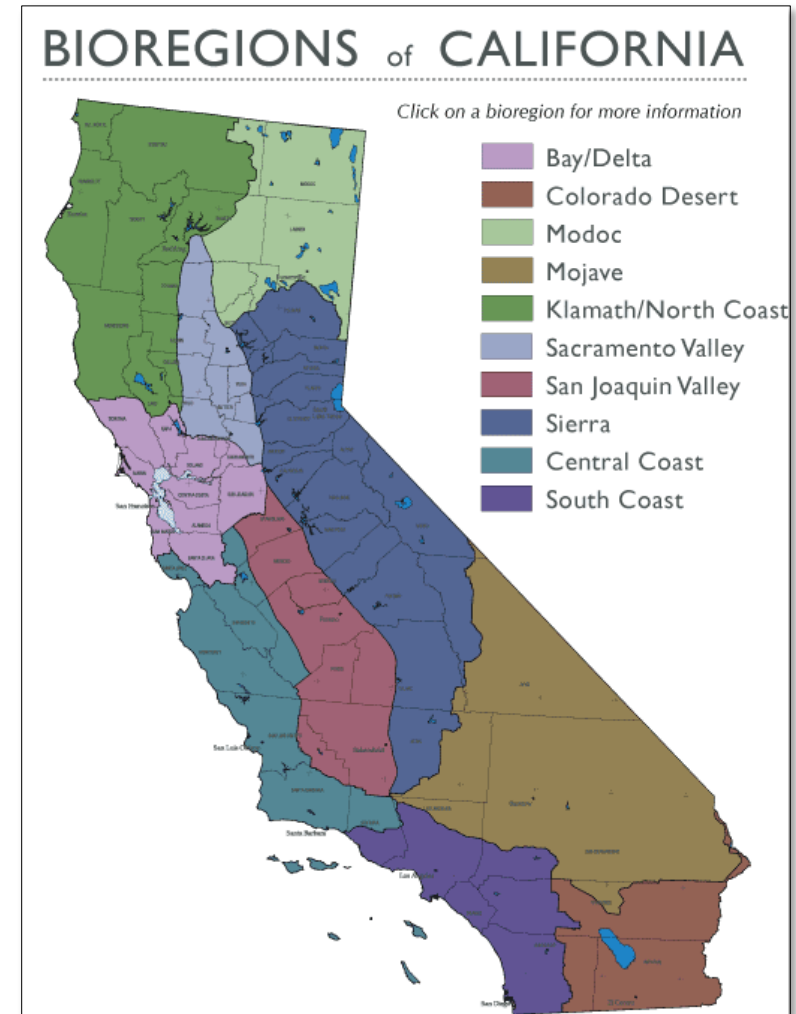


Photo: Huber, 2014 (from Thorne et al., 2014).

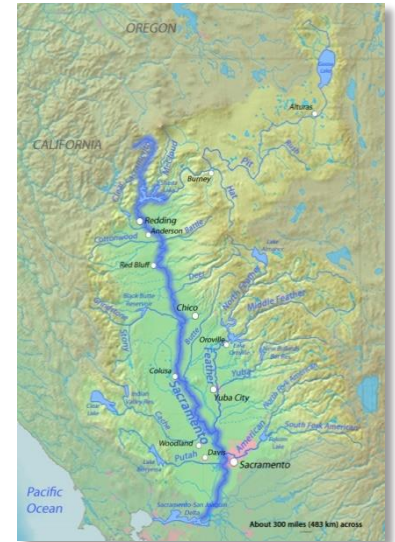
The Central Valley in Context

- Habitat essential to conserving biodiversity and ecosystem function
- Areas where multiple ecological regions converge
- Riparian corridors connecting foothills and Valley floor



The Central Valley in Context

- Sacramento / San Joaquin Delta
- Wetlands / remnant vernal pool habitat
- Special status species habitat

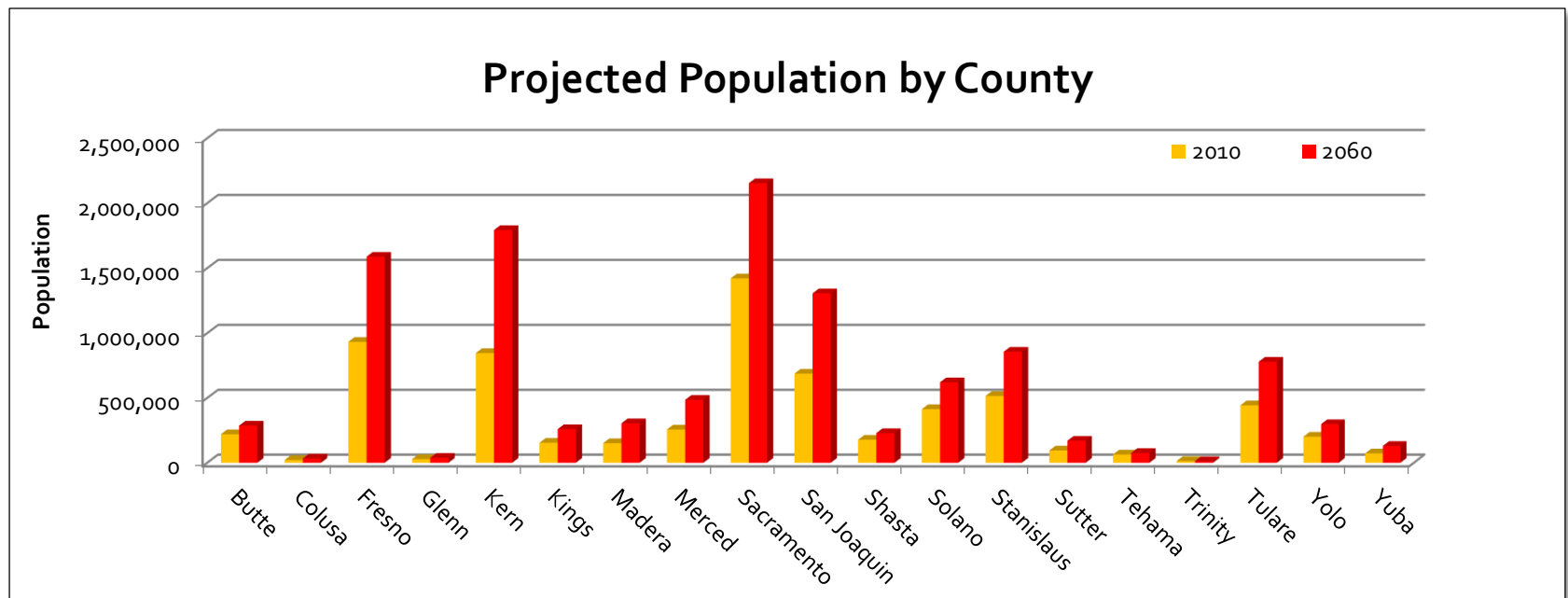


Photos: SRT, 2015; CA RWQCB, 2014.

Images: Shannon, 2010..

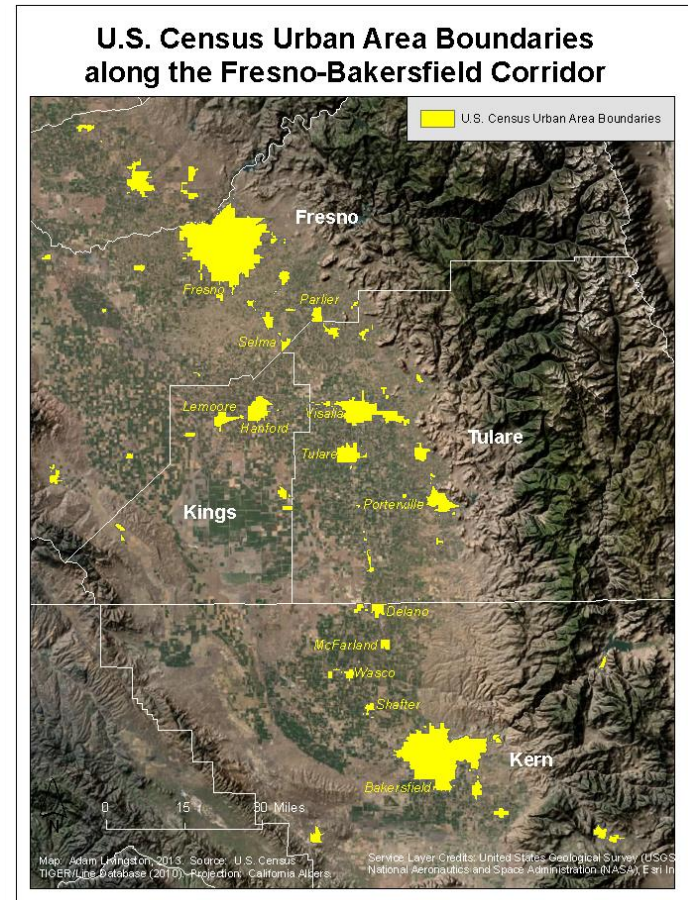
The Central Valley in Context

- Rapid population growth in Central Valley counties
 - From 6.7 million in 2010 to 11.4 million in 2060
 - Most growth in SJV and Sacramento County
- Majority-minority population in much of region



Regional Challenges

- Low density growth
 - New towns and growth at periphery of existing ones
 - Disinvestment in existing communities
 - Stagnant population density
- Climate change
 - Effects on agriculture
 - Changing species ranges
 - Other effects



Regional Challenges

Water challenges:

- Long term drought adaptation
- Groundwater loss / subsidence

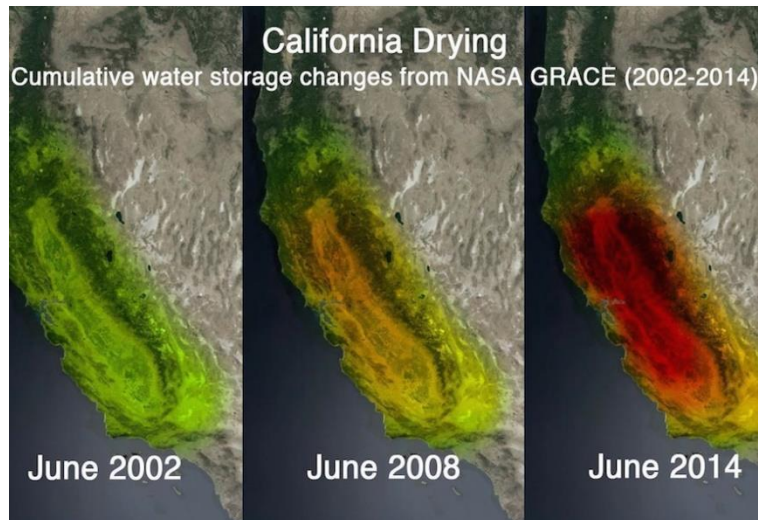


Image: NASA, 2014.

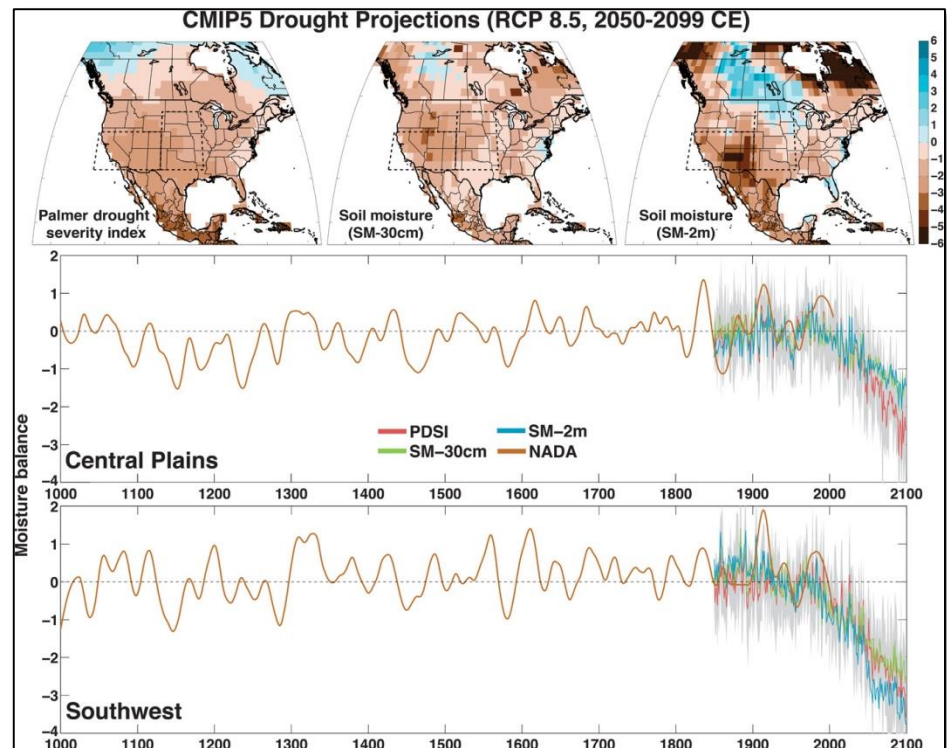


Image: Cook et al., 2015.

Regional Challenges

- Parts of region have worst air quality in country
 - Car-dependent transportation patterns
 - Mountains trap additional pollution from coast
- High rates of poverty and unemployment



Photos: "Steeven1" 2007 and NIH, 2013.

Regional Challenges

Uneven support and funding for conservation:

- Local control and “taking land out of circulation”
- Northern Sierra / Sacramento Valley vs. Southern Sierra / SJV
- Relevance of conservation to rising demographic groups

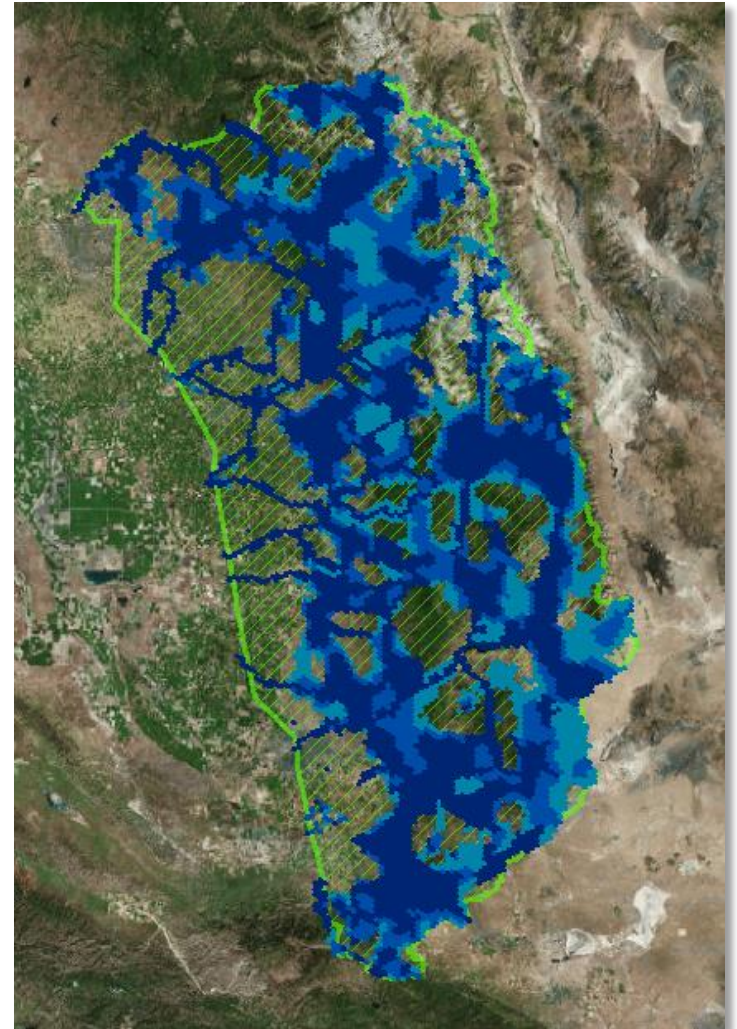


Image: Odder, 2012.

Opportunities for Conservation

Land Protection:

- Conservation priorities developed for parts of region
 - SSP Framework
 - Extensive data on important farmland
- Land trusts working throughout region



Conservation Design Layer: SSP, 2010.

Opportunities for Conservation

Land Protection:

- Mitigation (renewable energy, HSR, etc.)
- Potential funding through water bond
- Cap and trade (SALCP)
- Lower land values than other parts of state

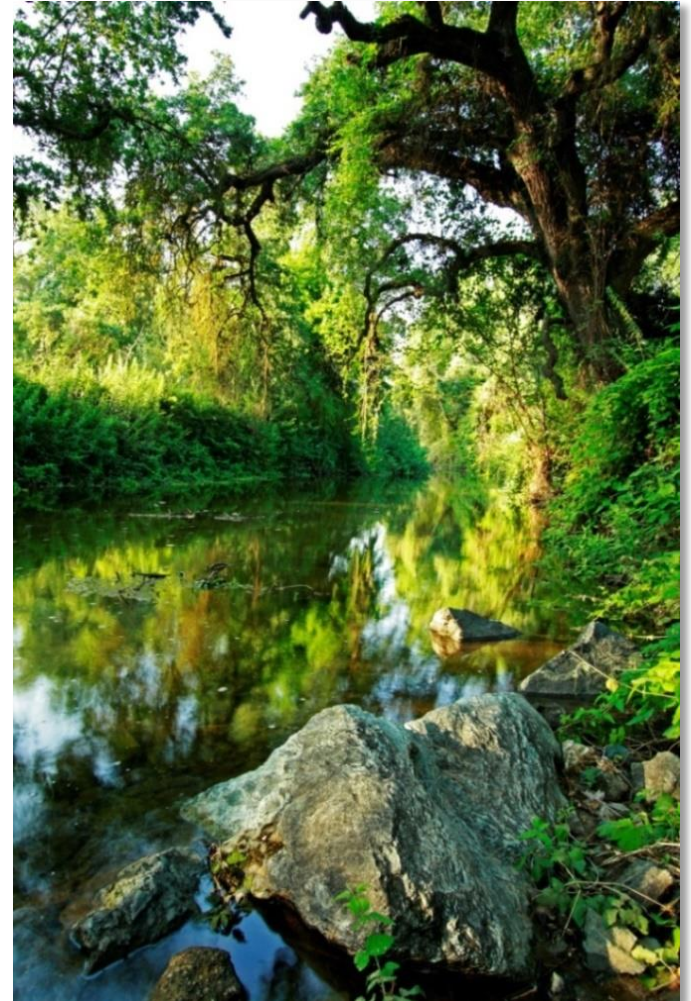
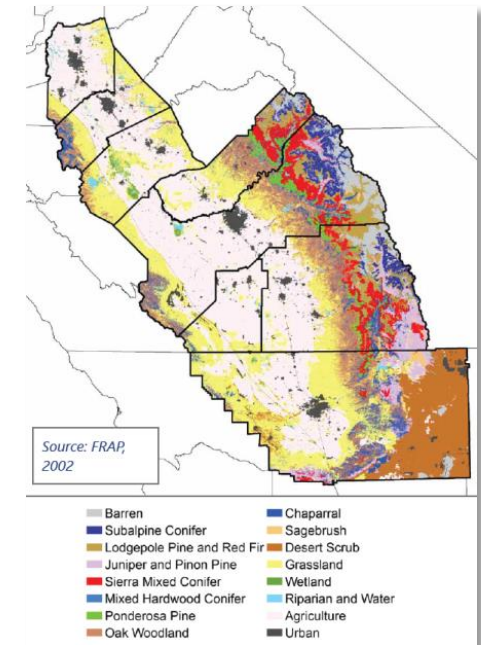
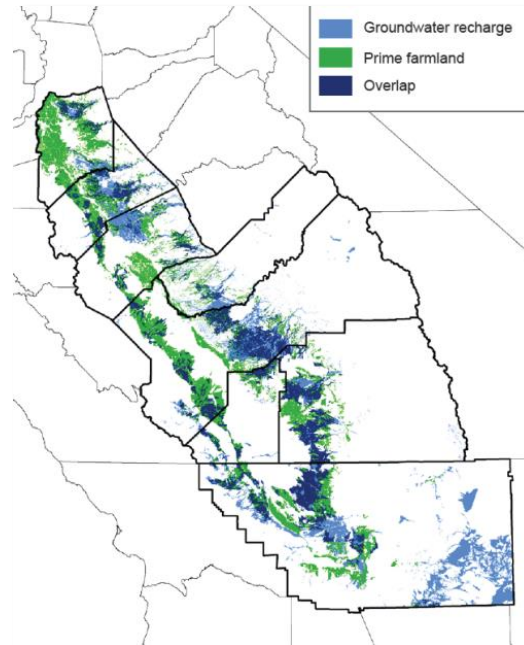
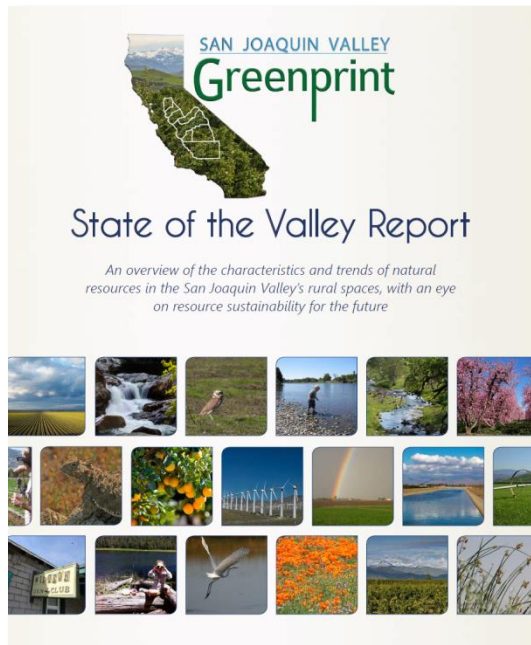


Photo: Greening, 2010.

Opportunities for Conservation

Land Use Planning:

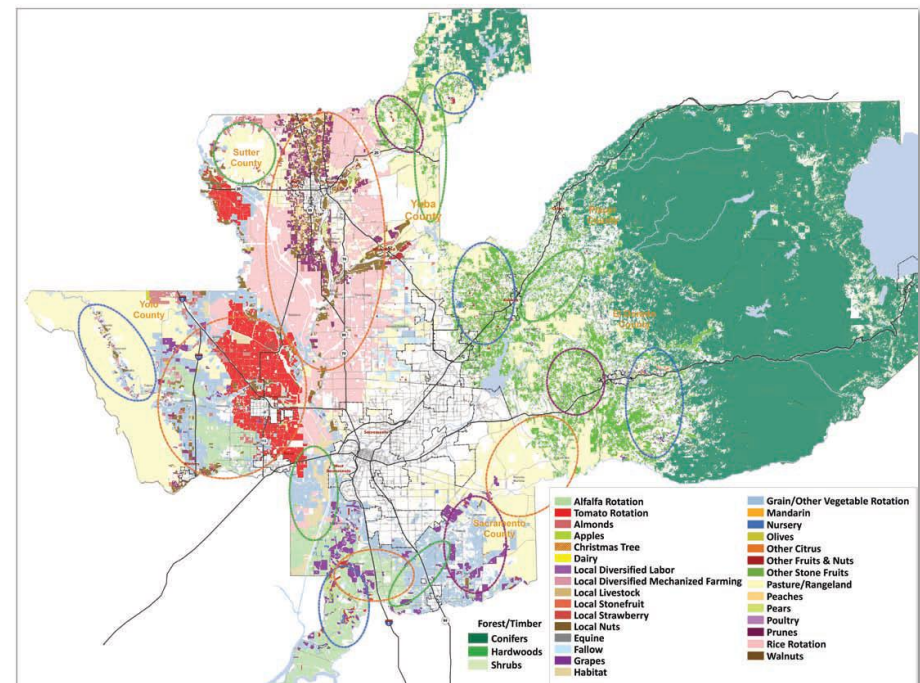
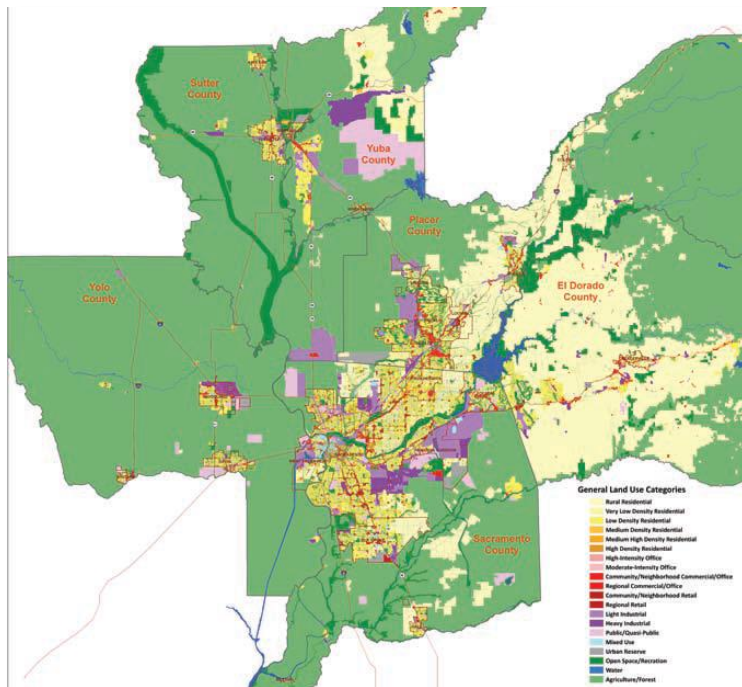
- **San Joaquin Valley Greenprint**
- **Rural Urban Connections Strategy**



Opportunities for Conservation

Land Use Planning:

- San Joaquin Valley Greenprint
- Rural Urban Connections Strategy



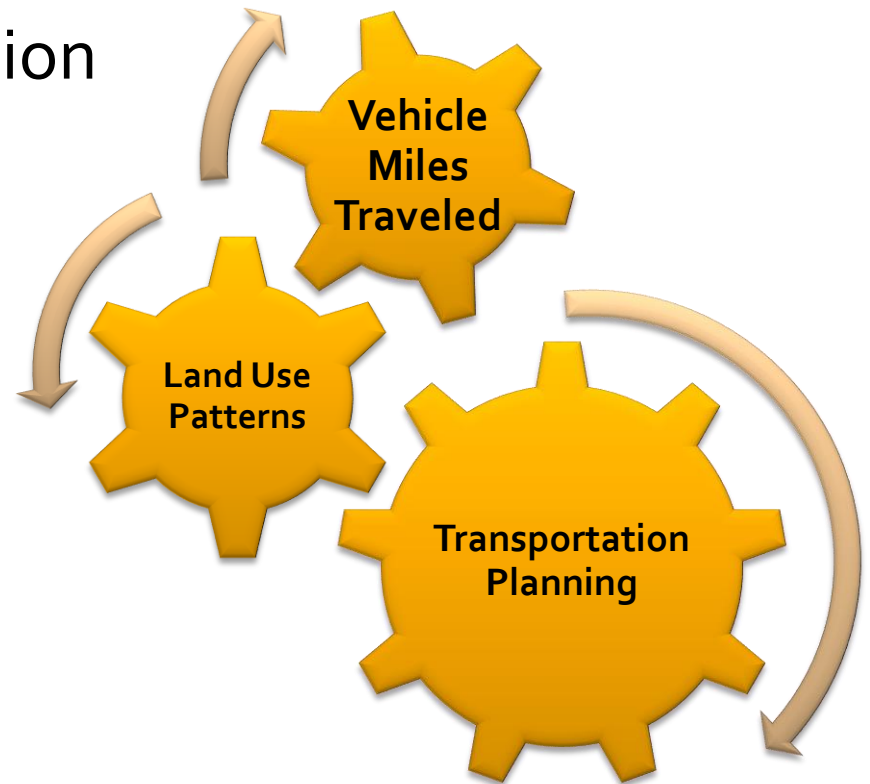
Opportunities for Conservation

Land Use Policy:

- **Sustainable Communities Strategies**

- Required in much of region
- Must “consider” resources and farmland
- Transportation policy as lever to influence land use

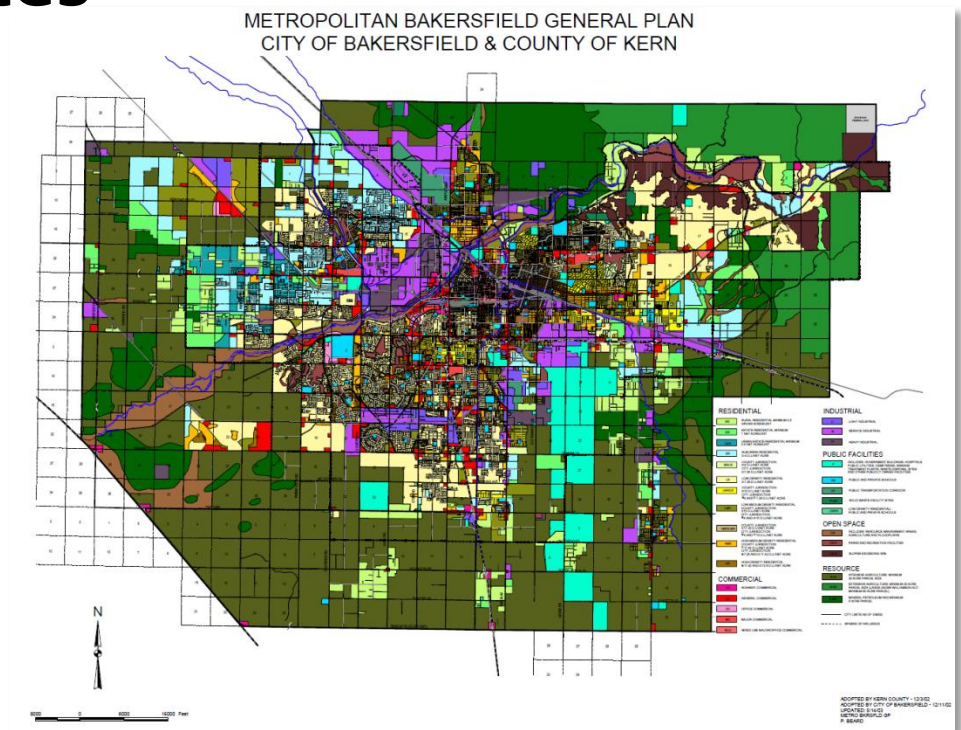
- **General Plan Updates**



Opportunities for Conservation

Land Use Policy:

- Sustainable Communities Strategies
- **General Plan Updates**
 - Land use planning authority
 - Urban growth boundaries
 - Lowering barriers to infill
 - Mitigation policy



Conclusion



Photo: Greening 2012.

For more information: adam@sequoiariverlands.org