



NORTH COAST REGIONAL WATER BOARD'S RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN

Background and Preliminary Actions

The purpose of this document is to 1) describe the history of the Regional Water Board's Racial Equity Initiative and the goals of the Racial Equity Action Plan (Action Plan) and 2) present preliminary draft actions for consideration.

Background

Following outreach and engagement with interested parties, the North Coast Regional Water Board adopted a Racial Equity Resolution (Resolution) in February 2023. The Resolution acknowledges and condemns racism, xenophobia, bigotry, and racial injustice while outlining our commitment to racial equity, diversity, inclusion, access, and anti-racism. The Resolution directs Regional Water Board staff to develop an Action Plan which "articulates a vision for racial equity and outlines specific actions to address Regional Water Board systems that perpetuate racial inequities while establishing new, equitable, and resilient systems." In particular, the Resolution specifies that the Action Plan does the following:

- Is developed in consultation with and informed by 1) California Native American Tribes and 2) Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color communities in the North Coast Region;
- Articulates a vision for racial and workforce equity;
- Addresses Regional Water Board systems that perpetuate racial inequities and supports new, equitable, and resilient systems within all aspects of our work, including, but not limited to, plans, policies, permits, enforcement, compliance assurance, contracting, funding, procurement, site remediation, and monitoring;
- Includes 1) goals, actions, timelines, and metrics, and 2) quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to measure and evaluate progress;

- Includes a framework to analyze the potential impacts of staff recommendations and Board actions on racial equity and modify, as necessary, community engagement and the decision-making processes to address inequities; and
- Complements the State Water Resources Control Board's Racial Equity Action Plan.

Preliminary Draft Actions

The following is a list of preliminary ideas of actions to include in the Action Plan. This list was informed from input received during the public engagement process in developing the Regional Water Board's Racial Equity Resolution. This list is intended to support and inform consultation with Tribes and engagement with Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color and community organizations during Action Plan development.

- Update the existing Native American Culture (CUL) and Subsistence Fishing (FISH) beneficial uses that have been in the Regional Water Board's Basin Plan since 2006 to align with the Tribal Traditional Culture (CUL), Tribal Subsistence Fishing (T-SUB), and Subsistence Fishing (SUB) beneficial uses adopted by the State Water Board in 2017. Include findings and provisions in permits and policies sufficient to support these Tribal beneficial uses for waters designated for these uses.
- Incorporate management practices based upon traditional ecological knowledge in permits, where applicable.
- Conduct Regional Water Board staff and Board meetings at locations easily accessible to Tribes and Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color communities.
- Develop protocols for inclusive engagement with Tribes, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color communities to be implemented during development and Board approval of all relevant regulatory actions by the Regional Water Board.
- Provide an annual communication to Tribes informing them of Regional Water Board projects planned within the upcoming year for which Tribal consultation and/or engagement ([AB52](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB52&search_keywords=) (https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB52&search_keywords=), [AB2108](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB2108) (https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB2108) will be sought.
- Strengthen processes for considering impacts to Tribes, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color communities when developing enforcement priorities, pursuing enforcement actions, and identifying water quality related restoration opportunities through supplemental environmental projects.

- Identify and implement strategic initiatives that address water resource related climate impacts that disproportionately affect Tribes, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of color communities.
- Implement racial equity trainings and workshops for Regional Water Board staff, preferably with funding for Tribes and/or communities of color located in the North Coast to serve as trainers.
- Provide readily available information regarding the process to apply for vacancies on the Regional Water Board.
- Reassess recruitment and retention processes and protocols to ensure that the Regional Water Board is promoting a diverse workforce.
- Direct staff to ensure that outreach materials are plain-language and free of jargon and acronyms.
- Complete periodic “Racial Equity Audits” to assess effectiveness of Action Plan implementation and update these actions as needed. Remain engaged with Tribes, organization partners, and other interested members of the region to receive feedback on the benefits of each action or lack thereof.