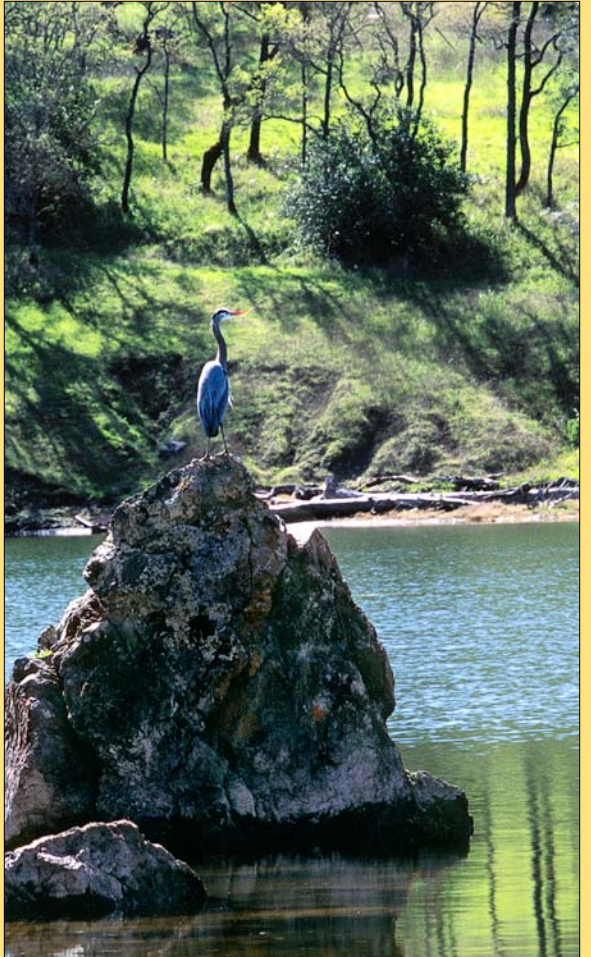
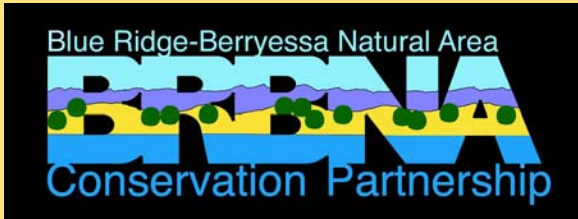




The BRBNA Conservation Framework:

Saving an Endangered Landscape through Partnership





Since 1997, The Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area (BRBNA) Conservation Partnership has provided a monthly forum for the exchange of information about activities occurring within this 785,000-acre landscape of ranches, wild lands and public recreation areas. The group currently includes over 100 partners ranging from conservation-minded landowners and land management agencies to residents and environmental interests. The partners all have a common goal – to save one of California’s last, large-scale landscapes.

The Partnership’s mission is to promote the conservation and enhancement of the BRBNA by encouraging the protection and stewardship of its wild, agricultural, recreational, and cultural resources. The Partnership is a voluntary and inclusive organization that facilitates collaboration among its public, private and nonprofit partners; provides research, information, and education to the partners; and conducts outreach to the public about issues of conservation concern.

The Conservation Framework

In order to provide a scientific foundation for its planning and stewardship initiatives, the Partnership has developed a “framework” to guide conservation of the BRBNA’s biodiversity, working ranches, and nature-based recreation. This *BRBNA Conservation Framework*, summarized herein, includes an analysis of the resources within the BRBNA, tools for identifying conservation priorities, and strategies and opportunities for interested parties to participate in conservation activities.

The *Conservation Framework* also serves as the basis for a regional public outreach effort by the Partnership. Members of the Partnership will meet with residents, businesses, and government officials to convey the unique values of the BRBNA and to seek input in order to ensure that the Framework is a useful tool that enhances collaborative conservation efforts.

A Landscape of Ranches, Creeks, Lakes & Wilderness

The Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area (Figure 1) is a mosaic of wild and range lands extending from the southern limit of the Mendocino National Forest to Interstate 80. Consisting of natural habitat, working ranches, and recreation lands, it is one of the last large landscapes in California that remains relatively undisturbed by the development of cities, towns and commerce. The BRBNA lies approximately 90 miles west of Sacramento and 100 miles northeast of San Francisco and includes portions of five rapidly growing counties – Napa, Yolo, Solano, Lake and Colusa. The region is composed of a mix of public and private lands including federal, state, and local recreation areas, private ranches and land trust protected preserves and easements. The University of California’s Natural Reserve System also owns and manages three reserves within the BRBNA dedicated primarily to research and education.

Regional Significance

Four distinct values characterize this sparsely-populated landscape: the biological diversity and uniqueness of its plant and wildlife habitats; the legacy of its working ranches and ranching families; the many recreational opportunities offered by its public lands and waters; and the evidence of human history found throughout its natural boundaries.

Diverse Habitat

The region supports a variety of ecological communities including serpentine chaparral, grasslands, oak woodlands, and extensive riparian and cliff habitats. Contiguous ranches and natural areas provide unfragmented habitat for the movement of mountain lions, coyotes and other big mammals. The BRBNA includes concentrations of rare species and globally significant plant communities and has been recognized as one of the most biologically diverse areas in the United States by The Nature Conservancy.

Ranching as a Way of Life

A number of large cattle ranches as well as several vineyards, one of which has been in operation since 1893, reflect the region’s economy and history and reveal a landscape shaped by decades of human use. Poor soils, limited water, and re-

moteness have suppressed competition from other land uses, allowing these ranches to remain economically viable. Families operating these ranches go back many generations and offer a window into a California way of life that has vanished from much of the state.

Places to Raft, Fish, Hike & Swim

The region's public lands and waters draw visitors who seek the wide variety of nature-based, resource-compatible activities found here. These include hiking through the scenic and varied terrain; lakeside and remote camping; biking and horseback riding along miles of less-traveled roads; fishing, canoeing and kayaking in lakes and creeks; swimming, boating and water-skiing at Lake Berryessa; and white water rafting in Cache Creek.

A History of Natives, Miners & Ranchers

Archaeologists have found traces of human settlement throughout the BRBNA dating back 10,000 years. More recently, four Native American groups populated the region – the Hill Patwin, the Pomo, the Lake Miwok, and the Mayacamus (Wappo). Spanish explorers arrived in the region as early as 1808, followed by other settlers in search of land and livelihood. The California Gold Rush provided a market for the quicksilver produced by the area's mercury mines and transformed the surrounding farming communities into a booming agricultural region.

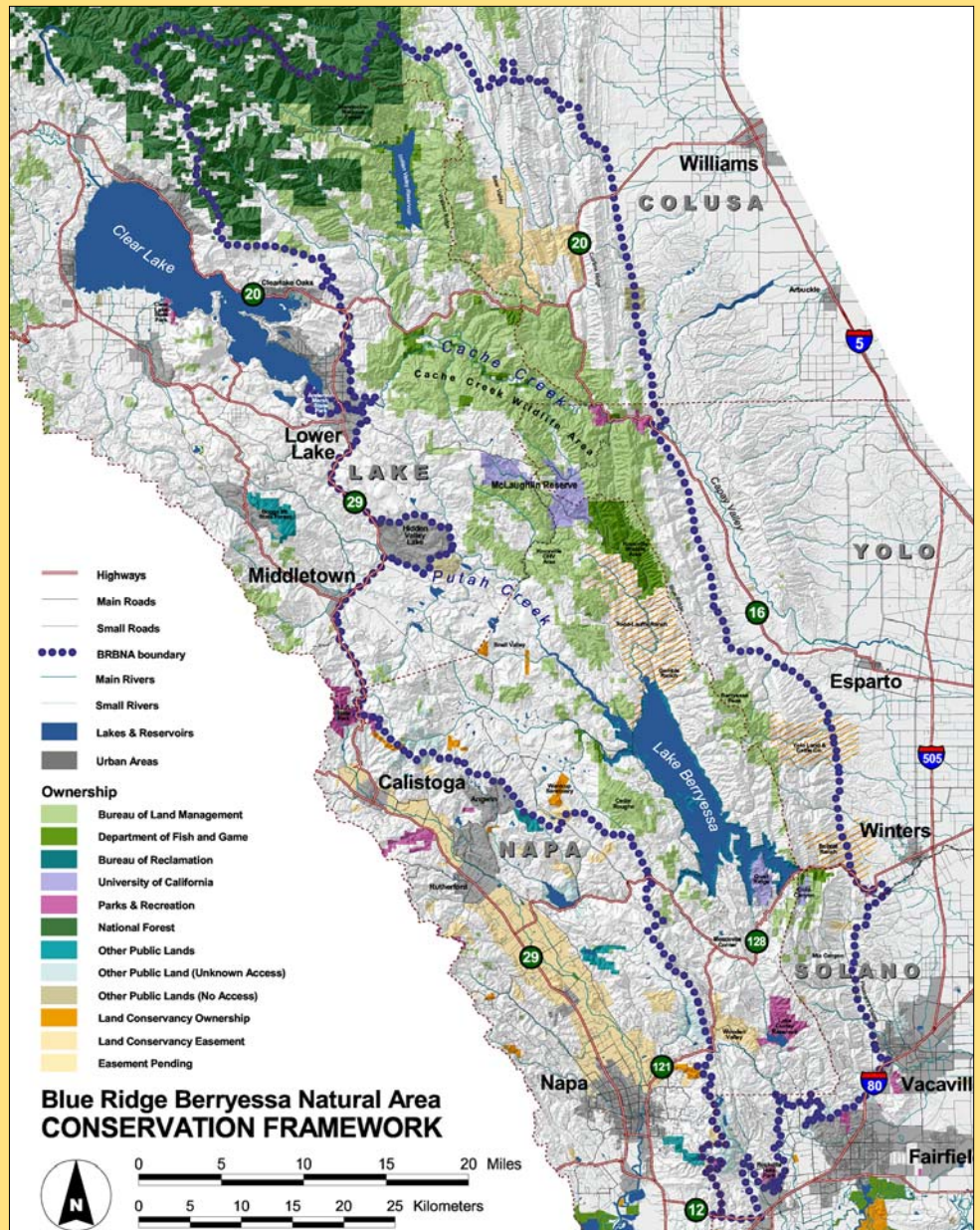


Figure 1: The BRBNA Natural Area Location

Threats to Conservation

Planners anticipate that future growth within the five-county BRBNA region will be even more pronounced than growth within the state as a whole. By 2020, the five-county population is expected to increase by approximately 329,000 people, a near-doubling of the populace present in 2000. Growth is likely to occur in two patterns – intensified development within the BRBNA on existing agricultural and wild lands and increased densities in adjacent urban and suburban areas.

Effects of Growth

Growth creates a myriad of changes that affect wild lands, working ranches and recreation. Effects of growth on wild lands include loss of habitat, introduction of exotic species that threaten native species, severed wildlife corridors, and degraded water quality. Impacts on working landscapes include loss or subdivision of existing ranches, land use conflicts and increased land values that can make the economics of ranching unsustainable and conservation purchases more difficult. Effects of growth on recreation include overcrowding, which can diminish visitor enjoyment, and lost opportunities for nature-based recreation and connectivity.

Last Chance for Large-scale Conservation

The projected population growth and its potential effects underscore how important it is to seize the opportunity for conservation of the BRBNA now, before resources are permanently lost and the cost of land conservation becomes prohibitive. Once development fragments the landscape, conserving lands on at the broad “landscape” scale will become more and more difficult.

Mapping & Priorities

In 1999, the Partnership began development of an environmental database to help evaluate lands and resources within the BRBNA for conservation and stewardship opportunities. Using these data, Universal Model Builder (UMB) combines many layers of information related to each of the three conservation elements – biodiversity, working ranches and recreation – to identify conservation priorities.

Users can weigh different conservation values based upon the relative importance of those values to the user. UMB promotes informed decisions about conservation projects, enables the Partnership to support proactive regional conservation, and allows partners to prioritize their efforts and get the most conservation value for their dollar. Clear priorities backed up by solid data provide momentum and leverage for activities on the ground.

Conservation Priorities

To create the three conservation priority maps on the following pages, data layers were ranked and combined. These maps illustrate the areas with the greatest concentration of factors that are favorable for that element.

Preserving Biodiversity

Figure 2 illustrates key biodiversity conservation areas in dark red. These areas include from north to south: Walker Ridge, Wilson Valley, McLaughlin Reserve, Knoxville Recreation Area, Knoxville Wildlife Area and Cedar Roughs. Some of these areas are already in public ownership or have been permanently protected as part of the UC Natural Reserve System or by land trusts.

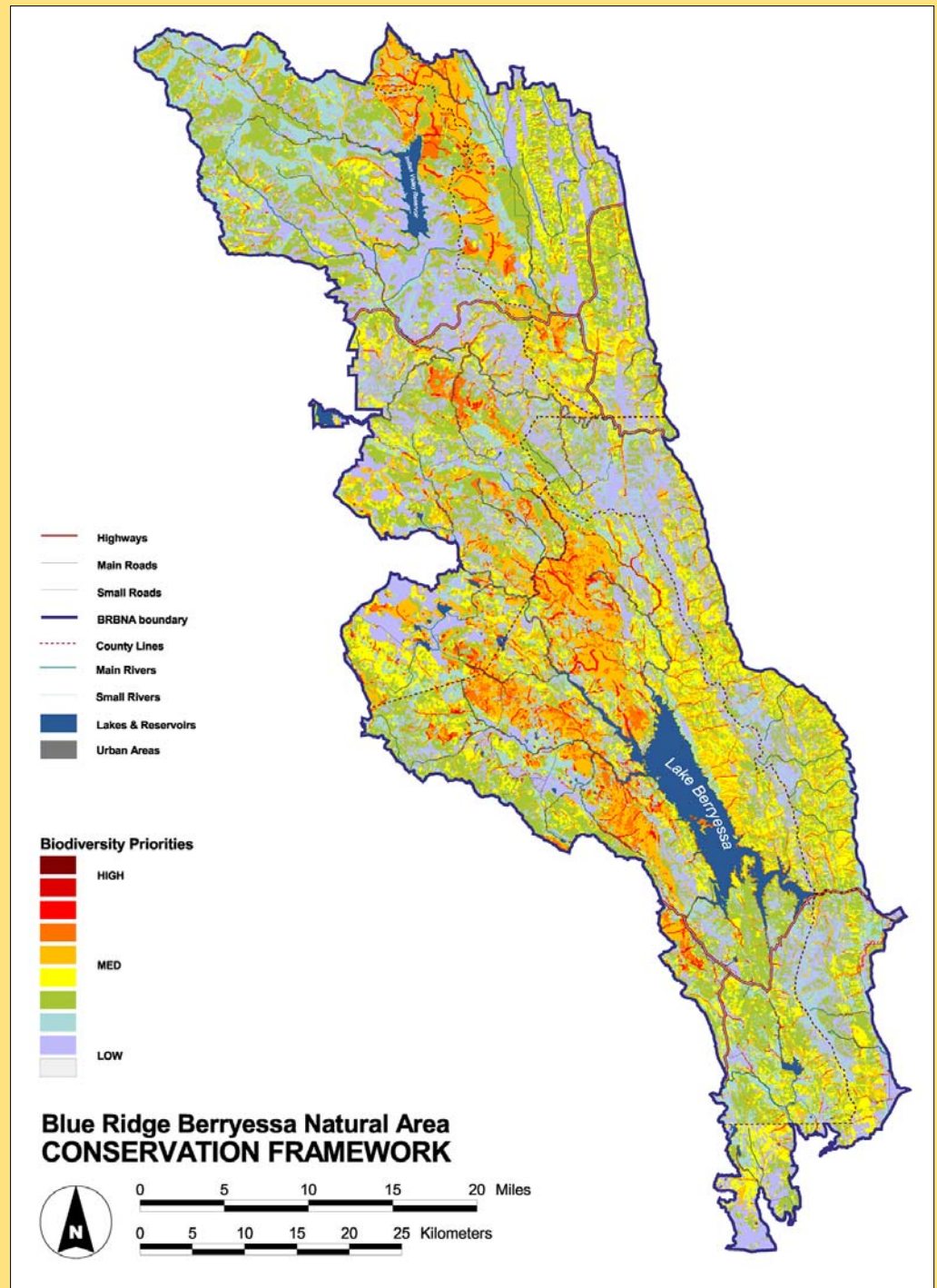


Figure 2: Biodiversity Conservation Priorities

Sustaining Working Ranches

The working ranch suitability analysis was prepared specifically for cattle grazing. Figure 3 illustrates in dark red those areas of the BRBNA that are most suitable for ranching. Some of these areas are currently in ranching operations while others may not be. Areas in the BRBNA most suitable for ranching are, from north to south: Bear Valley, Cortina Ridge, the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge in Yolo County, and the east side of Lake Berryessa.

Enhancing Recreation

Regional recreation experts developed the trails and recreation data and priorities during a May 2004 workshop. Participants identified existing and potential recreation destinations (natural, scenic, cultural, and historic), trailheads or access points, camping areas, and connections. Figure 4 indicates key recreation priorities in the darkest red. Additional recreation priorities include public lands that are not open for public recreation such as Berryessa Peak, BLM lands with constrained access, and Lake Curry. As some of these lands border existing recreation areas, they present potential priority areas for building recreational connectivity within the BRBNA.

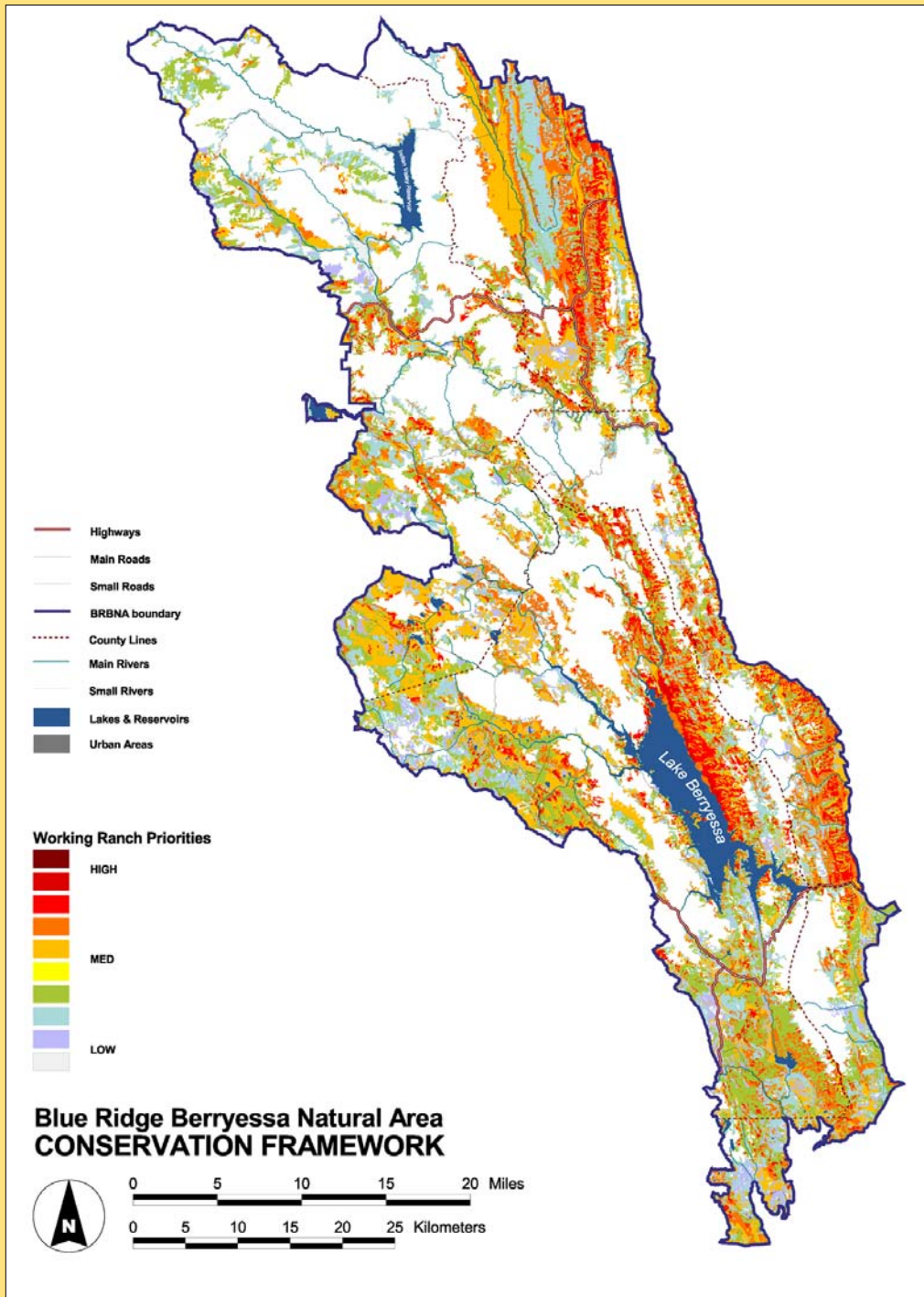


Figure 3: Working Ranch Conservation Priorities

Protecting Cultural Legacies

Cultural resource conservation priorities include traditional native lands; areas exemplifying the BRBNA's regional history (e.g. lands used by early settlers or miners); sites threatened due to erosion, vandalism, looting or development; and sites meeting multiple conservation objectives (e.g. cultural resource conservation and recreation). In setting priorities, the Partnership also seeks to uphold federal and state laws designed to protect cultural resources.

Strategies for Conservation

Efforts to protect the BRBNA before it is too late require innovation, regional collaboration, and major public support. Federal state and local agencies, organizations, as well as the people who live, work and play in the BRBNA all have opportunities to participate in the conservation of the BRBNA. Presented here are some of the many avenues and tools for participation.

Research, Planning & Monitoring

A key role for the Partnership has been to link research and monitoring to conservation planning and to promote new research on topics where it is most needed. In addition, many agencies and organizations have plans that address lands specific to their jurisdiction. It is essential to ensure the integration and consistency of these plans with the conservation vision of the BRBNA.

Creative Land Protection

Land can be permanently protected through the purchase or donation of property or conservation easements, or through county zoning laws that promote land use activities compatible with conservation. Important elements of land protection include identifying strategic parcels for protection, ongoing communication with landowners and developers, and networking with potential partners about land saving opportunities.

Active Stewardship

While acquiring land and easements can begin the process of protection for some lands, caring for the land through active management and stewardship supports the health of ecosystems and natural processes over time. Stewardship activities allow a private rancher or landowner to enhance the productivity and value of his or her land while working to achieve BRBNA conservation objectives.

Sustainable Economics

Meeting local and regional economic needs in ways that promote conservation and sustainability is key to building a strong constituency of conservation supporters for the BRBNA that includes businesses and local governments. Appropriate economic generators such as ranching operations and nature-based tourism and recreation all add value to the land and provide an enduring rationale for its protection.

Ongoing Outreach

The Partnership works to create opportunities for people, organizations, businesses, government bodies and agencies to learn about threats to the BRBNA and participate in conservation efforts. Through workshops, materials, meetings and other mediums, the Partnership seeks to increase awareness of the BRBNA's importance.

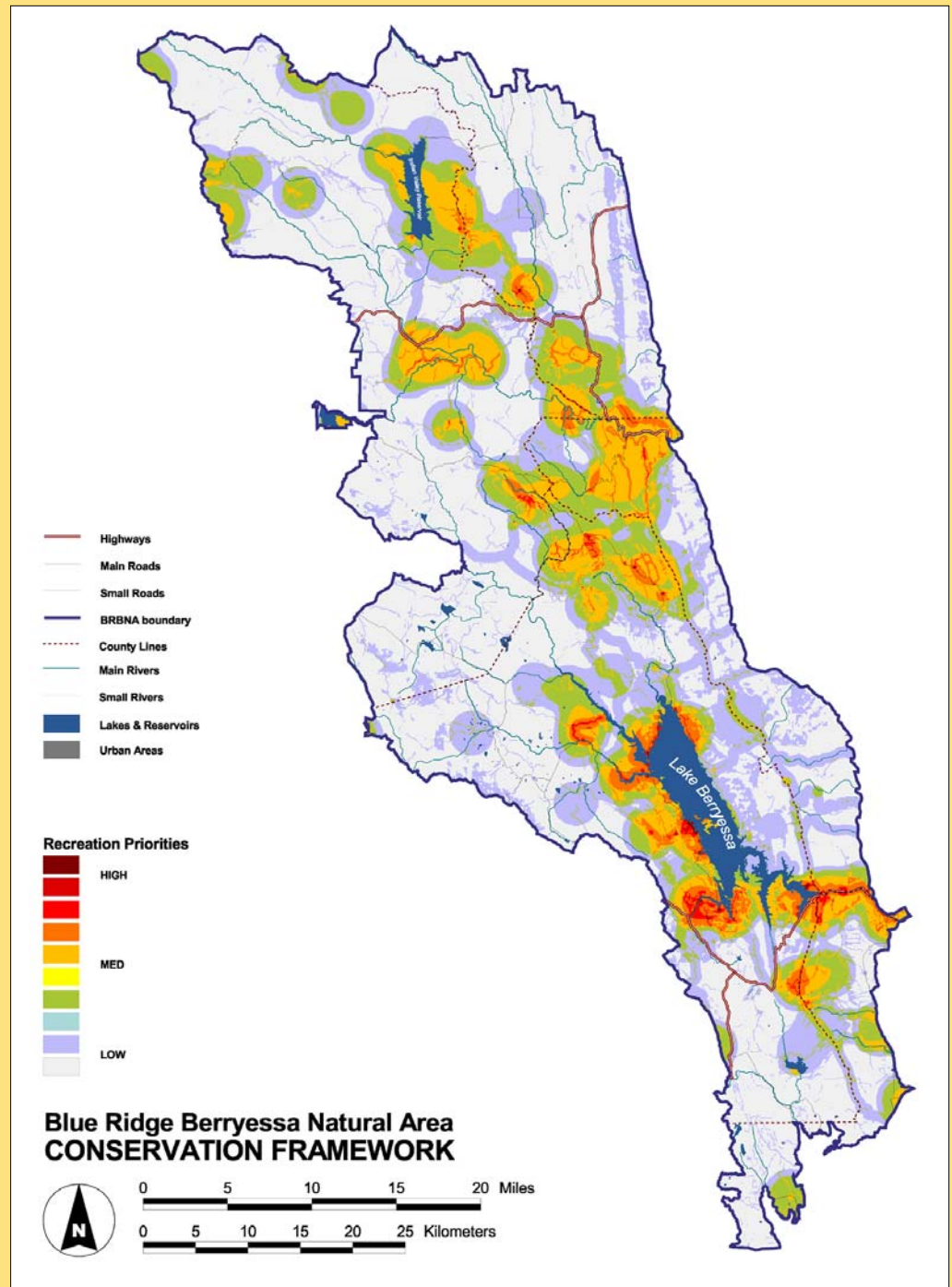


Figure 4: Recreation Priorities

Optimizing Partnerships & Resources

The best opportunities for collaboration arise directly out of conservation challenges. As the Partnership has demonstrated for nearly a decade, working together offers many benefits – sharing knowledge and resources, increasing efficiency, and minimizing redundancy and conflict. It also creates lasting relationships among partners who can achieve more by working together.

Participation in the BRBNA Conservation Partnership

The Partnership is a tremendous resource for those interested in conservation of the BRBNA. In addition to regular meetings where the partners share information about their activities, the group also serves as the nexus for collaborative efforts. The Partnership can assist with developing grant proposals, coordinating land protection and stewardship, mediating conflicts, and supporting research and monitoring. The Partnership also maintains the BRBNA website and an internet list-serve to help partners exchange information and improve public outreach efforts.

The Essential Ingredient: Your Support & Involvement

State and Federal Agencies can administer programs, set policies, and revise regulations for agency-held lands within the BRBNA. They can also continue to coordinate actions with others; provide technical assistance; and help facilitate stewardship activities on state and federal lands. Agencies can also review proposed projects, provide grant support, and coordinate with other partners.

Nonprofit Organizations, Stewardship Groups & Academic Institutions can participate in education, advocacy, land protection, scientific research and monitoring, and restoration and enhancement. They can also collaborate on management planning, stewardship projects, and outreach.

Counties can ensure that General Plans and land use policies continue to support the conservation of the BRBNA. They can coordinate these plans and policies with the management plans of the area's State and Federal land management agencies.

Ranchers & Agricultural Landowners can implement principles of sustainable agriculture and control erosion, protect riparian areas, and remove exotic species. You can also prepare management plans for your land and provide permanent protection of your ranch through conservation easements.

Businesses can conserve water, properly dispose of any hazardous waste the business may generate, and provide in-kind or funding support to conservation efforts. You can also participate in efforts to ensure that economic development is sustainable and directed to benefit local enterprises.

Gateway Communities can examine ways to capitalize on opportunities to provide BRBNA visitor-related services.

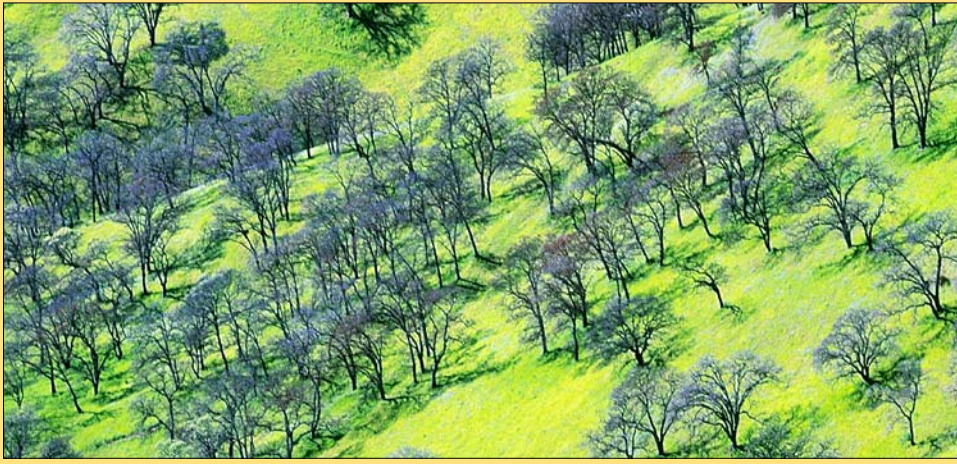
Residents can become stewards of their own backyards and neighborhoods – conserving water, planting native vegetation, and using nontoxic garden supplies. You can also participate in local land trusts, stewardship groups, and the BRBNA Conservation Partnership.

Visitors should follow posted rules and regulations; avoid littering and dumping of hazardous materials; and respect natural resources and private property.



Join Us

This Conservation Framework is a collaborative conservation vision of the BRBNA – a vision based upon good science, inclusiveness of all stakeholders, and the voluntary participation of the members of the Partnership. As one of California's most biologically significant landscapes, the BRBNA presents both a challenge and an extraordinary opportunity to create a coordinated public/private conservation program – one that will lead to greater participation and involvement and new opportunities to protect and enhance this unique region. Please join us in making this vision a reality!



The Conservation Framework

This brochure summarizes the product of a multi-year effort conducted by the Partnership to document the resources of the BRBNA and identify conservation priorities. The full document – the Conservation Framework – is available at www.BRBNA.org.

The Conservation Framework includes a detailed description of the region, its districts, the partnership, and the conservation framework mapping process.

Over fifty GIS data layers support the Framework, including vegetation, wildlife, soils, roads, and waterbodies. Additional conservation priority maps, created by weighting various data layers, are also part of the Framework.

Twelve appendices address a wide variety of topics including a detailed description of BRBNA lands, conservation tools, detailed mapping, county planning profiles, and BRBNA partner accomplishments in the region.

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