



Climate and Natural Systems Agency-Council Workgroup Update

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Climate and Natural Systems Workgroup



Purpose and Background

- Agency-Council workgroup that convenes natural resource managers to identify regional coordination opportunities for climate resilience and natural systems restoration and protection.
 - Where can the Council support these efforts in our local agencies?
- Created during Imagine 2050 planning process to develop the Natural Systems and Climate Resilience policies in the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan.
 - Agencies expressed interest in continuing workgroup after policy planning process. Participants saw value in having a space for natural systems coordination and to implement work plan items.

Climate and Natural Systems Workgroup

Imagine 2050 and Policy Plan Connections

- **Related Imagine 2050 Regional Goals:**
 - We lead on addressing climate change
 - We protect and restore natural systems
- **Related 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan Objectives:**
 - Protect and restore: Protect and restore natural systems to safeguard the well-being of all living things.
 - Adapt and mitigate: Increase the region's resilience to climate change through land stewardship practices that mitigate greenhouse gases and adapt to future climates.
- **Related 2050 Policy Plan Policies:**
 - Natural Systems: Identify lands with high-quality natural features and/or with high restoration potential... and put these lands in a protected status so that they will be available for recreational uses and preservation purposes in perpetuity.
 - Climate Resilience: Adapt and enhance the Regional Parks and Trails System to promote resilience to climate change, including the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.



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Policy Plan Workplan Connections

- Explore establishment of a Special Features – Open Space/Natural Systems subclassification.
- Reconvene Climate and Natural Systems Workgroup to discuss implementation steps for climate resilience policy and actions.
- Develop an inventory of and guidelines for harvestable fruits, mushrooms, and other plants.
- Develop learning opportunities for implementing agencies to explore indigenous land management practices and other related topics.

2026 Workgroup Priorities



Workgroup Priorities

- Workgroup topics gathered from 2050 policy plan and agency feedback.

Future Priorities

- Open Space Subclassification exploration
- Identify opportunities for regional research projects related to Natural Systems and Climate Resilience
- Coordinate and plan learning opportunities for agencies
- Define what implementation of climate policy looks like

Open Space Subclassification



Background and Context

- Idea for subclassification suggested during policy plan development stage.
 - Agencies mentioned that the best strategy to protect natural systems and build resilience was by acquiring more land for parks and natural systems.
 - Acquiring land primarily for conservation outside of a park or trail currently isn't flexible.
- Open Space subclassification would be primarily focused on protecting regionally significant natural areas instead of having a recreation focus.
 - Similar concept to a park reserve, but without the larger acreage requirements.
 - Could take the form of wildlife corridors connecting fragmented units or added buffers around existing parks and trails.
 - Opportunities to partner with local agencies and organizations to create patchwork of natural areas.

Open Space Subclassification



Proposed Timeline and Steps

Month	Milestones
2026	
March – April	Environmental Scan
April	Create Subclassification Recommendation
May – September*	Draft and Revise Subclassification Language
October – December*	Finalize Language and Engage with Agencies and Council Committees
2027	
January – *	System Additions Process Begins

**Action Dependent on moving forward with subclassification*

Discussion



Discussion Questions

- What are some notable climate trends identified in the previous presentation, and how could this impact our regional parks and trails?
 - How can the Council make the system more resilient?
 - What areas should we observe closely?
- What are your initial thoughts on the Open Space Subclassification?
 - What do you like about the proposed subclassification?
 - Are there any concerns or questions you have?
- What other topics do you think the Climate and Natural Systems workgroup could focus on?



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