



EQUITY

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023

Advancing Equity, Environmental Justice, and
Tribal Affairs in California's Natural Resources



CALIFORNIA
NATURAL
RESOURCES
AGENCY



Photo by Timothy Wong, from the California Coastal Commission's annual Ocean & Coastal Amateur Photography Contest



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MESSAGE FROM WADE

Welcome to our first annual “Equity Year in Review,” which highlights the critical work of our departments, boards and commissions to improve our organizations and better serve all Californians.

Governor Newsom has established **California for All** as a core pillar of state government. This means creating opportunities for *all* Californians to live healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. To achieve this vision, he has directed state agencies to take strong, durable actions to embed equity into our mission, investments, policies, and programs.

At the Natural Resources Agency, we are responsible for safeguarding precious resources, including water, land, wildlife, parks, energy and our coast and ocean. We know that many Californians lack equal access to these resources and their benefits, and that many residents suffer disproportionate environmental burdens. We have a responsibility to confront these realities and reshape the work we do to better serve these Californians.

To do so, we are listening and learning from tribal and community partners to chart our path forward. For me personally, the best part of my job has been getting out of Sacramento to visit people across the state, from the Imperial Valley to the Klamath Basin. I’ve learned more from these visits than I could imagine, both about the daily struggles Californians face to the tremendous opportunities we have to help make things better.

Now across our agency, we are working to expand access to the outdoors and nature for all Californians, provide funding to communities and groups excluded in the past, build resilience in communities most vulnerable to climate change, broaden meaningful participation in government decision making, and much more.

We’re making real progress across our agency, as I hope you will see in this Year In Review. I’m thankful to leaders across the agency for making this work a clear priority.

While we are proud of our progress, we know that much more work lies ahead. And we are more committed than ever to build a California for All in true partnership with tribes and communities. The time is now and there’s no time to waste.

Onward,
Wade Crowfoot
Wade Crowfoot
California Natural Resources Secretary



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY LEADS ACROSS CNRA

- Noaki Schwartz**
Deputy Secretary for Equity and Environmental Justice, California Natural Resources Agency
- Julie Alvis**
Deputy Executive Officer, Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- Erin Aquino-Carhart**
Senior Environmental Scientist, Wildlife Conservation Board
- Phoenix Armenta**
Senior Manager for Climate Equity and Community Engagement, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
- Mona Badie**
Public Advisor, California Energy Commission
- Kathryn Baines**
Chief of Administration, Central Valley Flood Protection Board
- Rachel Ballanti**
Deputy Executive Director, California Fish and Game Commission
- Karen Buhr**
*Deputy Executive Officer, Delta Conservancy
Interim Executive Officer, San Joaquin River Conservancy*
- Sandy Cooney**
Chief, Communications and External Affairs, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety (Energy Safety)
- Nicole Cropper,**
Deputy Director of Equity, Environmental Justice, and Tribal Affairs, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Jamie Fong**
Outreach and Engagement Analyst, California Department of Conservation
- Salian Garcia**
Budgets & Administration Officer, San Gabriel & Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy
- Dustin Harrison**
Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist), San Diego River Conservancy
- Raymond C. Hitchcock**
Executive Secretary, Native American Heritage Commission
- Monique Hudson**
SR Vice President, Government Affairs & Chief Diversity Officer, California Science Center Foundation
- Alfred Konuwa**
Equal Employment Officer and Training Program Manager, California Science Center
- Emely Lopez**
Tribal and Equity Liaison, State Coastal Conservancy

- Sara Lopez**
Staff Attorney, Tahoe Conservancy
- Liz McGuirk**
Chief Deputy Director, California Department of Parks and Recreation
- David McNeill**
Executive Officer, Baldwin Hills and Urban Watersheds Conservancy
- Kristina Ordanza**
Environmental Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator, California Conservation Corps
- Serena Ortega**
Deputy Director, Equal Employment/Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
- Javier Padilla Reyes**
Environmental Justice Manager, California Coastal Commission
- Yessica Ramirez**
Environmental Justice and Tribal Liaison, California State Lands Commission
- Shana Rapoport**
Environmental Program Manager, Colorado River Board of California
- Maria Rodriguez**
Climate and Environmental Justice Program Manager, Ocean Protection Council
- Diana Rosas**
Associate Director, Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy
- Sarah Rubin**
Outreach and Engagement Advisor, California Department of Conservation
- Bianca Sievers**
Deputy Director of Special Initiatives, Department of Water Resources
- Rorie Skei**
Chief Deputy Director, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- Ryan Stanbra**
Chief Deputy Executive Officer, Delta Stewardship Council
- Randella Tyler**
DEI/EEO Specialist, California Department of Conservation
- Debra Waltman**
Assistant Executive Director, Delta Protection Commission
- Joe Yun**
Executive Officer, California Water Commission

CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

For more than a year, staff from departments across CNRA have come together to organize public panel discussions, hikes, social events and other activities that celebrate and uplift our diversity. In 2023 we organized a staff safe space discussion for Black History Month, toured Angel Island for Asian American & Pacific Islander Month, walked in the Sacramento Pride march with our CalEPA colleagues, organized a record 10 events for Latino Heritage Month, held a public film screening for Native American History Month and so much more. These months have filled us with cultural pride, helped us learn so we can better support colleagues, and continue to be an important way for all us to contribute to a more inclusive California.



ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

JOIN US FOR THESE SPECIAL VIRTUAL EVENTS



CAREER PATHWAYS FOR AAPI IN STATE SERVICE

WED, MAY 3, 2023, NOON-1:30 P.M.
VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

There are meaningful careers across all the departments, conservancies and boards that make up the Natural Resources Agency. Hear from Asian American and Pacific Islander employees on how they came to work for the state and advice they have on careers in public service.

REGISTER VIA ZOOM



REVISITING THE PAST TO REIMAGINE THE FUTURE

THU, MAY 11, 2023, 1-2:30 P.M.
VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

In this panel discussion, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) leaders talk about the significant historical events that have shaped the Asian American experience in California. The panelists will also discuss their plans, hopes and calls to action for the future.

REGISTER VIA ZOOM



SECRETARY SPEAKER SERIES ON AAPI LEADERS AND THE FUTURE OF NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDS

THU, MAY 25, 2023, NOON-1 P.M.
VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

Join CNRA Secretary Wade Crowfoot for a special Secretary Speaker Series event. This panel will feature AAPI environmental leaders from across the state, who will share their perspectives and priorities on the natural resource and conservation movement.

REGISTER VIA ZOOM



The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and its supporting departments invite you to celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, honoring Asian leaders in the environmental field who work to protect the environment for current and future generations.



[Resources.ca.gov/AAPIHeritageMonth](https://resources.ca.gov/AAPIHeritageMonth)

CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

For each cultural heritage month, a committee from across CNRA collaborated to create a monthlong series of meaningful events for staff and members of the public, like this for Asian American & Pacific Islander Month.





The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) oversees and supports more than 26 distinct departments, conservancies, and commissions. Our Agency executive team leads efforts to steward California's natural environment and to advance Governor Newsom's key priorities. More than 21,000 Californians work within our Agency all across the state to meet our mission "to restore, protect and manage the state's natural, historical and cultural resources for current and future generations using creative approaches and solutions based on science, collaboration, and respect for all the communities and interests involved."

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Key CNRA positions overseeing equity and environmental justice and tribal affairs were elevated to the Deputy Secretary level in 2023, furthering the Agency's commitment to these issues. Elevating these positions will ensure that these key issues are considered at the highest levels of the Agency.

CNRA released a draft strategy for its Outdoors for All initiative. Championed by Governor Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom, Outdoors for All is expanding parks and outdoor spaces in communities that need them most, supporting programs to connect people who lack access, fostering a sense of belonging for all Californians in the outdoors and much more. The initiative follows a historic \$1 billion plus investment by the Newsom Administration to expand access, creating a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

CNRA developed the first ever \$100 million Tribal Nature-Based Solutions grant program to support tribally-led initiatives in the nature-based solutions space, including ancestral land return. This grant program is part of the Agency's commitment to strengthening partnerships with California Native American tribes in all of our policies and programs and specifically in the implementation of the Pathways to 30x30 Strategy and the Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy.

As part of CNRA's commitment to embed equity in all we do, we updated employee duty statements that outline key responsibilities for every position across our Agency team. Each duty statement now includes language devoting time to tasks, trainings and activities that support diversity, equity and inclusion. There is also language that "employees are expected to provide all members of the public equitable services and treatment, collaborate with underserved communities and tribal governments, and work toward improving outcomes for all Californians." CNRA also strongly encouraged our departments to do the same to help ensure that progress will continue in these critical areas.

In partnership with the State Coastal Conservancy, CNRA had the honor to award funding to support the Hoopa Valley Tribe's ancestral land return and acquisition of over 10,000 acres of forest lands. These lands will count towards our 30x30 goals and ensure the original stewards of the land have ownership of their important lands and resources.

CNRA hired four new staff to support the Tribal Affairs Unit. These new staff are administering the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions grant program and managing the California Advisor Committee on Geographic Names and its implementation of AB 2022 to replace all "sq_" offensive names on features and places throughout California.



Key California Natural Resource Agency positions overseeing equity and environmental justice and tribal affairs were elevated to the Deputy Secretary level in 2023, furthering the Agency's commitment to these issues.

2024 AND BEYOND

CNRA will host the Justice Rising Summit, the Agency's first environmental justice and equity conference in 2024. The in-person event in Sacramento will include environmental justice advocates, tribal members, CNRA leadership, department directors and their EJ and equity leads, as well as other experts in the field. The day will include featured speakers, panel discussions and listening sessions, which will inform and update CNRA's environmental justice and equity policy.

In 2024, CNRA released a report on opportunities for its Salton Sea Management Program to address community needs, as well as a commissioned report from Better World Group Advisors that outlines a broad assessment of key community needs across the Salton Sea region ranging from more tribal engagement to increased public access. Over the past decade, community members near the Salton Sea have asked for multi-benefit restoration projects that provide community amenities and benefits. These benefits are critical in a region with historic underinvestment in infrastructure and services and where residents experience some of the highest rates of public health and environmental justice issues in California.

In 2024, CNRA will begin the process of updating its 2003 environmental justice policy. The new EJ and equity policy will be developed with the input of environmental justice advocates, tribal members and other interested members of the public. The document will cover a range of topics that CNRA departments oversee including public access, climate change, conservation and more.



“This park receives about 70,000 visitors a year. It’s a long time coming. We’re getting Conservation Corps to come in and fix peelings and paint and deferred maintenance. It’s incredible...We’re fighting to maintain this history here...When people can understand a culture and know the history, you develop an appreciation. And so we’re here to teach that, educate that, and heal that.”

— Denise Kadara, President of the Allensworth Progressive Association

CCC.CA.GOV



Since it was founded in 1976, the California Conservation Corps (CCC) has transformed the lives of thousands of young adults. Its mission is protecting and enhancing California’s natural resources and communities while empowering and developing young adults through hard work and education.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, nearly 2,000 young adults between the ages of 18-25 years old and some veterans through age 29 received paid job training through the CCC along with career development, educational scholarships, and housing. Transition navigators, based at centers across the state, advised Corpsmembers individually on their career and educational pathways in natural resources and conservation, including in firefighting, forestry, culinary arts, energy, apprenticeships, and public service careers.

The CCC created and filled a new executive role dedicated to creating career pathways from the CCC into state service opportunities at the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) departments, commissions, and conservancies. This effort will assist CNRA in achieving a more diverse government workforce that is better able to serve the state of California.

The CCC is dedicated to equity in all aspects of program delivery and operational excellence, releasing a Racial Equity Action Plan report and a gender equity survey among field staff and Corpsmembers this year. Objectives and key results planning highlight the CCC’s strategic approach toward tangible outcomes in environmental justice and equity. Corpsmember voices matter in this work, and ongoing training and professional development for all CCC staff related to justice, equity, diversity, inclusion or cultural humility and competency are among annual performance measures.

The CCC operates multiple conservation projects

across the state. This year, 10 crews assisted with the restoration of buildings at Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park in the community of Allensworth, the state’s first African American founded, financed, and governed community. CCC crews also assisted with statewide and out-of-state emergencies relating to floods, wildland fires, and agricultural emergencies.

The CCC established the Tribal Youth Nature-Based Solutions Conservation Corps grant program or Tribal Corps in collaboration with CNRA. Assembly Bill 179 allocated \$10 million in grant funding exclusively for California Native American tribes to establish tribal youth conservation corps programs. CCC leaders reached out to tribal leaders and hosted consultations in development of grant guidelines, offered technical assistance workshops, and facilitated the review of grant proposals. The CCC awarded grant awards to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, Bishop Paiute Tribe, and Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation.

2024 AND BEYOND

Partnerships with California community colleges offer Corpsmembers opportunities to explore college campuses and a range of programs in forestry, culinary arts, utility line apprenticeship training and more. The California Naturalist (CalNat) program with the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources is focused on certifying 480 Corpsmembers as California naturalists, through approximately 24 courses at nine CCC sites across the state.



California
**Department of
Conservation**

The Department of Conservation administers a variety of programs to create a safe and equitable environment for all Californians by balancing today's needs with tomorrow's challenges with the intelligent, sustainable, and efficient use of the state's energy, land, and mineral resources.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has implemented a first-of-its-kind race and equity-focused public engagement training. The goal is to support state government staff in planning and implementing authentic community engagement. The model includes a benefit/burden analysis, evaluation of impacts on public decisions, policies, and actions, measurability of outcomes, and how to successfully share tools with teams and leadership. A total of 100 state staff members from across 14 different CNRA organizations have completed the two-day training. Per participant interest, follow up trainings are scheduled. Examples include facilitation skills, language access best practices, setting up effective local site visits and complex issues and high emotions in meetings.

Language access is a high priority at the Department. One strategy the Department has pursued is partnering with community-based organizations to better understand the needs and preferences of residents, specifically those who have been historically under-included in government decision-making. Staff traveled to Ventura County to meet with the Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) to explore effective engagement with local Mixteco speaking residents. One result of the visit will be collaboration with MICOP's local radio Indigena station featuring two DOC bilingual staff. Resources from the California Geological Survey will be featured, including landslides, fire, tsunami and earthquake preparedness.

Direct engagement with environmental justice advocates and community leaders is a foundational component to building trust and collaborative partnerships. In August 2023, staff traveled to the greater Los Angeles area to meet with a watchdog organization to discuss strategies for increasing transparency and information sharing with the California Geological Energy Management Division and its efforts on California's Orphan Well Abandonment Program. In October and November 2023, the Department organized informal group meetings with a variety of community leaders in the Delta and Central Valley to better understand how residents would like to engage around the development of a legal framework for a Carbon Capture and Storage initiative.

The Department made strides in its effort to

elevate a future workforce that reflects the diversity of California. In October 2023, the Department conducted outreach activities at the Expanding Your Horizon: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Conference at California State University, Sacramento. The Department hosted a booth at the career demonstration and exposition section that had 200 diverse middle schoolers in attendance.

Increasing workplace diversity and inclusion awareness is an ongoing priority for the Department. One aspect of this effort is involvement in Agency-wide diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Department staff actively collaborated and played key roles in several heritage month committees that organize activities for staff across CNRA, including Black History Month, Native American Heritage Month, Pride Month, Women's History Month and Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Department of Conservation is proud that 78% of staff have completed our Understanding DEI training in 2023. In 2024, the remaining 22% of staff or about 150 individuals and new hires will receive this training which will be offered monthly. The training provides staff with an immersive learning experience that introduces terms, concepts, and methods for supporting and expanding structural change related to DEI in the workplace. Building on the foundational Understanding DEI training, the Department is working on vetting new DEI trainings in 2024. The Department recognizes that an ongoing

commitment to training and engagement on racial equity is necessary to support the cultural shift DOC is pursuing.

The Department of Conservation will offer its Race and Equity-Focused Public Engagement Training bi-annually to staff across CNRA. The living framework of this public engagement model will be evaluated and refined through input sessions held with several environmental justice community leaders in February 2024, as well as other avenues with state experts in the field.





The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is charged with managing the state's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), after the approval of the Wildlife Conservation Board, began taking steps to transfer more than 40 acres at no cost to Fort Independence Indian Community of Paiute Indians of the Fort Independence Reservation to own, operate, and maintain in perpetuity the historical Mount Whitney Fish Hatchery and to steward these lands for their tribal members, public access, and habitat preservation. This is the first ever type of transfer of CDFW property to a tribe at no cost.

To build an inclusive workplace and facilitate community building at Fish and Wildlife, the Equity, Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs Office developed the Affinity Group Program which provides a space to share, engage in learning opportunities on various topics of interest, and create a support network for staff across the state to feel less isolated.

The Equitable Granting Team has developed a plan to collect demographics that will be implemented in the Fisheries Restoration Granting Program's 2024 Proposal Solicitation. This will allow the program to review, analyze, and strategize outreach initiatives to improve inclusion and diversity.

Fish and Wildlife expanded its equity, environmental justice and tribal affairs work across the Department. This includes developing approaches for incorporating equity and environmental justice in programs such as publications, grantmaking, social media, language access and regulations.

The Equity Office also held training courses and discussions with programs across Fish and Wildlife on the principles of environmental justice and equity. This includes a training on CalEnviroScreen in collaboration with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard and Assessment (OEHHA), which included program specific case studies, to build the capacity of program staff to better understand the potential impacts of Department decisions on pollution burdened communities.

The Equity Office also hosted an inaugural gear donation drive for CNRA staff to donate gently used fishing, camping gear, and accessories that were distributed to organizations with programming geared to underserved, underrepresented, or otherwise vulnerable community members.



LOOKING BEYOND

Fish and Wildlife is also developing an equity advisor training that will provide liaison staff in each program and region advanced training on principles of equity and environmental justice. With this deeper understanding, the liaison will work within their program to ensure the Department centers equity in decision-making. We will have an inaugural cohort in the first quarter of 2024.

In 2024, the Department will focus on the implementation of an equity assessment for regulatory actions and programmatic policies to better understand the potential impacts of proposed decisions on pollution burdened communities, a majority of who are low-income and communities of color.



The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection or CAL FIRE is dedicated to fire prevention and protection, and the stewardship of over 31 million acres of California's privately-owned wildlands. CAL FIRE provides emergency services in 36 of the state's 58 counties via contracts with local governments. CAL FIRE has adapted to the evolving destructive wildfires and succeeded in significantly increasing its efforts in fire prevention through wildland pre-fire engineering, vegetation management, fire planning, education and law enforcement.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past three years, CAL FIRE distributed more than three quarters of its grants to Underserved communities. Utilizing the mapping tool Cal Enviro Screen 4.0, the allocation percentages were 85% in FY 2020-2021, 71% 2021-2022 and 80% in FY 2022-2023.

The CAL FIRE's Workforce Planning and Recruitment Unit (WPRU) has partnered with our communications team to develop a recruitment vehicle wrap featuring images that highlight the diverse array of classifications available within CAL FIRE. This wrap will include a QR code enabling the public to access our webpage, recruitment email, phone number, social media pages, and e-newsletter sign-up page. The campaign aims to reach communities that are typically more challenging to engage with in order to broaden recruitment efforts statewide, reaching not only major population areas but also diverse and underserved communities.

CAL FIRE has granted \$120 million in Green Schoolyards awards to address the challenges posed by extreme heat in underserved K-12 public educational facilities. The inclusion of trees and vegetation on school campuses is recognized for enhancing student social interactions, health, cognition, and attentiveness, while concurrently decreasing exposure to heat and air pollutants. This initiative empowers students to learn about the benefits and care of nature within their own campus environment.

CAL FIRE's Research Development and Innovation division has introduced various data analytic tools to champion equity and inclusion throughout the department's operational domain. These tools provide informative resources, offering a comprehensive view of the diversity within the state and the individuals served. They present interactive displays of information such as languages spoken, ethnicity, and other demographic details, fostering dialogue and supporting the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) objectives for our regions, units, and the entire state.

CAL FIRE's Research, Development and Innovation Program (RDI) is creating a comprehensive GIS digital atlas composed of qualitative and quantitative information (live demographics) of the communities served. This digital atlas will serve multiple purposes, ranging from better understanding the communities served, removing barriers, providing literature in languages most commonly spoken and seeking meaningful engagement through trusted resources. The Department has launched a revamped website that more accurately reflects and embraces the diverse populations served and offer translations in a variety of languages.

The Department's diversity, equity and inclusion program is in the final phases of creating a comprehensive language survey dashboard to better understand the number and distribution of bilingual certified staff across CAL FIRE. The data will help

to formulate an implementation plan to identify areas requiring additional bilingual certified employees. Their presence ensures that documents, forms, and other written materials can be translated, facilitating the dissemination of important information to members of the public who may not speak English.

CAL FIRE is using platforms such as LinkedIn to help with its recruitment efforts to under-represented segments of the population to join the organization. The Department worked with LinkedIn in 2023 under the Hiring Enterprise Program to help elevate awareness of career opportunities, spotlight crucial and challenging-to-fill positions, connect with diverse communities, and offer a supplementary outreach avenue for individuals keen on joining the Department. CAL FIRE's LinkedIn page has 15,159 followers with an impression rate nearing 341,800 over the past year.

The Tribal Wildfire Resilience grants form a crucial component of CAL FIRE's Climate and Energy Program, aimed at assisting California Native American tribes in the effective management of their ancestral lands. These grants actively promote and implement Traditional Environmental Knowledges to enhance wildfire resilience and establish safety measures for tribal communities. These grants support projects dedicated to serving tribes advancing wildfire resilience, promoting forest health, and preserving the cultural use of fire within these

communities. The funded projects address critical needs and encompass a range of activities such as cultural and prescribed burns, creation and upkeep of shaded fuel breaks, and forest and wildfire resilience efforts.

2024 AND BEYOND

CAL FIRE is updating its 2024-2028 Strategic Plan and actively involving a diverse range of stakeholders in this initiative, including tribal groups. As part of this inclusive approach, various community members are being invited to participate in surveys designed to assess opinions on the Department's direction and to explore ways in which CAL FIRE can enhance its partnerships with diverse organizations through meaningful engagement. Additionally, the Department has formally embraced diversity as a distinct value, encompassing associated behaviors and inclusive goals for the future.

The Urban and Community Forestry Program's California Climate Action Corps Fellowship is currently underway. Fellows are tasked with planning and organizing the Urban Forestry Next Generation Camp based at the Sacramento headquarters, where they receive mentorship. The camp will focus on recruiting and training fellows from underrepresented communities. The fellows will also participate in volunteer events throughout California, receive training to match career goals, and learn about CAL FIRE programs and services.





The California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) provides access to parks and open spaces and contributes to a healthier and richer quality of life for Californians through its programs, including grant programs administered by the Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS), the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division and the Division of Boating and Waterways. The Department's equitable access initiatives provide Californians benefits for their hearts, minds and bodies for generations to come. The Department contains the largest and most diverse recreational, natural and cultural heritage holdings of any state agency in the nation.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Department supported California Natural Resources Agency's (CNRA) efforts to celebrate cultural diversity across the agency and the state through the following commemorative months: Black History Month, Latino Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month, Pride Month, Women's History Month, and Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. To date, the DPR's team has led the Latino Heritage Month planning committee, created graphic and logo toolkits, organized outdoor experiences, and supported CNRA departments in further embedding equity in all that they do.

The Tribal Affairs Program promotes government-to-government relationships and opportunities for co-management of park lands with California Native American tribes through its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) program. Six MOUs were signed in calendar year 2023 bringing the total number of MOUs with California Native American tribes to 10.

State Parks has been working to make its parks more inclusive through several efforts. This includes taking stock of and critically reexamining its past, looking specifically at contested place names, monuments, and interpretation across California's State Park System. The Tribal Lands Acknowledgment, Interpretation and Exhibits Project works to

engage and build relationships with California Native American tribes, with the goal of fostering co-creation of exhibits at state parks. The African American History and Engagement Project is addressing gaps in the representation, preservation, and interpretation of California's significant African American history through a partnership with the California African American Museum.

Seeking to provide more equitable access to California's State Park System, the Department established a three-year pilot program that provides free day-use access to more than 200 state parks through California through three innovative pass programs: the Golden Bear pass, the California State Park Adventure Pass and the California State Library Parks Pass. Since the three pilot programs began in 2021, more than 144,000 passes have been provided to Californians in an effort to remove income barriers which may prevent access to the state park system's rich natural and cultural resources, and high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities.

Department staff from leadership positions across the state joined the Capitol Collaborative for Racial Equity (CCORE) as a cohort. Working with staff from the Public Health Institute, participants advanced our work to integrate explicit considerations of racial equity into decisions, policies, practices, programs, and budgets.

State Parks has been working to make its parks more inclusive through several efforts, including taking stock of and critically examining its past, looking specifically at contested place names, monuments, and interpretation across California's State Park System.



Parks established the Leadership, Excellence, Advancement, Development and Recruitment Program (LEADR), which focuses on expanding career and leadership development. The goal of the program is to strengthen leadership and diversity in the Department.

The Department established guidelines for the next round of applications for the Outdoor Equity Grants Program. The Office of Grants and Local Services coordinated with representatives from organizations who work with underserved communities throughout California and conducted virtual and in-person application workshops where nearly 500 participants attended. In the last two years State Parks has trained 61 organizations and 179 staff that are running the Outdoor Equity Grants Programs.



2024 AND BEYOND

The Department aims to accelerate the pace of negotiations for tribal MOUs with more than a half dozen in the draft phase that will be completed in 2024.

State Parks anticipates selecting approximately 100 Outdoor Equity Grants Program grants by summer 2024. These programs will increase the ability of residents in underserved communities to participate in outdoor experiences within their community and at state parks and other public lands.





The Department of Water Resources (DWR) manages the water resources of California, in cooperation with other agencies, to benefit the state's people and environment. In so doing, DWR operates the State Water Project, serving 27 million people and 750,000 acres of irrigated agriculture; maintains 300 miles of levees that protects millions of people and property; ensures the safety of more than 1,200 dams; provides policy direction, regulatory guidelines, and financial support for local water supply investments, sustainable groundwater management, and water use efficiency; and restores ecosystems in the state's rivers and streams. Given the growing complexities of water management, DWR also strives to inform and educate the public about the importance of water, California's unique challenges and opportunities, and DWR's role in managing and protecting this valuable resource.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, DWR awarded a total of \$143.7 million to underserved communities for 36 drought-related projects through its Urban and Small Community Drought Relief Programs. Of this, \$10.2 million will implement solutions such as pipeline replacement, well rehabilitation, and infrastructure upgrades. Another \$133.5 million of the amount awarded will support efforts like groundwater recharge, improved water supply reliability, recycled water, and water conservation.

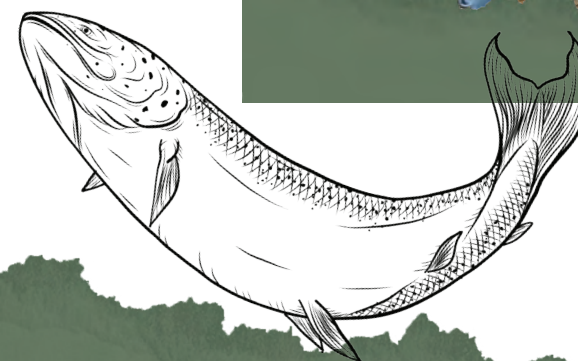
In spring 2023, the DWR executive team participated in its second Annual Community Visit to inform state policy and programs related to protecting groundwater dependent communities. In partnership with local non-governmental organizations and other state agencies, DWR explored important equity issues of the central coast region, including water quality and affordability of private domestic wells, regional flood emergency and preparedness, and Sustainable Groundwater Management Act's impact on the agricultural workforce.

In April 2023, DWR convened the fourth Tribal Water Summit to incorporate tribal perspectives and recommendations into the California Water Plan Update 2023. The Summit, convened over three days, provided over 300 tribal leaders from

across California, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico to join state and federal partners to discuss water management issues, resource management strategies and policy recommendations. Tribal governments and tribal communities identified recommendations to address historical underrepresentation in local and regional funding, human right to water, traditional ecological knowledge, and covered topics such as data sovereignty, the decommissioning and removal of the Klamath Dams, and tribal water rights.

In August 2023, DWR established a Racial Equity Office within the executive team and hired a racial equity officer. The office is responsible for the Department's Racial Equity Action Plan which prioritizes workforce diversity, community engagement, and embedding racial equity into Department work. The office has onboarded an additional staff member at the end of 2023 to support plan implementation.

Launched in September 2023, DWR now provides comprehensive language services for public meetings, including translation of meeting materials, live translation support, and accessibility modifications of DWR resources. All DWR employees have been instructed to use this service in all external meeting notices to improve public access to state resources.



2024 AND BEYOND

In the coming year, DWR plans to expand its practice of building meaningful engagement with communities through developing and adopting best management practices for community engagement and expanding targeted outreach to underserved communities regarding combating drought and flood emergencies, preserving the ecosystems, and safeguarding the human right to water. DWR also plans to develop and incorporate inclusive language guidelines in all Department communications.

Top photo by DWR Public Affairs Office at the 2023 Tribal Water Summit. Bottom photo by Community Water Center at the San Jerardo Cooperative.



The Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety oversees California’s electrical corporations’ compliance with wildfire safety rules and regulations and develops and enforces safe excavation standards for all underground facilities.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, Energy Safety increased its outreach efforts to expand the diversity of qualified candidates who may apply for its positions. This initiative included promoting awareness of Energy Safety’s job opportunities among diverse student populations at colleges throughout the state.

Energy Safety conducted its first webinar with tribal leadership to engage their participation in the development of the 2026-2028 Wildfire Mitigation Plan Guidelines. This meeting was also the first step in establishing the process of early, often, and meaningful consultation with California Native American tribes.

Energy Safety required electrical utilities to incorporate community vulnerability into their risk modeling efforts. In support of that ongoing effort, Energy Safety held its first public scoping meeting that began a process to identify the disproportionate impacts of wildfire on socially vulnerable communities and to incorporate these factors into the electrical corporations’ wildfire mitigation planning.

In 2023, Energy Safety completed its implementation of translation services on its website, which will provide greater transparency and more access to the department’s work.

2024 AND BEYOND

In 2024, Energy Safety will continue to focus on promoting its job opportunities to diverse populations. This will include further promoting awareness of Energy Safety’s job opportunities among diverse student populations by expanding the number of colleges throughout the state.

In 2024, Energy Safety will continue to develop its relationships with California’s Native American tribes through early, often, and meaningful consultation. This will include proactively seeking tribal engagement in the Wildfire Mitigation Plan Guidelines development process.

Energy Safety will continue to ensure that socially vulnerable communities, disproportionately impacted by wildfires, will be represented in the electrical corporations’ wildfire mitigation planning.





The Baldwin Hills and Urban Watersheds Conservancy in Los Angeles County is the portal for communities of color with the highest population and pollution burdens in the state to access and experience the California's conservation and climate initiatives first-hand. The Conservancy's 70-square mile territory is characterized by lack of green and open space infrastructure unique to the urban watershed. With less than the County average of 3.3-acres per thousand people, investment in the territory will advance a more equitable distribution of resources and improve the quality of life in the most vulnerable neighborhoods in the state.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

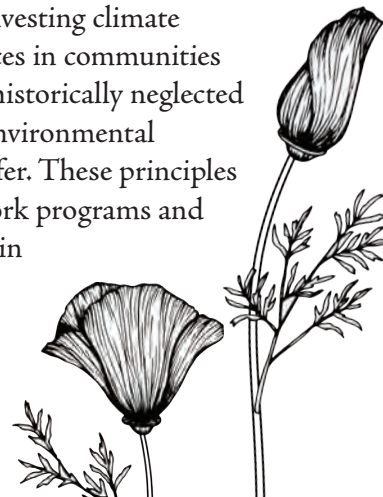
The Conservancy has undertaken the development of a territory-wide Watershed Improvement Plan. Working in partnership with several key partners, the Conservancy is compiling proposed climate resilience, transportation, housing, park and open space projects into a blueprint for watershed investments with equitable outcomes for regional stakeholders that have had a history of systemic neglect. A coalition of community business organizations have been engaged to create a capacity building toolkits as well identify funding mechanisms to help empower local leaders to implement resiliency and open space projects in the newly expanded Conservancy territory.

The Conservancy completed the Mar Vista Greenway Plan, which is the first of its kind greening plan in partnership with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. Mar Vista Gardens is the only large-scale public housing development on the westside of LA. This 40-acre community hosts 1,800 residents and is immediately adjacent to the seven-mile Ballona Creek Bike Path and the range of its connected outdoor amenities including the wetlands, beach and the Baldwin Hills Parklands. The Greenway Plan was a two-year community driven design development effort focused on removing barriers that disconnected the residents from the Ballona Creek, larger community and a healthy environment. The final plans for green infrastructure projects will transform and enhance the area with a

half-mile network of robust and sustainable public space amenities that will connect and unify the surrounding communities lining the Ballona Creek.

During the course of 2023, the Conservancy provided a \$500k grant to help build a coalition of community-based organizations and nongovernmental organizations that support increasing equitable access in the territory. Through compensated engagement, the one-year program facilitates and supports a regional coalition of up to 18 community-based organizations in land conservation, restoration, park, open space and recreation access. A series of coalition work sessions will solicit direct community input, feedback, review, guidance, and prioritization focusing on new project development in high need areas.

The Conservancy's Governing Board articulated and adopted its Equity Guiding Principles for inclusion in the Conservancy's statutory mandated Watershed Improvement Plan. These principles exemplify the Conservancy's commitment to investing climate adaptation strategies and resources in communities that have been systemically and historically neglected or excluded from accessing the environmental opportunities the State has to offer. These principles will help guide Conservancy's work programs and prioritization of project funding in the newly expanded territory.



2024 AND BEYOND

The Conservancy is collaborating with West LA College's Center for Climate Education and LA Trade Tech's School of Landscape Architecture for workforce development within the communities of color we serve. Training opportunities for digital virtual reality landscape design training will be deployed with local assistance grants for greenway projects in communities of high need. Outreach and engagement tools will also provide hands on experiential learning for the communities that will actively participate in the design and construction of their own pocket parks. These projects will include workforce development opportunities ranging from mentorships to partnerships with labor organizations that can certify skilled training to eligible workers that reside in the general area of proposed project sites.

Above photo: Martin Luther King Memorial Tree Grove at Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area



The California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) is a state agency, established in 1985, with a mission to lead California’s efforts to restore and enhance the extraordinary natural and recreational resources of the Lake Tahoe Basin. The Conservancy’s jurisdiction spans the 236 square miles of the California side of the Basin. The Conservancy manages 6,500 acres of state lands for wildlife habitat, open space, and to protect water quality, in addition to its programs to restore watersheds, enhance public access and recreational opportunities, increase forest health and reduce wildfire risk, and make Tahoe communities and natural resources more resilient to climate change.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

With support from the Equity and Wellness Institute (EqWI), the Conservancy hosted listening sessions with its traditional partners, community-based organizations in the Lake Tahoe Basin, and Spanish-speaking families in South Lake Tahoe. Information gathered through these sessions is informing the Conservancy’s planning for actions to address racial equity and community engagement.

The Conservancy hosted two racial equity trainings for its Board, and two racial equity trainings for its staff.

The Conservancy partnered with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and four community-based organizations to conduct community-based participatory research. This research will inform the Conservancy’s Racial Equity Action Plan and future trainings.

In December, the Conservancy Board approved multiple grants to support programs to expand recreational access to public lands in the Tahoe region for underserved communities and those who have faced barriers to outdoor recreation.

The Conservancy continues close, ongoing coordination with the Washoe Tribe, including providing grants that support tribal capacity building efforts and inclusion of ancestral science for forestry

management. The Conservancy is working with the tribe on incorporating tribal messaging and language and place names into signage and other documents. As part of updating its Strategic Plan, the Conservancy is engaging with the tribe to incorporate tribal practices and engagement in projects and to explore tribal access, land back, and co-management options.

2024 AND BEYOND

In 2024, the Conservancy plans to develop and implement a Racial Equity Action Plan. The Conservancy is updating its strategic plan, which will integrate equity initiatives and principles.





The Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy's mission is to protect and steward land in perpetuity and to provide for the public's enjoyment and access to those lands, which include mountainous lands surrounding the Coachella Valley from the Banning Pass to the Riverside County border line of the Salton Sea. The Conservancy develops partnerships with local governments, state and federal agencies, the private sector, and the community as a whole to protect the magnificent biological, scenic, cultural, and recreational resources of the Coachella Valley area. The Conservancy is directed by a 20-member board representing nine incorporated cities in the Coachella Valley, the County of Riverside, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, state agencies with land management responsibilities and citizens appointed by the Assembly, Governor and Senate offices.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Conservancy board approved a \$292,000 grant to The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens to establish a tribal conservation workforce development program in collaboration with the Torres Martinez Native American Tribe and other Native American tribes throughout the Coachella Valley. The project will develop a community-based workforce that will help the tribal community build resilience to adapt to climate change and will promote cultural preservation by featuring in the training process diverse cultures and viewpoints of the people who ancestrally and culturally call the region home.

The Conservancy board approved a \$140,000 grant to the Council of Mexican Federations North America to expand its staff capacity and provide resources and services to underrepresented communities that include low-income, immigrant, Spanish-speaking, and mixed status families. The goal of the project is to promote sustainability and climate change adaptability by connecting underrepresented communities to nature and empowering communities that are often marginalized and the first to experience environmental issues due to poor air and water quality or lack of access to the outdoors. The project also aims to provide recreational and educational experiences to support the well-being and the benefit of those communities as a whole.

The Conservancy board approved a \$202,000 grant to the Desert Recreation Foundation, to develop two new youth programs: Trips for Kids and Recreation Outdoor Camp. The programs promote equity in access to outdoor recreation for underserved youth by connecting them to natural areas and wild spaces and providing experiences on nature exploration, mountain biking, and environmental education.

In an effort to continue to diversify the Conservancy to better serve the community, the Conservancy appointed its first bilingual Latina to an executive position and recruited an immigrant of indigenous heritage for a position as project coordinator. Both are longtime residents of the Coachella Valley with strong histories of community involvement.

This year, the Conservancy created a social media program to facilitate interactive communication within our large territory with the goal of reaching younger audiences. The Conservancy has shared images of endangered species, successful restoration or acquisition projects and even trail maps to facilitate access to public lands. It also enables the Conservancy to obtain continuous input from community members.

The Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy has approved the transfer of 280-acres of ancestral lands

back to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. In 2011, the Conservancy awarded funding to the Friends of the Desert Mountains for the purchase of a 280-acre parcel for important desert conservation purposes. Through the past couple of years, the Friends of Desert Mountains in partnership with Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians have identified this parcel is an important location for the return of ancestral lands and tribal stewardship. The transfer was approved at the November 2023 Conservancy meeting. Now through tribal law and stewardship, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians will own and manage the land for recreation, preservation of open space, and cultural resources protection purposes.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Conservancy received \$8.5 million in funding for wildfire resilience. Conservancy staff reached out to tribal and local partners during the development of grant request for proposals and set aside \$4.5 million toward projects for tribal and underserved communities that target different aspects of wildfire risk. Applications for this grant program will be due in early 2024 and technical assistance workshops will be offered to facilitate successful proposals.

Several years ago, the Conservancy acquired a historic ranch in the mountains 4,000 feet above the Coachella Valley in a location that lacks outdoor recreational facilities. Working with the Desert Recreation District and nonprofit partners, the Conservancy built restrooms and a large shade structure to facilitate passive recreation, environmental research and historic preservation activities at the ranch. The ranch will open for public use in early 2024 and will provide outdoor education and recreational opportunities for underserved residents.

The Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy has approved the transfer of 280-acres of ancestral lands back to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. Now, through tribal law and stewardship, the tribe will own and manage the land for recreation, preservation of open space and cultural resource protection purposes.





The Coastal Conservancy plans and implements projects to protect, restore, and provide access to the California coast. The agency works along California's coast and in coastal watersheds, the San Francisco Bay Area, and the Santa Ana River watershed to protect coastal resources, support climate adaptation projects such as wetland restoration, sea level rise adaptation, and wildfire resilience, and increase opportunities for the public to access and enjoy the coast. The Conservancy partners with California Native American tribes, local communities, nonprofit organizations, and other government agencies to implement multi-benefit projects that serve the diverse populations of California.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In September 2023, the Coastal Conservancy awarded 16 Explore the Coast projects, which enhance public opportunities to explore the California coast. This included a block grant to Justice Outside to sub-award to sub-award block grants to community-based organizations. Staff estimates the 2023-2024 grant program will engage over 7,500 people, serving over 6,100 low-income Californians, 6,600 people of color, 1,000 homeless or foster youth, approximately 1,800 people for whom English is not their first language, and at least 2,100 people with physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities.

The Coastal Conservancy nurtures retention and professional growth through ongoing staff development training, including equity and tribal training. The trainings include a wide range of topics, such as guiding staff on tribal etiquette and partnerships, how to work with community-based organizations and diving into the complex racial history of the California coast in places such as Bruce's Beach.

The Conservancy has funded 12 projects this year in collaboration with California Native American tribes. This includes funding tribal engagement and planning at the Frank and Joann Randall Preserve/Genga in Orange County and an award of \$4,500,000 to the Hoopa Valley Tribe to acquire approximately 10,300 acres of their historic lands

in the Klamath River watershed. The Coastal Conservancy's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan targets spending 40% of the agency's funding to benefit systemically excluded communities and tribes. In 2023, the Conservancy approved \$309 million for projects, and about 65% of that funding went to projects that benefit underserved communities.

The Conservancy has funded 16 projects this year that involve engaging with community based organizations. This includes the planning for an outdoor exhibit area at the Discovery Cube along Santiago Creek in the City of Santa Ana, the planning for the Great Redwood Trail in Mendocino, Humboldt, and Trinity Counties, and planning for the Crescent City Citizen's Dock replacement in Del Norte County.

The Conservancy offers office hours to help grant applicants during grant solicitations and onboarding grantees post grant award. The technical assistance office hours help answer grant program, project, and invoicing questions to make the process smoother for partners. The Conservancy also created workforce development tips for staff and grantees to have clear guidelines for fair wage compensation on state projects.

In November 2023, the Coastal Conservancy awarded the second round of Coastal Stories



Above photo by Outdoor Outreach via the Explore the Coast grant program.

projects. In total, 14 Coastal Stories projects will tell their cultural connection to the outdoors through installations or interpretive materials that represent diverse communities and perspectives that historically have been excluded from narratives of California's coast and publicly accessible lands.

To further the Conservancy's goal of making coastal access available to all Californians, in December 2023 it authorized a grant of \$250,000 to Orange County Coastkeeper to provide small grants to nonprofits, public entities, and tribes for beach wheelchairs and other adaptive equipment to increase accessibility to California's beaches and coast in coastal counties statewide.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Coastal Conservancy will update its Tribal Consultation Policy in collaboration with California Native American tribes. The Conservancy also plans to collaborate with its sister agencies, the San Francisco Bay Conservation Development Commission and California Coastal Commission, to train all staff on tribal and equity topics.



The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy (Conservancy) is a primary state agency in the implementation of ecosystem restoration in the Delta. We support efforts that advance environmental protection and the economic well-being of Delta residents. The Conservancy collaborates and cooperates with local communities and other parties to preserve, protect, and restore the natural resources, economy, and agriculture of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Conservancy gave \$23 million in community enhancement grants to support community-based projects. Projects included a planning grant for the Stockton Aquatic Center to provide water access for the entire community on a sliding scale, a park in the city of Isleton to celebrate Asian American heritage, and an implementation grant to rebuild a public boat access ramp and park in the city of Pittsburg.

The Delta Conservancy provided technical assistance to applicants and grantees to support project development and management. Conservancy staff worked to remove barriers from accessing state dollars by using a rolling application deadline, providing assistance with the application process and allowing a longer time between pre-proposal and final proposal. This allowed many smaller or community-based organizations that historically lack technical capacity to access, apply, and receive state funding.

The Conservancy established internal groups to identify barriers that limit access to state resources. To address these barriers, these groups made improvements to communication styles, the hiring process, and grants proposal and administration procedures. Through these improvement efforts, the Conservancy is better able to make grants and careers accessible to all applicants.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Conservancy will continue to work to develop relationships with tribes and the community to grow the relevance and impact of the organization's work. Staff will also continue to assess barriers to access in the grant procedure, communications, and hiring process.



The San Diego River Conservancy is an independent, non-regulatory state agency established to preserve, restore and enhance the San Diego River Area. The Conservancy's 18-member Governing Board consists of both state and local representatives, creating a diverse partnership dedicated to conserving this highly valued resource of statewide significance. The San Diego River Conservancy's mission is accomplished by conserving land, and providing recreational opportunities, protecting wildlife species and native habitat, water quality, natural flood conveyance, historical, cultural, and tribal resources, and supporting educational opportunities.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The San Diego River Conservancy's Board awarded one grant to the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation to fund 13 Fire Safe Councils in San Diego County and to purchase a chipper for the Alpine Fire Protection District. The Fire Safe Councils prioritizes providing services to critically underserved communities including low income, elderly, veterans, and the disabled who are unable or can't afford to do the work to keep their homes and properties safe.

The Conservancy Governing Board approved eight grants totaling \$6.1 million from the Wildfire Early Action Plan, which support projects that support fire resilience and restoration. A quarter of the funding went to tribal governments and 63% to historically underfunded communities.

The Conservancy's work continues on a \$3.5 million grant to the Resources Conservation District of Greater San Diego County for their no cost chipping and defensible space assistance programs. In 2023, 284 homes were served, treating 420 acres and removing 6,137,045 cubic feet of biomass which assists homeowners that need to create defensible space, but are not able to do so because of physical, economic or other barriers.

The Conservancy provided outreach and engagement to bands of the Kumeyaay Nation and other tribal organizations. The Conservancy provided outreach for additional information on grant programs offered

by State agencies and provided technical assistance on Conservancy's grant applications.

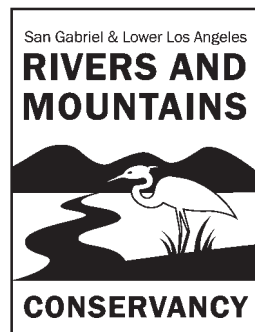
The Conservancy's deep commitment to outreach and engagement has resulted in substantial progress for underfunded communities and tribal organizations. The team provided extensive education on state grant opportunities and technical assistance to make the application process smooth. They created maps for tribal communities and presented to high school students and other rural East County Fire Safe Councils. With their assistance, the City of El Cajon was able to make significant progress in securing grants.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Conservancy will continue public outreach and engagement opportunities, technical assistance, and workshops for historically underfunded communities. The Conservancy will participate in the Eco Ambassadors program in the spring hosted by Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, which offers inspiring programming to high school students. The students learn about local ecosystems and monitoring techniques and collaborate with peers on projects. The Conservancy plans to update its Tribal Consultation Policy and attend the Tribal EPA Workshop on tribal access, co-management, ancestral land return, and carbon sequestration. Tribal liaisons will also receive input and engage San Diego County tribal members.



RMC.CA.GOV



The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy’s mission is to preserve open space and habitat in order to provide for low-impact recreation and educational uses, wildlife habitat restoration and protection, and watershed improvements within its jurisdiction. The Conservancy’s territory includes eastern Los Angeles County and western Orange County, a vast and varied area with mountains, valleys, rivers, coastal plain, and coastline.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy or RMC received its first direct grant application from the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy for accessibility and wildfire resiliency project. The Conservancy had their first land return just a year ago, which is the first time the tribe had land anywhere in LA County since 1833. RMC ramped up its outreach and technical assistance program by hosting workshop and created a consolidated grant program to cut green tape and accelerate application review.

2024 AND BEYOND

The RMC created a Natural Resources and Tribal Affairs Manager position, which will be dedicated to liaising with tribes and implementing tribal consultation efforts between tribes, local non-profits and governmental organizations. This manager will provide guidance on the analysis and integration of tribal recommendations to help the RMC’s work meaningfully reflect the needs of tribal communities as it relates to restoration, access, and climate adaptation plans and projects. The position is expected to be filled in late 2023.

SJRC.CA.GOV



The San Joaquin River Conservancy is a regionally governed agency created to develop and manage the San Joaquin River Parkway, a planned 22-mile natural and recreational area in the floodplain extending from Friant Dam to Highway 99. The Conservancy’s mission includes acquiring approximately 5,900 acres from willing sellers; developing, operating, and managing those lands for public access and recreation; and protecting, enhancing, and restoring riparian and floodplain habitat.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

After extensive outreach, the Conservancy is working to create an access plan for tribal members that will include access to the land and management and planting of cultural resources. The Conservancy recognizes the important role these 22 properties can play in providing access to cultural resources and gathering places.

The Conservancy provided approximately \$1.1 million to conduct outreach and design a welcome center for tribal members. The project design completed this year and is now seeking construction funding. In the meantime, the Conservancy continues outreach around this project and is developing a staged approach to open the property for traditional gathering.

The Conservancy was created to provide recreational opportunities for the areas of Fresno and Madera, which are in great need of outdoor recreation opportunities. The Conservancy was able to open Sycamore Island and Van Buren for public access that includes swimming, fishing, hiking and boating opportunities closely accessible to Fresno and Madera.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Conservancy will work to advance the tribal access plan and incorporate this and other access goals into a new strategic plan.

The Conservancy also plans to open three more properties for public access for the communities of Fresno, Madera and beyond in 2024.





Through direct action, alliances, partnerships, and joint powers authorities, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's mission is to strategically buy back, protect, preserve, restore, and enhance treasured pieces of Southern California to form an interlinking system of urban, rural, and river parks, open space, trails, and wildlife habitats that are easily accessible to the public.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Conservancy granted funding to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps to provide fire resiliency and restoration projects throughout the conservancy zone. In addition, fire resiliency grants were made to two local tribes for workforce development and monitoring.

Though a fire resiliency grant to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, funding was provided to the Tataviam Conservation Corps for workforce development and trail building.

The Conservancy granted funding to community-based organizations, such as the Community Nature Connection to support workforce development for underserved youth, and restoration projects for fire resiliency and habitat improvements.

The Conservancy granted funding from its Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program to the North East Trees, an urban greening nonprofit in Los Angeles, for habitat restoration and fire resiliency at Elyria Canyon Park and Flat Top, which also involved jobs for neighborhood youth.

A fire resiliency grant was awarded to Outward Bound Adventures for the development of pathways to park and public safety careers for fire resiliency, including engagement with community colleges to advance curriculum to facilitate those career paths.

The Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority support urban and underserved communities' access to Malibu beaches, including sponsored trips for families with nature education and introduction to park careers components.



The Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority support urban and underserved communities' access to Malibu beaches, including sponsored trips for families with nature education and introduction to park careers.



The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is a state agency with the mission to initiate, encourage, and support efforts to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra-Cascades Region, its communities, and the people of California.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy's governing statutes were amended this year to include equity among its priorities. The Conservancy is in the process of updating its five-year strategic plan, which will build in equity as a priority and help lead to outcomes that fully support diverse communities in the Sierra-Cascades Region. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has continued to award grants that support tribes in the Sierra-Cascades Region.

A few examples of note in 2023:

The Conservancy awarded \$1 million to the Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) in Kern County to purchase 2,285 acres of the Fay Creek Ranch. The Conservancy will transfer more than half of that ranch to the Tubatulabal tribe for long term stewardship as a working ranch — the first time that culturally significant land has been returned to this tribe.

The Conservancy granted \$862,176 to the Sarah Priest Fuels Reduction Project. The American Indian Council of Mariposa County will use the funding to treat overloaded fuels on a 160-acre parcel that will reduce fire risk to communities.

The Conservancy awarded funds for a tribal land back purchase to conserve cultural and natural resources in Mono County. The Mono Lake Kutzadika's Indian Community Cultural Preservation Association will use the over \$2 million grant to help purchase a 160-acre parcel near Lee Vining.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is at the beginning stages of developing a pilot tribal capacity building program. The pilot will strategically invest capacity funds in ways that specifically meet a tribe's needs, with the goal of putting more tribes in control of their funding opportunities. Available training and technical assistance that may be offered in the pilot include grant fundamentals, grant administration, subcontracts, contracts, and agreements, as well as reporting; leveraging funds, and other skills.





The California Coastal Commission is committed to protecting and enhancing California's coast and ocean for present and future generations. It does so through careful planning and regulation of environmentally sustainable development, rigorous use of science, strong public participation, education, and effective intergovernmental coordination.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

For decades, visitors to Lunada Bay in Palos Verdes have been harassed, threatened and attacked by members of a local surfer gang known as the Lunada Bay Boys. In 2023, after the Commission ordered the city to demolish an illegal fort from which the Bay Boys organized their activities, an appellate court also found that it's illegal to intimidate and harass people to keep them off the beach. This case was a victory for public rights and is an example of how the Coastal Act can be used to address social and racial barriers to coastal access.

Teaching kids to surf is one of the most empowering ways to build a lifelong connection to the ocean. But coastal non-governmental organizations (NGO) have complained for years that it can be difficult and expensive to get the necessary permits for group surf lessons or camps. One of the most sought-after areas is Linda Mar Beach in Pacifica. After years of coordination with the City of Pacifica and local NGOs, the Commission approved a revamped surf school permitting system that provides parity for non-profits who previously had to compete with commercial surf schools for a limited number of permits. The new system is both affordable and accessible, and increases coordination between all user groups to ensure all participants can enjoy a safe, welcoming environment.

Just before Thanksgiving, the Tongva and Acjachemen Tribes celebrated the return of 6.2 acres of coastal ancestral land overlooking the Bolsa Chica wetlands in Orange County. The land had

been the site of an ancient village and holds deep cultural significance as well sensitive native habitat. The land owner had allowed extreme grading and land contouring on the site to create a competitive course for mountain bike competitions, without any permits or tribal consultations. With a significant Coastal Act enforcement action and administrative penalties looming, the landowners worked with the Coastal and the City of Huntington Beach on a to transfer the land to the Acjachemen Tongva Land Conservancy (ATLC) which will restore the land and preserve it for ceremonies and traditional cultural practices.

The Commission approved over \$2 million to 56 Whale Tail grantees, which funds experiential education and stewardship of the California coast. Recent funding includes 49 projects focusing on low-income communities, 39 supporting communities of color, 22 serving dual-language learners, 13 engaging inland communities, 9 providing programming for tribal communities, 9 addressing migrant communities, 7 engaging unhoused communities, and 3 focusing on LGBTQ2S+ communities.

To enhance meaningful engagement and enhance communication between EJ partners and Commission's executive leadership and staff, the Coastal Commission's environmental justice unit (EJ unit) launched quarterly partner calls with the Executive Director and senior management. Over a dozen EJ organizations participated in each of the calls in 2023, engaging in substantive discussions of

relevant topics, including offshore wind, equitable access to our beaches, and housing.

The EJ unit and sea level rise team started developing guidance for staff and local governments to better address environmental justice and equity in the Commission's sea-level rise work with funding from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Staff selected EJ and sea level rise advisors from across the state, who will be paid a stipend to provide input on the development of this new policy guidance and public engagement strategies.

The EJ unit also conducted environmental justice training sessions in several district offices. These sessions serve to teach new staff, refresh long-term employees, and showcase new and updated EJ tools available to staff across the state.

To help raise awareness of the rich history and contributions of California Native American cultures, and foster respectful engagement with Tribes today, the Commission created a deeply informative tribal consultation story map that features the voices of California tribal leaders in their own words. It provides an overview of the Commission's tribal consultation Policy as well as advances in state law and examples of how Tribal consultation leads to better project outcomes.

2024 AND BEYOND

To track and measure success, the Commission will undertake a review the effectiveness and progress of the agency's EJ policy. The Coastal Commission will release a public draft of the environmental justice update for the agency's Sea Level Rise Guidance, which will support consideration of environmental justice and sea level rise in coastal development permits as well as local coastal program (LCP) updates. This includes in vulnerability assessments, adaptation plans, and draft LCP policies on sea level rise.



To enhance meaningful engagement and communication between EJ partners and Commission's executive leadership and staff, the Coastal Commission's environmental justice unit launched quarterly partner calls with the Executive Director and senior management. Over a dozen EJ organizations participated in each of the calls in 2023, engaging in substantive discussions of relevant topics, including offshore wind, equitable access to our beaches, and housing.



The California Energy Commission (CEC) is the state's primary energy policy and planning agency leading the state to a 100 percent clean energy future for all. The CEC plays a critical role in creating the energy system of the future — one that is clean, modern, and ensures the fifth largest economy in the world continues to thrive.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In February 2023, the CEC adopted the Justice Access Equity Diversity Inclusion (JAEDI) Framework as part of the 2022 Integrated Energy Policy Report. The framework is a tool for staff and leadership that functions as a north star to help guide agency-wide efforts by outlining CEC's commitment, values, principles, and best practices for embedding energy equity and environmental justice into its programs and policies.

In March 2023, the Commission adopted a resolution recognizing and committing to support tribal energy sovereignty and independence at a first-of-its-kind convening, called a tribal en banc, held in Humboldt with Native American tribal leaders, CEC commissioners and the California Public Utilities Commission. To further the relationship building and to hear directly from tribes about their vision for clean energy and tribal sovereignty, the tribal en banc was followed by a series of engagement and visits with multiple tribes throughout the state.

In May 2023, through the Clean Transportation Program Investment Plan, CEC invested \$1 million to establish the ZEV Truck Training Program. The program is offered at six community colleges throughout the state located in underserved communities. Students will embark on clean transportation career pathways in heavy-duty electric truck technologies that will lead to good paying jobs and economic sustainability.

In August 2023, CEC launched the Communities of Practice (COP) effort aligning with Governor

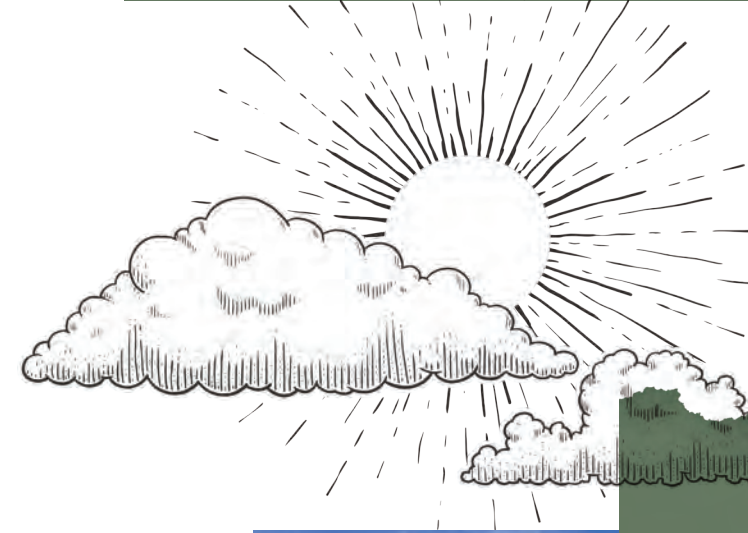
Newsom's Executive Order N-16-22 to embed equity into all agency efforts. With a staff lead and commissioner sponsor, five COPs are convening and developing recommendations for the CEC to apply agency-wide to advance supplier diversity, language access, labor and workforce development, outreach and engagement, and benefits development.

In November 2023, the Commission adopted the Equitable Building Decarbonization Direct Install Program Guidelines, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in homes and advance energy equity. The program will provide energy-efficient electric appliances, other energy efficiency measures, and related upgrades to low-income households at no cost.

2024 AND BEYOND

In 2024, CEC plans to unveil an updated Energy Equity Indicators tool that will provide data visualization and mapping functions to enable communities and the public to access energy-related information to use for grant applications and other purposes. CEC staff will share the tool widely and provide trainings on how to use the tool for various purposes.

In 2024, the CEC plans to advance a partnership with the California Workforce Development Board to increase clean energy job opportunities, particularly for underserved and low-income communities. This will be in conjunction with participating in working groups convened by the Labor Workforce Development Agency.





The California Fish and Game Commission was one of the first wildlife conservation agencies in the country. Today, the Commission, which consists of five Governor-appointed Commissioners, protects and preserves the state's fish and wildlife by regulating hunting, sportfishing, and some commercial fishing. The Commission determines the status of species under the California Endangered Species Act, provides leases for aquaculture and adopts policies guiding the work of the California Department of Fish and Game and more.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, the Commission developed a framework for and initiated a review of all 63 Commission policies to proactively identify and address justice, equity, diversity and inclusion or JEDI issues, as well as identify opportunities for longer-term policy improvements. This full review of Commission policies through a JEDI lens is expected to be a multi-year process. The Commission has hired a consultant to assist the Commission in developing its first-ever JEDI plan. The Commission is in the process of hiring a tribal advisor and liaison to support the Commission's equity and tribal affairs work.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Commission has identified reviewing its policies through a JEDI lens to be a high priority for 2024 and 2025. In addition to guiding the work of the Commission, these policies also guide the work of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the largest fish and wildlife agency in the United States. Working closely with its consultant, the Commission is expected to adopt its first-ever JEDI plan in 2024. The plan will be developed with significant input from tribes, underserved communities and other members of the public. While many components of the Commission's plan are underway, the final plan will provide a foundation for additional, high priority JEDI initiatives.



The California State Lands Commission manages 4 million acres of tide and submerged lands and the beds of navigable rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, inlets, and straits. These lands, often known as sovereign or public trust lands, stretch from the Klamath River and Goose Lake in the north to the Tijuana Estuary in the south, the Colorado River in the east, and from the Pacific Coast three miles offshore in the west to world-famous Lake Tahoe in the east, and includes California's two longest rivers, the Sacramento and San Joaquin. The Commission oversees sovereign land granted in trust to about 70 local jurisdictions, which are predominantly prime waterfront lands, coastal waters, and the lands underlying California's major ports. The Commission also protects state waters from marine invasive species introductions and prevents oil spills by regulating oil transfers at marine oil terminals. The Commission is a leader in the fight against climate change and transitioning away from fossil fuel to clean energy, managing a portfolio of renewable energy leases and working alongside the California Energy Commission and others to bring offshore wind energy to California.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Commission continued to implement its Environmental Justice and Tribal Consultation Policies, evaluating lease and permit applications through the lens of environmental justice and providing meaningful outreach and engagement with underserved communities and consultation with Tribes. Staff conducted environmental justice outreach on numerous lease applications and projects, sending over 100 letters and engaging with community-based organizations. Key outreach projects involve a vehicle triage center in San Francisco, offshore oil and gas operations in Long Beach, and California's offshore wind energy strategic plan. Staff consulted with tribes and participated in all the tribal consultations and tribal working group meetings for the strategic plan.

Staff helped launch the Coastal Justice Lab, a joint program led by Azul, a Latino-led and serving environmental justice organization focused on coastal and marine conservation; the Center for Land, Environment, and Natural Resources at UC Irvine Law; and UCI Newkirk Center for Science and Society. The Coastal Justice Lab is intended to advance environmental justice in coastal regions through research and facilitated dialogues.

The Commission prioritized language access by executing a language access contract and providing translation services on request. The Commission incorporated CNRA's language access best practices by advertising the availability of language access services and including instructions for how to access services on our website.

2024 AND BEYOND

Environmental justice is a priority for the Commission. We hope to update and strengthen our environmental justice and tribal consultation policies and continue learning and improving how we implement our policies, with the goal of providing tangible benefits to underserved communities.

The Commission also hopes to provide more staff training and education so we can better serve California's tribal nations and underserved communities.



The California Water Commission explores water management issues from multiple perspectives and formulates recommendations to advise the Department of Water Resources, and, as appropriate, the California Natural Resources Agency, the Governor and Legislature on ways to improve water planning and management in response to California's changing hydrology. The Commission consists of nine members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. The Commission supports policies that result in sustainable water management and a healthy environment statewide.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In April of 2023, the Commission adopted a California Native American Tribal Leadership Comment Policy and began implementing the policy the following meeting. This policy acknowledges tribes' unique political status and specifies a procedure for acknowledging tribal leaders and inviting them to comment prior to taking public comment.

Commission staff participated in a voluntary diversity, equity, and inclusion training pathway and held group discussions to process information and apply it to the Commission's office culture and work. As a result of this process, staff launched a justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) working group that meets monthly to provide a safe space for discussing JEDI topics and how to better integrate them into the Commission's office culture.

The Commission's operations are nested within the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and the Commission's equity work is being rolled out in collaboration with DWR. The Commission works closely with DWR to get updates on their equity activities and to align the Commission's work with these efforts.

2024 AND BEYOND

At its August 2023 meeting, the Commission asked staff to research options for developing a JEDI-related resolution. The Commission will consider adopting a resolution in 2024.



The Central Valley Flood Protection Board (Board) is the State regulatory agency responsible for ensuring that appropriate standards are met for the construction, maintenance, and protection of the flood control system that protects life, property, and wildlife habitat in California's vast and diverse Central Valley from the devastating effects of flooding. Board issues encroachment permits and works with other agencies to improve the flood protection structures, enforces removal of problematic encroachments, represents the State as the non-federal sponsor in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for federal flood risk reduction projects, adopts five-year updates to the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP), and keeps watch over the Central Valley's continually improving flood management system.

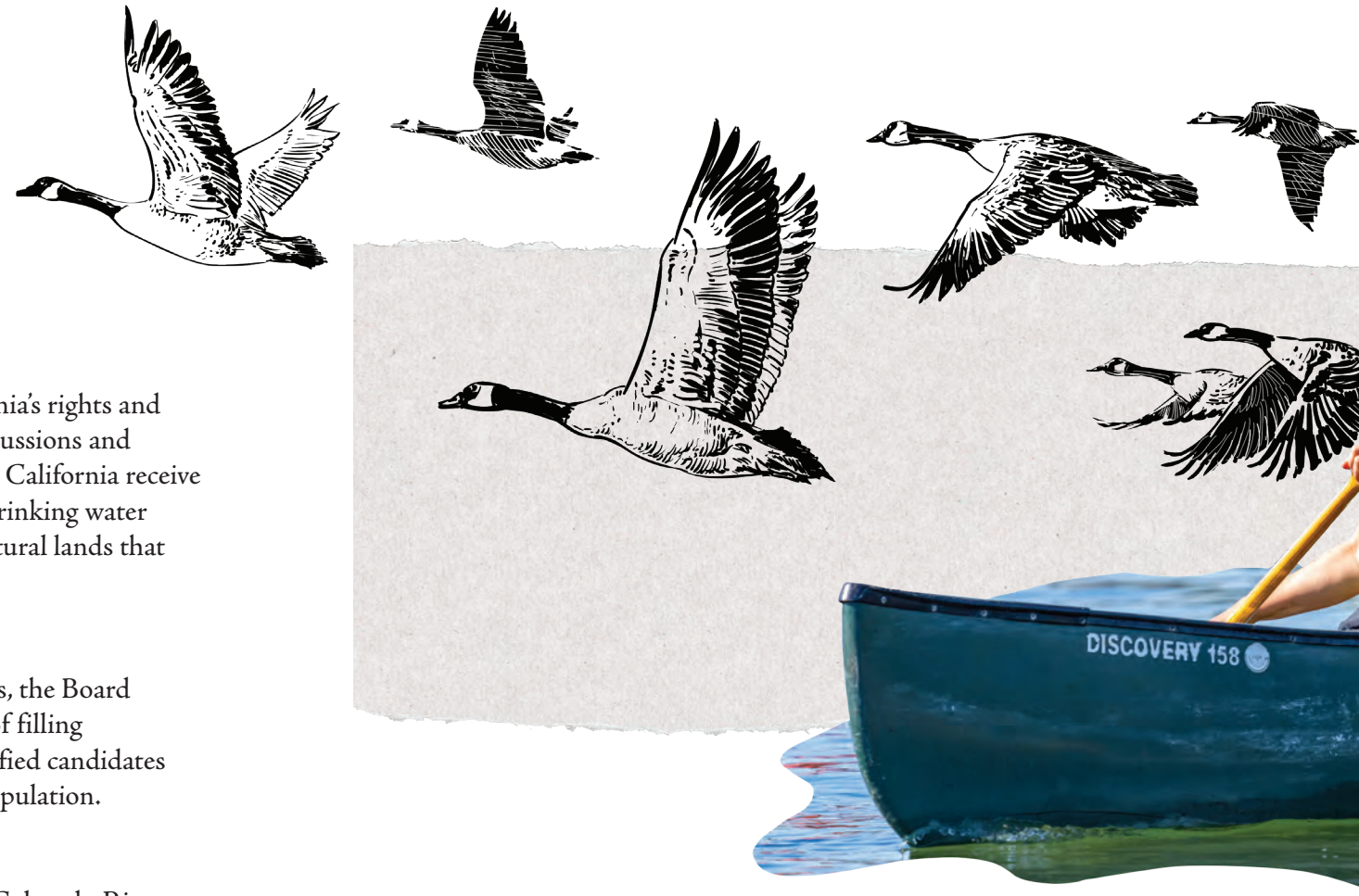
2023 HIGHLIGHTS

As part of a resolution declaring the Board's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion or DEI, the Board convened a DEI Task Force comprised of staff. The group has held monthly meetings to develop a vision statement, conducting extensive research, engaging with other DEI groups for knowledge sharing, and formulating recommendations to implement the new vision. The Task Force spent time educating members through training, self-reflection, and discussion.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Board will work with the Department of Water Resources or DWR to develop a 2027 Central Valley Flood Protection Plan Update to promote flood system equity in future flood management strategies, particularly those that consider climate change. The Board plans to increase engagement, both internally and externally by continuing to attend CNRA equity events and through additional communication with DWR's team to learn more about their DEI efforts and find ways to leverage existing efforts and further collaboration. The Board will also evaluate equity gaps in regulatory functions and engage with its team and other partners to discuss equity in flood protection and risk reduction.





The Colorado River Board of California (Board) was established in 1937 to protect California's rights and interests in the resources provided by the Colorado River and to represent California in discussions and negotiations regarding the Colorado River and its management. Seven counties in Southern California receive water and hydroelectric energy from the Colorado River. Colorado River water is used for drinking water by over 19 million people in Southern California and irrigates over 600,000 acres of agricultural lands that produce fruits, vegetables and other crops that help feed our nation's families.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Colorado River Board of California held Board meetings throughout Southern California. Board agencies hosting the meeting facilitated tours that increased the knowledge of Board members, staff, and the public regarding local usage and management of Colorado River water. The meetings and tours have helped facilitate cooperation and understanding and build upon the collaborative relationship among the Board's member agencies.

The Board is working closely with Native American tribes in the development of the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Within California, the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe has regularly participated in discussions with technical staff from water agencies reliant on water from the Colorado River. The Board is also actively engaged in the Post-2026 Federal-Tribes-States Work Group, an initiative led by the Bureau of Reclamation to facilitate discussions regarding water management along the Colorado River.

The Board's public member seats have been filled, increasing the diversity of perspectives represented on the Board and facilitating increased collaboration between water agencies represented on the Board and the public. The Board's public member seats are filled by the President of the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe and the Salton Sea Director for Audubon.

Through its recent hiring practices, the Board continued to advance its priority of filling departmental vacancies with qualified candidates reflective of California's diverse population.

2024 AND BEYOND

In coordination with California's Colorado River water and power users, the Board will continue working on the development of the Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead to ensure California's diverse population continues to receive sufficient water supplies while ensuring system reliability. The Board is committed to collaboration with the federal government, tribes, Mexico, and the six other basin states receiving water from the Colorado River as we develop solutions to adapt to reduced water supplies due to the impacts from climate change.

The Board will continue working closely with Native American tribes, including the continued engagement in the Post-2026 Federal-Tribes-States Work Group. The Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe is scheduled to host a monthly meeting of the Board in 2024 on tribal land.



The Delta Protection Commission is committed to the protection and health of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta in California. The Commission protects, maintains, enhances and enriches the overall quality of the Delta environment and economy. The Commission does this with a focus on agriculture, heritage, recreation, and natural resources while remaining mindful of the importance of the Delta to all Californians. Valuing the needs of the Delta as well as the needs of the State is fundamental to achieving the Commission's vision: an ideal synthesis of cultural, ecological, and agricultural values in a sustainable, healthy, and celebrated way of life.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Delta Protection Commission voted to add a tribal government seat on the Delta Protection Commission Advisory Committee and is recruiting for new members until the seats are filled.

2024 AND BEYOND

The Delta Protection Commission will be engaging in tribal consultation for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area management plan approval and implementation.



The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) works with lead agencies, higher learning institutions, museums, the public, and California Native American tribes to protect Native American sacred sites from disturbance and desecration. The main goals of the NAHC are to help protect ancestors from being disturbed before ground disturbance, help to identify the tribe that is the most likely descendant for an inadvertent unearthing or discovery of ancestors, and to facilitate and enforce the return of ancestors and ancestral collections back to their respective tribal families.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The NAHC will make continuous efforts to adopt regulations to implement and interpret statutes under its authority. Some of these regulations include the contact list for tribal representatives, the most likely descendant process, the California Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (CalNAGPRA.)

The Commission is working to update the rules and regulations for the California Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act process and the Most Likely Descendent process. This includes releasing in November 2023 a proposed draft contact list regulations for a tribal consultation period, virtual listening sessions, in-person inter-tribal roundtable sessions, and one-on-one tribal consultations. This process will continue into 2024.



The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC/Commission) protects and enhances San Francisco Bay and advances the Bay's responsible, productive, and equitable uses for this and future generations in the face of changing climate and rising sea levels.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Commission hired a second staff member, Lita Brydie, expanding its EJ program. Since joining the team, Brydie has taken lead roles to complete BCDC's Racial Equity Action Plan, setting up trainings for the Commission's EJ Advisors program, and drafting BCDC's Tribal Engagement Plan.

In 2023, BCDC secured additional funding from the Ocean Protection Council and Coastal Conservancy for its Environmental Justice Advisors Program. Advisors will be paid \$10,000 annually, which is a \$4,000 increase, to ensure they are fairly compensated for their time and expertise.

BCDC has ensured that each of its Bay Adapt committees has representation from underserved communities. There are reserved paid equity and EJ representative seats on the Regional Shoreline Adaptation Technical Advisory Group and the Bay Adapt Implementation Coordinating Group and have invited elected representatives from underserved communities to serve on the Commission's Elected Officials Task Force.

The Commission solicited proposals for a three-year translation services contract and began developing a plan to start translating meeting notices and other relevant documents. Interpretation and translation of other materials will now be available to the public by request.

BCDC tabled at nine community events in underserved communities across the Bay Area as part of its visioning phase of the Regional Shoreline

Adaptation Plan development. Staff talked with the public about what a Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan could be and surveyed them about their attitudes regarding sea level rise.

2024 AND BEYOND

BCDC will complete a Tribal Engagement Policy in accordance with CNRA to build relationships with tribal communities and will coordinate with other California state agencies to learn from their experiences. BCDC plans to complete and adopt its Racial Equity Action Plan in early 2024. After adoption BCDC will develop an implementation plan that includes increasing staff time dedicated to the Racial Equity Plan and delegating roles in the implementation process.





The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) is an independent board under the California Natural Resources Agency that works closely with the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Board administers programs that protect land, restore and enhance wildlife habitat and provide wildlife oriented public access. The Board is a key partner in implementing the State's 30 X 30 goals of advancing efforts to conserve biodiversity, increasing climate resilience, and providing access to nature for all.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Wildlife Conservation Board provided a \$2.27 million grant to the 40 Acre Conservation League, California's only Black-led conservation group, for the Tahoe Forest Gateway Leidesdorff Property in Placer County in partnership with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The conservation group will acquire approximately 650 acres of land near the Tahoe Lake area for the purposes of providing opportunities for public access and wildlife oriented recreation as well as wildlife habitat preservation, restoration and management.

WCB supported Outward Bound Adventures, a non-profit dedicated to providing outdoor education, conservation, and environmental learning expeditions for low-income urban youth, to restore oak woodland habitat at the Los Angeles Zoo. The project engages members of underserved communities in paid, site-based workforce training and includes academic partners to learn about this incredibly important ecosystem while gaining valuable career skills in ecological restoration and land management. The Project provides employment, mentorship, and pathways to careers in outdoor education and conservation.

WCB provided a large block grant to Point Blue Conservation Science to implement projects to build wildlife-friendly resilience in working landscapes. Point Blue has awarded 77 small grants to a variety of local partners to implement projects such as riparian restoration, hedgerow plantings, beaver dam analogs, wildlife-friendly fencing, and monarch and

pollinator plantings. In the first funding round, 74% of applicants qualified as disadvantaged by one or more criteria.

The Board helped protect more than 2,285 acres in northeastern Kern County at Fay Creek Ranch through a grant to Western Rivers Conservancy and the Kern River Valley Heritage Foundation. The project expands connectivity by preserving a wildlife corridor, protecting rare and endangered flora and fauna, increasing climate resiliency, and providing the opportunity to create new, free outdoor public access for the nearby underserved communities. Of that, more than 1,246 acres of culturally significant ancestral lands have been directly conveyed to the Tübatulabal Tribe of Kern County.

WCB helped protect 5,105 acres in Monterey County through a grant to the Big Sur Land Trust. Big Sur Land Trust will co-manage the property with the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County. The Esselen Tribe will have access to the property for management and implementation of traditional ecological knowledge and cultural practices including harvesting of culturally relevant plants. The project protects habitat for a large diversity of plant and animal species, provides connectivity, and increases climate resiliency.

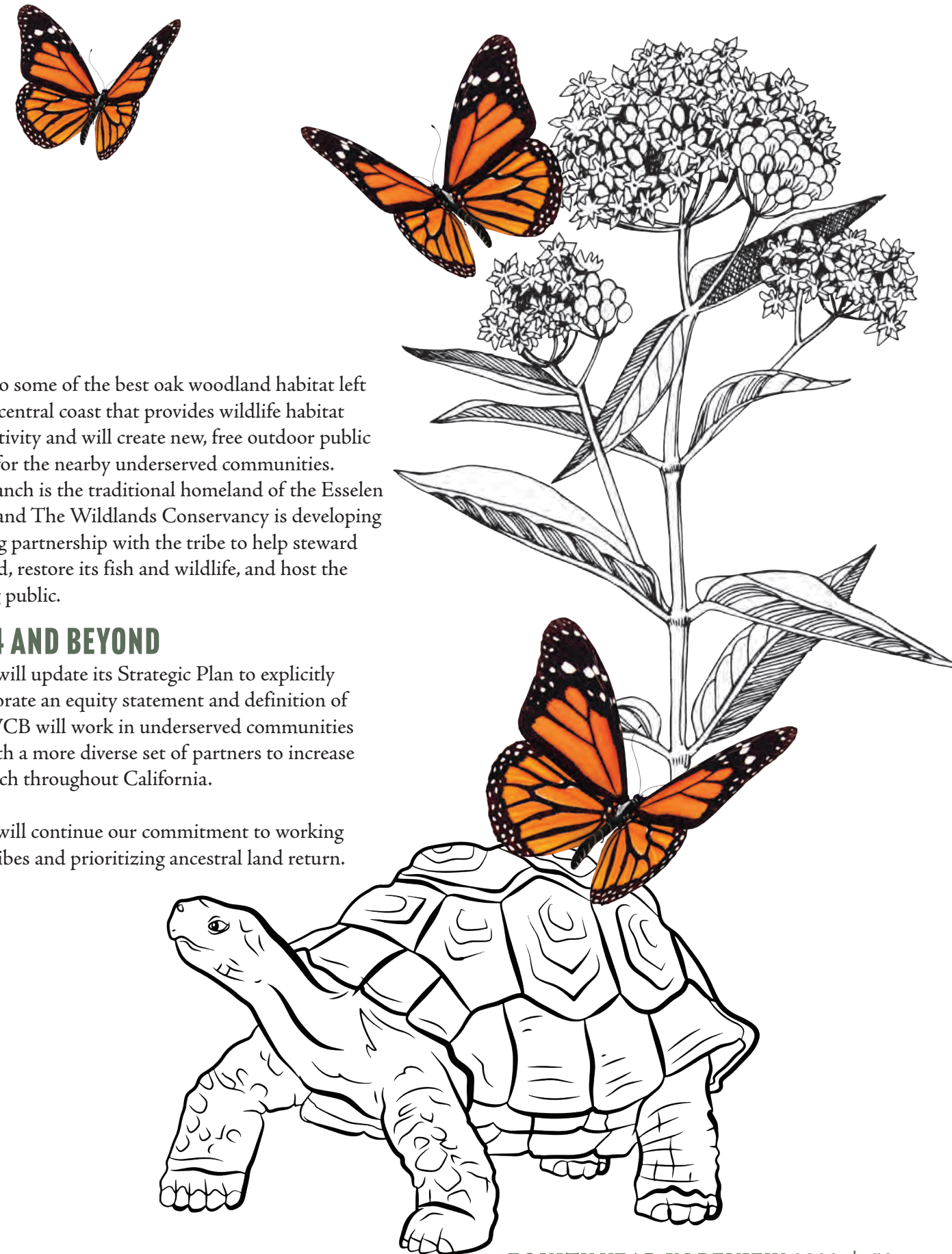
WCB provided a \$24 million grant to the Wildlands Conservancy to acquire the 11,691-acre Rana Creek Ranch in the Carmel Valley. The Ranch is

home to some of the best oak woodland habitat left on the central coast that provides wildlife habitat connectivity and will create new, free outdoor public access for the nearby underserved communities. The Ranch is the traditional homeland of the Esselen Tribe, and The Wildlands Conservancy is developing a strong partnership with the tribe to help steward the land, restore its fish and wildlife, and host the visiting public.

2024 AND BEYOND

WCB will update its Strategic Plan to explicitly incorporate an equity statement and definition of how WCB will work in underserved communities and with a more diverse set of partners to increase our reach throughout California.

WCB will continue our commitment to working with tribes and prioritizing ancestral land return.





Delta Stewardship Council

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

The Delta Stewardship Council was created to advance the state's goals for the Delta, which include a more reliable statewide water supply and a healthy and protected ecosystem, achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique characteristics of the Delta as an evolving place. To do this, the Council developed an enforceable long-term sustainable management plan for the Delta to ensure coordinated action at the federal, state, and local levels. The Delta Plan, adopted in 2013, includes both regulatory policies and non-binding recommendations.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Council's 2019 Delta Plan Five-Year Review Report identified environmental justice (EJ) as a priority issue and recommended the council prepare an issue paper to investigate the need for additional strategies to address EJ within the Delta Plan, summarize the best available science, and identify future policy options for the Council to consider. To ensure the issue paper reflects the values and priorities of the Delta's environmental justice community, staff undertook a robust public engagement strategy based on preliminary outreach. Completion of the issue paper is anticipated in fall 2024.

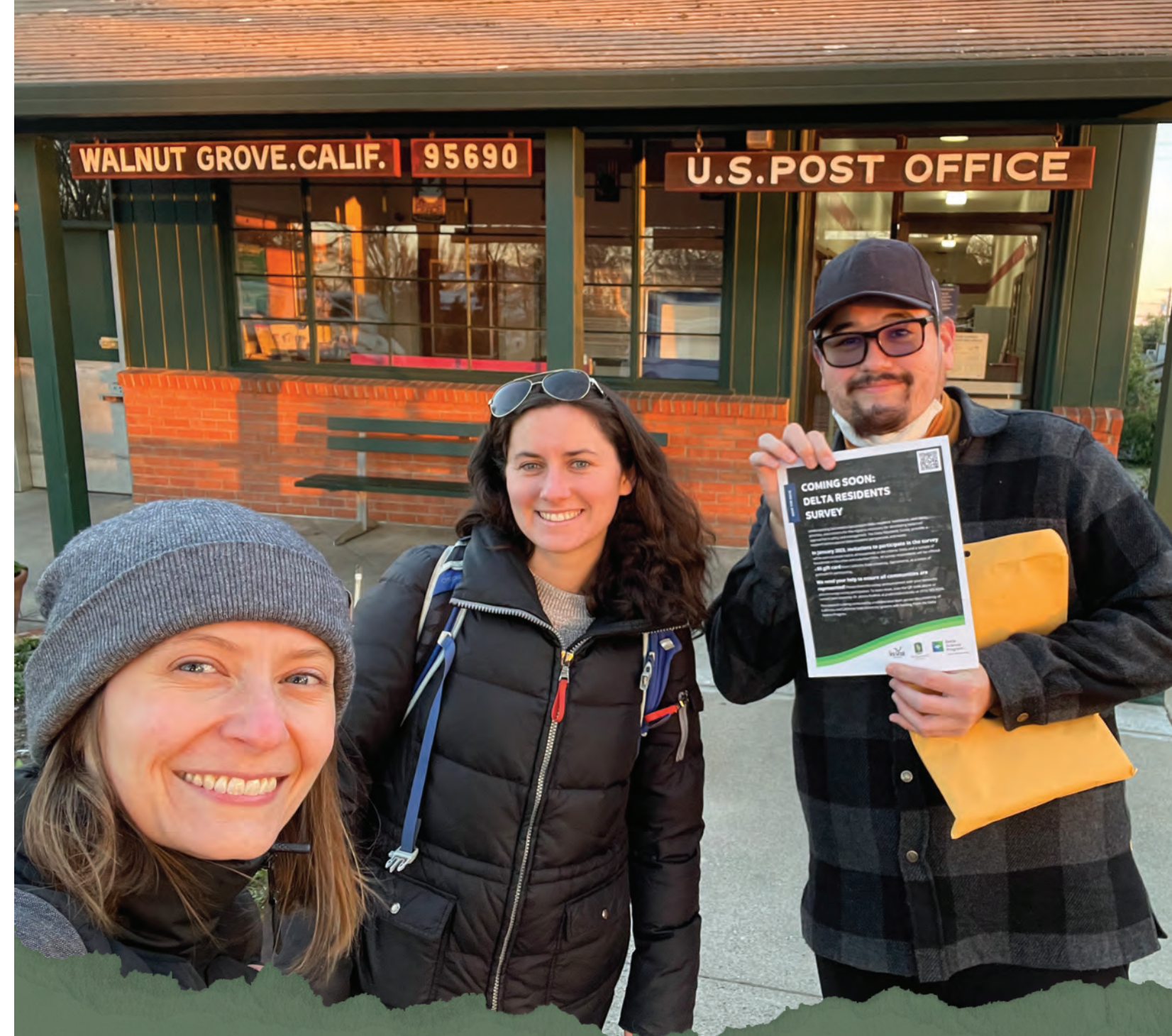
The Council embarked on the climate initiative Delta Adapts, which consists of a climate change vulnerability assessment for the Delta and Suisun Marsh and an adaptation plan detailing strategies and actions to adapt and respond to the identified vulnerabilities. Council staff is currently working with a diverse group of interests that includes community-based organizations, environmental groups, reclamation districts, local and state partners and others to prepare a draft adaptation plan that will include an emphasis on society and equity for public review in early 2024.

In 2021, the Council's Delta Science Program provided research funding for a survey to better understand Delta residents' livelihoods, well-being, priorities, and concerns for the region. A summary of survey results was presented at the October 2023



Council meeting. Additional products, including anonymized survey data and an interactive data viewer tool, will be made publicly available in early 2024.

The Council has focused on fostering partnerships with California Native American tribes that advance tribal considerations and finding ways to collaborate towards a more resilient Delta watershed for all. This included hosting the Council's first tribal listening session, where the Council hosted representatives from Delta tribes, who spoke about their ties to the Delta, their sovereignty and relation to the state, and their opinions regarding Delta management. The Council has also worked to integrate tribal partners into the planning and roles at Council events such as the Adaptive Management Forum, numerous Restoration Forums, and the Delta Independent Science Board's Food-webs Workshop, among others.



2024 AND BEYOND

Council staff has worked to launch a justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) committee. They finalized a charter that outlines the committee's purpose and preliminary objectives, which include equitable outreach, engagement, research, and funding, building an inclusive workplace and workforce, and recommending policy that considers equity in a manner that furthers the Council's goals for the Delta. Staff are currently developing a duty statement for a JEDI position, which would be tasked with leading the committee and developing a work plan.

In 2024, the Council will continue to work to identify opportunities for greater integration of social sciences within the Council's work and the Delta more broadly. Integrating the social sciences into environmental management in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta means gaining a better understanding of the people who live, work, and recreate in and around the estuary, along with how the region impacts their health and well-being, and how their behaviors influence environmental issues.



CALIFORNIA
**OCEAN
PROTECTION
COUNCIL**

The California Ocean Protection Act established the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) as a Cabinet-level state policy body nested within the Natural Resources Agency that implements the Governor’s priorities for coastal and ocean policy. OPC is mandated to protect California’s coastal and ocean resources by effectively and strategically providing best available science to decision-makers, supporting targeted initiatives to protect and restore coastal and marine systems, collaboratively advancing policy, and coordinating relevant agency activities across jurisdictional, programmatic, and regional boundaries. To be successful, OPC’s work must be inclusive and reflect the diversity of perspectives and needs of California’s communities.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In April 2023, the OPC approved grant funding to the Better World Group Advisors (BWG) to provide guidance and support for implementation of select Equity Plan priorities for the next three years. Through this effort, BWG will develop and convene an Environmental Justice Advisory Board that will advise on the needs and perspectives of environmental justice communities, California Native American tribes and tribal governments into state policies, programs, and actions that impact the coast and ocean. Recruitment for the board is anticipated to launch in late 2023 to early 2024.

The Council has partnered with grantee, Justice Outside, to support the development and administration of OPC’s Environmental Justice Small Grants Program. The \$1 million program is a direct action from OPC’s Equity Plan and will support investments for organizations to fulfill small and short-term projects across coastal regions that create positive impacts in California’s EJ communities and advance coastal and ocean conservation priorities in OPC’s Strategic Plan. The program will include extensive and nontraditional outreach to priority communities, an accessible application process, technical assistance and capacity building for grantee partners, and opportunities to mobilize and join larger EJ networks in the state and across the country. The program will begin accepting applications in Spring 2024.

In December 2023, OPC approved \$1,500,000 to establish an Ocean Corps Pilot Program with the California Conservation Corps (CCC), in collaboration with local conservation corps and partners, to enhance coastal climate resilience and provide equitable opportunities for young adults. The Ocean Corps Pilot Program aims to build a resilient California by leveraging the CCC’s extensive experience in environmental conservation and youth empowerment. The pilot program also advances key equity priorities from OPC’s Equity Plan aimed at strengthening career pathways to create a more diverse ocean and coastal workforce throughout the state and expanding coastal access in both physical access and the quality of experience for California communities. OPC funding will support the CCC in implementing the Ocean Corps Program within three local corps programs operating in coastal regions: CCC Fortuna District, Conservation Corps Long Beach, and Urban Corps of San Diego. This pilot program has the potential to serve as a model and be expanded to six CCC centers and eight local corps operating in coastal regions, pending available federal funding. The Ocean Corps Pilot Program will advance equitable opportunities by engaging corps members in climate resiliency initiatives while providing mentorship, internship opportunities, and other types of support to young adults, particularly those from underserved communities.



In December 2023, OPC approved \$1.5 million to establish an Ocean Corps Pilot Program with the California Conservation Corps (CCC), in collaboration with local conservation corps and partners, to enhance coastal climate resilience and provide equitable opportunities for young adults. The Ocean Corps Pilot Program aims to build a resilient California by leveraging the CCC’s extensive experience in environmental conservation and youth empowerment.

In January 2023, OPC adopted its first-ever Tribal Engagement Strategy, which will serve as a framework for enhanced communication and partnership between OPC and California Native American tribes on ocean and coastal issues. The Tribal Engagement Strategy was crafted in close collaboration with California Native American tribes, including early consultations and listening sessions in 2021, as well as further consultation on a draft Strategy held in 2022. It provides specific actions that OPC will undertake to enhance tribal engagement in all aspects of its work, as well as approaches that OPC will pursue to improve communication with tribes. In January 2023, OPC approved the disbursement of \$1 million to establish a Tribal Small Grants Program to provide dedicated funding to California Native American tribes and tribally led entities in support of work that advances tribes’ priorities for conservation, management, and stewardship, as well as the goals in OPC’s Strategic

Plan and Tribal Engagement Strategy. The OPC Tribal Small Grants program will be part of the Natural Resources Agency Tribal Nature-Based Solutions program to assist California Native American tribes in advancing multi-benefit nature-based solutions in the coast and ocean.

Following Council approval in April 2023, OPC awarded Coastal Quest through a competitive solicitation for applicants to develop and manage OPC’s first-ever Senate Bill 1 Technical Assistance Program (SB 1 TA Program) to provide application support to local, regional, and tribal governments that represent environmental justice communities applying for Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning funding. Recipients of technical assistance will be offered tailored and customized support based on their needs, including capacity building and grant writing support. The SB 1 TA Program is expected to launch in early 2024.



The California Science Center in Los Angeles is an educational and family destination that contains award-winning exhibits and world-renowned education programs. The Science Center’s mission values accessibility and inclusiveness, and aspires to stimulate curiosity and inspire science learning in everyone through fun, memorable experiences.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The Science Center continues to maintain and retain a diverse workforce representing our surrounding community by conducting employment opportunities to increase a diverse candidate pool. It also encourages current staff to participate in the Upward Mobility Program, which aims to provide guidance for entry level staff interested in advancement. The agency established a revamped Upward Mobility Program in June of 2023, targeting low-paying, entry level positions, and three applicants were approved.

The Center maintains and strengthens education program partnerships among diverse local communities by engaging with community-based organizations that work with youth ages 5 to 13. The Young Curators program continues to provide educational programming to youth from surrounding underserved neighborhoods and youth enrolled in programs with partner organizations. The Center delivers educational after-school programming to four community partners, including Brotherhood Crusade, Literacy, Arts, Culture, Education, and Recreation Afterschool Programs, Heart of Los Angeles, Para Los Niños and the Los Angeles Boys & Girls Club.

The Center continues to assess and expand language services for guests by ensuring all new exhibitions are fully bilingual in English and Spanish. Recent bilingual exhibits include Maya: The Exhibition, Nikon Small World and Jané’s Endangered Animal Experience. The Center works to create a sense of stewardship among employees by providing

opportunities for employee involvement in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) concerns at regular meetings and access to training.

The Center held DEI training for staff in 2023 and continues to hold monthly Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) meetings, which gives staff at all levels the opportunity to interact with members and invited guests and speakers.

2024 AND BEYOND

The California Science Center will continue to look for new community partnerships for after-school programming and participation in hands-on Science Camp for the upcoming calendar year.

The Center will continue to identify job boards and hiring programs that target underserved and marginalized communities throughout Los Angeles County.





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