San Francisco Biodiversity and Natural Resources Policy History

The City has a long history of setting biodiversity and natural resources policies. The following documents and policies have guided how San Francisco should treat its natural environment. Federal and State policies are excluded from this list, including National Park Service policies.

1981  The San Francisco Park Code prohibits “disturbing animals, birds, and fish.”

1986  The Environmental Protection Element of the General Plan directs the City to (1) conserve and protect the city’s natural resources; (2) restore and improve the quality of natural resources; (3) coordinate management of natural resources; (4) promote citizen action and environmental education; (5) protect natural habitats and rare and endangered species.

The Urban Design Element of the General Plan directs that “natural areas must be kept undeveloped for the enjoyment of future generations,” and, “natural areas in the city that remain in their original state are irreplaceable and must not be further diminished.”

1993  The City Charter, section 4.118, empowers the Commission on the Environment to “investigate habitat restoration and natural resource conservation.”

1997  The Biodiversity Chapter of the Sustainability Plan includes long-term goals and objectives: (1) awareness; (2) ecosystem restoration; (3) sensitive habitat and species protection; and (4) maximizing habitat in the developed and naturalistic environments; and (5) organizing biodiversity information.

The Waterfront and Land Use Plan of the Port of San Francisco includes “designating protected wetlands south of China Basin.” (Revised, 2009) (2019 draft undergoing review and revision)

1998  The purpose of the Golden Gate Park Master Plan is “to preserve...the diversity of cultural, natural and recreational resources...”

2000  The Board of Supervisors passed a resolution supporting the restoration of wetlands at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area.

2003  The Environment Code’s Precautionary Principle “requires the selection of the alternative that presents the least potential threat to human health and the City’s natural systems.”

2005  Urban Environmental Accords Action 12 commits the City to “pass legislation that protects critical habitat corridors and other key habitat characteristics from unsustainable development.”

2006  The Recreation & Park Department (RPD) Significant Natural Resource Areas Management Plan (SNRAMP) includes goals for natural resources conservation, ecological restoration, community stewardship, education, research, monitoring and adaptive management.

Guided by its Water Enterprise Environmental Stewardship Policy, the SFPUC will “proactively manage the watersheds ... in a manner that maintains the integrity of the natural resources, restores habitats for native species, and enhances ecosystem function.”
The Environment Commission’s Resolution 2011-05-COE supports “protecting San Francisco’s biodiversity” and directed the Department of Environment to prioritize funding for biodiversity staffing and programs.

The Yerba Buena Island Habitat Management Plan goals all relate to nature conservation, including, to “maintain and expand, where possible, the existing biodiversity on Yerba Buena Island.”

The Green Connections Plan will “increase wildlife habitat” in a network of green street corridors by integrating local ecology into planning and design.

The Candlestick Point State Recreation Area General Plan “seeks to protect and enhance the park’s natural resources by adapting to the challenges associated with increased urban growth and sea level rise.”

The Recreation and Open Space Element (ROSE) of the City’s General Plan has a Biodiversity Objective, which directs the City to protect and conserve biodiversity throughout the city, including the natural areas, other green spaces and the built environment.

The San Francisco Urban Forest Plan includes recommendations to promote “biodiversity and habitat” among the urban forest of the city’s streets.

The Final Environmental Impact Report for the Natural Resource Areas Management Plan was certified by the Planning Commission on December 15.

The Board of Supervisors passed a resolution designating San Francisco as a Bee City USA to promote healthy, sustainable habitats and communities for bees and other pollinators.

The Environment Commission passed a resolution adopting citywide biodiversity goals and articulating the role of the Environment Department to protect San Francisco’s natural heritage.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution establishing local biodiversity as a citywide priority, with a framework for interagency collaboration for nature-based initiatives.

The Mount Sutro Vegetation Management Plan has several community-serving objectives including improving biodiversity and ecosystem health. (Original plan published in 2001)

The Healthy Ecosystems Chapter of the Climate Action Plan includes seven strategies and 32 actions that are nature-based solutions for helping mitigate and adapt to climate change and which embody San Francisco’s biodiverse city vision.

The San Francisco Biodiversity Guidelines were developed by the Biodiversity Interagency Working Group to push project managers to support the City’s biodiversity goals.

Chapter 7 of the Environment Code, Municipal Green Building Requirements, mandates projects to support the City’s biodiverse city vision:

“Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat. Each Municipal Construction Project shall follow the City and County of San Francisco’s Biodiversity Guidelines.”