

2023–2025

**CALIFORNIA STATE WATER
RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD**

**RACIAL EQUITY
ACTION PLAN**

State Water Resources Control Board Racial Equity Action Plan January 2023

Acknowledgements

The State Water Resources Control Board's (State Water Board or Board) Racial Equity Action Plan was developed in partnership with employees and the communities they serve. Many people dedicated their time and resources to contribute to the visioning and strategizing sessions, participate in government-to-government tribal consultations, attend public workshops, submit public comments, and engage with the State Water Board in many other ways to ensure this plan reflects the needs and priorities of communities most impacted by our work. The Racial Equity Team acknowledges and thanks our community partners, community members, California Native American tribes, and Water Boards staff for their continued support and engagement.

Over 200 employees from the State Water Board and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (collectively, the Water Boards) participated in visioning and strategizing sessions, along with external partners. Employees also contributed to action planning workshops and shared their action ideas during internal employee feedback sessions in May and June of 2022.

Approximately 200 community members attended the Water Boards' July 2022 public workshops, either virtually or in person, and provided 327 comments on the draft plan. The following community partners supported the planning, development, and hosting, of the July 2022 public workshops.

- Alianza
- Central California Environmental Justice Network
- Community Water Center
- Pueblo Unido
- Restore the Delta
- Save California Salmon
- Self Help Enterprises

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Introduction

The Water Boards have a shared mission to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water. This mission is strengthened by a commitment to racial equity and environmental justice. Racial equity is achieved when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved. Environmental justice means the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. The Water Boards acknowledge and condemn inequities, past and present, in water quality, access, and affordability, and are proactively working to eliminate the structures and practices that perpetuate these inequities.

The Water Boards envision a California where:

- race no longer predicts a person's access to, or quality of, water resources;
- Water Boards employees at all organizational levels reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of California; and
- a racial equity lens is consistently applied to Water Boards' decision-making processes.

This Racial Equity Action Plan does not expand or modify the Water Boards' existing authorities, but rather it is a compilation of actions intended to advance the State Water Board's efforts to create a future where we equitably preserve, enhance, and restore California's water resources and drinking water for all Californians, regardless of race, and where race is not a predictor of professional outcomes for Water Boards employees.

This Racial Equity Action Plan sets goals for the State Water Board to address racial inequities and identifies metrics to measure progress. Applying a "racial equity lens" means the Water Boards will consider a set of questions throughout its decision-making processes. The racial equity lens questions interrupt the impact of unintended consequences by taking into consideration the lived experiences and perspectives of the racially diverse communities the Water Boards intend to serve.

How We Got Here

On August 18, 2020, State Water Board staff presented an informational (non-voting) item to the State Water Board on a framework for addressing racial equity. The State Water Board acknowledged the historic effects of institutional racism that must be confronted throughout government, including within our organization, and directed staff to develop a priority plan of action.

In fall 2020, State Water Board Executive Director Eileen Sobeck, convened a Water Boards Racial Equity Team to advance racial equity for the communities that the Water Boards serve, and internally within the organization. The Water Boards' Racial Equity Team comprises staff representing various divisions, office, and regions from all levels of the organization. The team was tasked with three major priorities: (1) establish a foundation of internal and external engagement that values listening and

collaboration to drive action; (2) draft a resolution on racial equity to be considered for adoption by the State Water Board and leveraged by the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards) to adopt their own resolutions; and (3) develop racial equity strategies and action plans to drive efforts for the coming years.

The Water Boards reached a major milestone on November 16, 2021, when the State Water Board voted to adopt its Racial Equity Resolution, “Condemning Racism, Xenophobia, Bigotry, and Racial Injustice, and Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism.” ([Resolution No. 2021-0050 \(ca.gov\)](#)) The Resolution directs staff to develop a plan of action to advance racial equity within the Water Boards.

In March 2022, the Water Boards’ Racial Equity Team began working with a diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant to articulate a vision and strategic directions that serve as the framework for our action planning. Throughout spring 2022, Water Boards staff, community partners, tribes, and communities impacted by racial inequities began to identify potential actions. In April 2022, the Water Boards began soliciting requests for government-to-government tribal consultations. And in May 2022, community partners and Water Boards’ management and staff came together for visioning and strategizing sessions, as well as a series of action planning workshops.

The Water Boards Racial Equity Team compiled draft action ideas developed through feedback from members of the public, tribes, and Water Boards staff and leadership and hosted four public workshops in July 2022 to receive feedback. The September 2022 draft Racial Equity Action Plan was posted online for public comment from September 23, 2022, through October 24, 2022. Verbal comments also were gathered during a State Water Board workshop held on October 19, 2022. The Racial Equity Team partnered with the Office of Public Participation to develop and implement the public engagement process described in the sections above, including the July 2022 public workshops and one-on-one meetings between community members and the diversity, equity, and inclusion consultants, to ensure actions in this plan match the assets and opportunities in the communities that the Water Boards serve and that we have incorporated feedback collected through those efforts into this document.

Next Steps

The Racial Equity Team will bring this plan to the State Water Board as an informational item in 2023. The Board will not take action to approve or deny the plan, however, the actions outlined in this plan will be subject to the Board's standard decision-making and public engagement processes. This action plan does not modify any existing policy, plan, permit, or regulation duly adopted by the State Water Board. Any proposed changes to State Water Board policy will be subject to State Water Board approval.

Although this is an action plan for the State Water Board, some actions will require coordination with the Regional Water Boards. The Regional Water Boards have strongly supported the State Water

Board's racial equity efforts and will leverage this plan to inform their own racial equity work, as they have the State Water Board's Racial Equity Resolution.

Some actions in this plan can be completed within a year and some will require multi-year processes. Annually, State Water Board staff will present to the Board on progress made in their respective divisions and offices via an informational item. During this Board item, as with other Board items, interested parties can provide feedback on our progress. Prior to the Board informational item, staff will post a written update online, which may include information such as:

- Actions that have been completed
- For incomplete actions, an update on milestones or progress
- Barriers to progress
- Changes in priorities, including moving up timelines for future actions.
- Any new actions that were added

After two years of implementing this Racial Equity Action Plan, the State Water Board will reinstate a public engagement process that will include reengaging the public and tribes to reflect on accomplishments, hear feedback on emerging priorities, and develop actions for the next three years. In 2026, after the public engagement process is completed, staff aims to present a second iteration of this plan to the State Water Board as an informational item. The following is an estimated timeline for this revision:

- January 2023: Action Plan presented to the State Water Board
- January 2024: Action Plan updates presented to the State Water Board as an informational item
- January 2025: Action Plan updates presented to the State Water Board as an informational item
- Throughout 2025: Re-engage the public and tribes to reflect on accomplishments, hear feedback on emerging priorities, and prioritize actions for the next three years
- January 2026: Revised racial Equity Action Plan presented to the State Water Board as informational item

Like this initial version of the action plan, future iterations will be developed in collaboration with communities impacted by racial injustices. Although the consultation period for this action plan has closed, California Native American tribes can continue to request government-to-government consultations on Water Boards' topics on an ongoing basis, consistent with our Tribal Consultation Policy.

General comments about the Water Boards' racial equity work can still be shared by emailing racialequity@waterboards.ca.gov.

How This Document Is Structured

Strategic Directions = How to approach the work of advancing racial equity.

Goals = Results the Water Boards aim to achieve.

Challenges= Existing barriers that need to be addressed.

Actions = Actions to overcome existing barriers and achieve goals. Actions were developed through an engagement process with employees, the public, and tribes.

Lead Role = Division or Office responsible for action implementation.

Support Role = Divisions or Offices to support action implementation.

Type = This document represents a repository of actions the State Water Board is committed to working on. Action type indicates when an action will start, continue, or be completed.

- Actions for 2023: actions that will start, continue, or be completed in 2023. Performance indicators have been developed for these actions and progress will be assessed during the annual board update.
- Future Actions: actions that **will not** start, continue, or be completed in 2023. These actions will be assessed during the annual board update and their priority may be modified as other actions are completed.

Stages = The progress of each action is measured by project stages as of the end of 2022. Stages will be used to evaluate and monitor progress in the future.

- Stage 1: Preparation or scoping not yet started
- Stage 2: Preparation, scoping, data collection, securing funding and resources
- Stage 3: Work in progress
- Stage 4: Action complete and/or at least one cycle of continual action complete; monitoring and evaluation of action is complete or ongoing
- (R): Needs new personnel or new resources to start or complete action

Performance Indicators = Quantitative performance measures and qualitative targets to assess progress and evaluate each action's success. Due to the diversity of actions included in this plan, measurements of success include metrics, milestones, data, and other indicators that can be used to indicate successful completion of actions or to track progress toward actions over time. For "Actions for 2023," indicators have been included that can be measured or achieved within the first year of action plan implementation. Many "Actions for 2023" will require the collection of data over time to inform future development of meaningful performance targets. For those actions, quantifiable measurements (e.g., number of permits, percent of staff) have been included to establish a baseline measure from which to evaluate the action's success in future years. To ensure their utility, metrics may be added or changed over time. Knowledge gained from tracking these performance indicators may result in the development of additional indicators and inform future iterations of the action plan.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALL = All State Water Board Divisions and Offices, and all Regional Water Boards

BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color

CalEnviroScreen = California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool

CalEPA = California Environmental Protection Agency

CalHR = California Department of Human Resources

Comms = Communications Office

DAS = Division of Admistrative Services

DDW = Division of Drinking Water

DFA = Division of Financial Assistance

DIT = Division of Information Technology

DWQ = Division of Water Quality

EEO = Equal Ememployment Oppportunity Office

EJ = Environmental Justice

EXEC = State Water Board Executive Team

OCC = Office of Chief Counsel

OE = Office of Enforcement

OIMA = Office of Information Management and Analysis

OLA = Office of Legislative Affairs

OPA = Office of Public Affairs

OPP = Office of Public Participation

ORPP = Office of Research, Planning, and Performance

Regions/Regional Water Boards = Nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) in California:

Region 1: North Coast RWQCB

Region 2: San Francisco Bay RWQCB

Region 3: Central Coast RWQCB

Region 4: Los Angeles RWQCB

Region 5: Central Valley RWQCB

Region 6: Lahontan RWQCB

Region 7: Colorado River RWQCB

Region 8: Santa Ana RWQCB

Region 9: San Diego RWQCB

Rights = Division of Water Rights

State Water Board = State Water Resources Control Board

TMDL = Total Maximum Daily Load

Water Boards = State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards, collectively

Strategic Direction #1

Integrating Racial Equity, Measuring Impact

Infusing the Racial Equity Resolution throughout the Water Boards’ policies, programs, and practices; measuring progress toward goals and adapting when necessary.

Goal 1a: Water Boards data are accessible, equitable, and culturally relevant.

CHALLENGE: The Water Boards collect and analyze data that can be used to advance racial equity and environmental justice. Examples include the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) drinking water program’s collection and analysis of demographic data in the Needs Assessment and Fund Expenditure Plan; development of maps to prioritize enforcement and environmental cleanups in disadvantaged communities; and the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) bioaccumulation monitoring program’s update based on input from tribal governments and communities who are most at risk of health impacts of eating fish with high levels of contamination. However, improvements are needed, including:

- Additional data collection to better identify gaps in programs and policies related to racial equity and environmental justice.
- More staff expertise and training to effectively manage data and conduct analyses through a racial equity lens.
- A deeper understanding of demographic data associated with programs and policies to continue evaluating patterns that emerge from the data. This will require, in part, development of analyses that identify racial equity gaps and disparities and establish a current baseline.

To fully achieve true equity for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities, the Water Boards must collaborate more with BIPOC communities to co-create a framework for every aspect of its data process, including collection, governance, methods, interpretation, discovery, and visualization.

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------|------------------------|
| Actions for 2023 | | | | |
| Update the State Water Board’s racial equity webpage to include a page for tracking and measuring progress on the Racial Equity Action Plan. | Comms | DIT | 1 | Webpage updated |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|--------------------|-------|---|
| <p>Develop and implement a Racial Equity Data Action Plan (REDAP). At a minimum, the REDAP must do the following: (1) Develop training and best practices guidance for Water Boards staff on incorporating racial equity concepts into the planning and design of data collection methods and visualizations (e.g., maps, factsheets, etc.) projects. (2) Identify and expand existing opportunities for public participation in science and community data gathering programs to develop new data collection methods, support existing programs, and incorporate community datasets into the database. (3) Create a publicly accessible data catalog tool / interface that includes existing demographic data, Water Boards program data, and other available data (such as heat maps or flood hazard maps) to inform the implementation of the Racial Equity Action Plan.</p> | OIMA | Comms, OPP, ORPP | 1 | <p>Circulate draft REDAP to Water Board organizations by January 2023.</p> <p>Develop REDAP best practices draft guidance by February 2023.</p> <p>Deliver beta version REDAP best practices training online by March 2023.</p> <p>Build online platform for public access to REDAP priority data catalog and visualization tools by February 2023.</p> |
| <p>Incorporate racial equity analysis into the 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Report to identify impacted waters in BIPOC and disadvantaged communities, starting by identifying data gaps. The Integrated Report is a document with a comprehensive review of surface water quality and includes a list of currently impaired water bodies by pollutant type.</p> | DWQ | Regions, OIMA, DIT | 1 | <p># Newly identified or prioritized waters in BIPOC and disadvantaged communities in the Integrated Report</p> |
| <p>Identify and assess available data to identify racial equity data gaps related to water quality.</p> | DWQ | | 1 | <p># DWQ units/programs that have completed data needs assessments</p> <p>Types and # of datasets assessed</p> <p>Process for ground truthing data sets developed</p> |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------|--|
| Include a Racial Equity Action Plan progress update at a State Water Board meeting. The update should include any barriers, such as funding or legislation, encountered as the plan is implemented. | EXEC | OPP, ALL | | Racial Equity Action Plan update held at a State Water Board meeting in 2024 |
| Incorporate racial equity analysis into the annual Drinking Water Needs Assessment, including a measurement of the number of BIPOC communities impacted by primary and secondary contaminants in drinking water and water unaffordability. Work with U.S. EPA to implement a similar analysis to federally regulated tribal water systems. | DDW | DFA, OPP | 3 | Each future Needs Assessment will include the evaluation. Types of data incorporated into the Needs Assessment. |
| Assess race/ethnicity data and other relevant demographic data, associated with the communities that benefit from funding administered by DFA. Existing annual funding reports and plans will be the primary mechanism to report these data on a project specific basis, where appropriate. In addition, summaries for the funding program will be provided. | DFA | | 3 | % Funding program reports/plans that include racial, ethnic, and other demographic information |
| Future Actions | | | | |
| Evaluate the feasibility of collecting demographic information from wastewater and drinking water exam applicants and certified operators. | DFA | | 1 | |

Goal 1b: Programs and policies are evaluated and realigned to address racial injustices.

CHALLENGE: The Water Boards have acknowledged the role racism plays in creating and perpetuating systemic inequities in affordability, access, allocation, and protection of water resources. Some Water Boards programs and policies have been modified to advance equity and justice; one example is the process of protecting tribal beneficial uses of water in State Water Board and Regional Water Board basin plans.

Another example is the Water Boards’ internal Facilitation and Training Pool, which is a network of Water Boards staff facilitators who can guide meetings, navigate difficult discussions, and lead trainings. The Facilitation and Training Pool includes a racial equity train-the-trainer program that is now offering training to Water Boards staff. The racial equity course covers fundamental racial equity concepts, the historic role of government in establishing structural racism, a model of change to become an antiracist organization, guidance on partnering with community groups, and how staff can use data and tools to advance racial equity in their day-to-day work. The three-part training was developed in collaboration with other California Environmental Protection Agency boards, departments, and offices and has been adapted specifically for the Water Boards.

This internal training will help the State Water Board better understand its role in creating or perpetuating inequities and will support staff with identifying opportunities to meaningfully assess and realign programs and policies. With adequate information, data and training, staff will be in the best position to: 1) apply a racial equity lens to their work, 2) align their programs and practices to advance racial equity, and 3) assess the effectiveness of the solutions they develop and the outcomes they create.

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------|--|
| Actions for 2023 | | | | |
| Deputy directors and directors should regularly discuss their division’s or office’s progress with their staff on actions identified in the Racial Equity Action Plan and gauge where more support is needed. | ALL | | 3 | Division and office senior leaders meet regularly with program leaders to discuss racial equity progress and resource needs to complete actions. |
| Develop a racial equity toolkit for all Water Boards staff to consider racial equity in their day-to-day work. | OIMA | OPP | 2 | Toolkit developed |
| Develop training and guidance for how to implement the racial equity toolkit to examine potential disproportionate impacts of policies and programs on BIPOC communities. | OPP | ORPP, OIMA | 1 | Training developed # Staff trained # Programs that have piloted the toolkit |
| Select, train, and support a second cohort of Water Boards staff to deliver “Advancing Racial Equity at the Water Boards” trainings. | OPP | ORPP | 3 | # Water Boards staff trained |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|-------------------------------|-------|--|
| <p>Develop a racial equity training plan for staff that will guide efforts to develop and coordinate a racial equity curriculum through the Training Academy. Elements may include analysis of what trainings are effective; what trainings should be required; how often people should get training; which current courses could be modified to incorporate more content related to racial equity; how racial equity goals should inform the selection, onboarding, and evaluation of instructors and vendors providing materials or courses; and what educational content could be developed or made available.</p> | ORPP | Racial Equity Training Cohort | 2 | Plan developed |
| <p>As appropriate, ensure that priorities and actions within the State Water Board's annual Strategic Work Plan reflect this action plan.</p> | ORPP | ALL | 2 | # Strategic Work Plan actions that reflect use of a racial equity lens |
| <p>Develop a plan to identify climate change impacts (related to State Water Board authorities) and how they may potentially disproportionately impact BIPOC communities or interests.</p> | ORPP | ALL | 2 (R) | Plan developed |
| <p>In basins where State Water Board intervention into groundwater management (through SGMA authorities) is likely, engage with BIPOC communities that may be affected.</p> | ORPP | | 2 | <p>Type and # of engagement efforts made to engage with BIPOC communities and groups</p> <p># Meetings or workshops in communities where residents are predominantly BIPOC</p> |
| <p>Assess potential equity impacts of the proposed urban water use efficiency regulation.</p> | ORPP | | 3 | To the degree data allows, consider equity in analyses done related to the rulemaking |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|------------|--------------------------|----------|---|
| <p>Pilot the racial equity toolkit to identify program-specific actions, priorities, and metrics, and realign programs and practices to advance racial equity, and assess the effectiveness of programs.</p> | <p>DWQ</p> | | <p>1</p> | <p>Desired outcomes and accountability metrics are developed using results-based accountability approach for each DWQ program</p> <p>Type and # of metrics developed by engaging with U.S. EPA to implement the Justice 40 initiative for federally funded programs (e.g., nonpoint source grants, ocean beach monitoring grants, water quality management planning). The Justice 40 initiative includes distributing 40% of federal funds to disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>Process established for ground truthing data sets</p> |
| <p>Provide guidance to Regional Water Boards on the consideration of impacts to BIPOC communities and environmental justice when addressing impaired waters through development of total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) or other actions to restore clean water. Use prioritization to inform allocation of funding for environmental cleanup projects.</p> | <p>DWQ</p> | <p>Regions, DFA, OCC</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>Revised guidance to Regional Water Boards on setting priorities to address impaired waters through the development of TMDLs or other restoration actions. Prioritization factors should include impacts to BIPOC communities and consider environmental justice.</p> <p>Revised TMDL program guidance for the development of TMDL implementation plans to include consideration of BIPOC communities and environmental justice. Consider revising the implementation plan guidance in <i>A Process for Addressing Impaired Waters in California</i> (adopted by SWB Resolution 2005-0050).</p> |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------|--|
| <p>Participate as partners in implementing the Environmental Justice Enforcement Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency.</p> | OE | | 2 | <p>Staff participation in EJ community listening sessions</p> <p>Staff participation in EJ Enforcement Rapid Response Team</p> <p>Participation in community outreach training for enforcement staff</p> <p># Multimedia inspections in overburdened communities</p> |
| <p>Consider impacts to BIPOC communities, tribal beneficial uses and cultural resources, and related ecosystems when developing, implementing, and enforcing instream flow requirements, consistent with all applicable laws and requirements, including those related to water rights, basin planning, public trust resources, and endangered species.</p> | RIGHTS | OCC, OE | 3 (R) | <p>Develop and update a webpage that identifies streams with ongoing instream flow development activities.</p> |
| <p>Establish a single point of contact in the Division of Water Rights to serve as a coordinator on Bay-Delta tribal and BIPOC engagement to improve communication and outreach, and conduct tribal outreach under AB 52 and B-10-11 for the Bay-Delta Plan implementation regulation for Lower San Joaquin River flows and Southern Delta Salinity.</p> | RIGHTS | | | <p>Establishment of Division coordinator</p> <p>Number of consultation requests and engagements related to development of the Sacramento River watershed and interior Delta (Sac/Delta) Bay-Delta Plan Staff Report</p> <p>Include a chapter in the Sacramento/Delta Staff report focused on BIPOC and DAC issues.</p> |
| <p>Incorporate racial equity analysis when developing maximum contaminant levels using available data and as data and methods allow.</p> | DDW | | 2 | <p>Each future maximum contaminant level will include a racial equity analysis when data and methods allow.</p> |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------|------------------------|
| Future Actions | | | | |
| Implement a State Water Board organizational structure that creates internal capacity for ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion work by hiring dedicated staff. | EXEC | DAS | 1 (R) | |
| Pilot the racial equity toolkit to evaluate effectiveness of key programs and actions in advancing racial equity. | RIGHTS | | 1 | |
| Identify and implement actions to address climate change impacts, related to State Board authorities, found likely to have disproportionate impacts on BIPOC communities or interests. | ORPP | ALL | 1 | |

Strategic Direction #2

Creating, Maintaining Spaces for Inclusion & Belonging

Addressing internal and external representation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color at all Water Boards’ levels; elevating overall understanding of racial equity.

Goal 2a: Water Boards staff and leadership reflect the diversity of California.

CHALLENGE: Greater diversity provides many benefits, including broader perspectives, more innovation, improved collaboration, and relatability to all the communities the Water Boards serve. To make decisions that equitably benefit Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities, the Water Boards must include and value more Black, Indigenous, and people of color staff and leadership in decision-making. In 2020, the Water Boards developed the Immediate Action Plan for Advancing Workforce Diversity which focuses on the following key goals: 1) Require hiring panels to have expertise on implicit bias or racial equity, 2) Include a diversity statement in job advertisements, 3) Establish model diversity interview questions, 4) Target recruitment efforts. As part of the targeted recruitment efforts, a list of over 40 science and engineering multicultural organizations was developed and have been incorporated as part of ongoing recruitment outreach. In addition, DAS requires hiring panelists and supervisors to take implicit bias training that equips them to recognize and address biases that could potentially affect hiring decisions.

However, the Water Boards’ workforce still does not reflect the racial composition of California. United States Census Bureau data collected via the 2019 American Community Survey show that 37% of California’s population is white, yet the Water Boards’ workforce census data from 2020 show that 57% of the Water Boards’ workforce and 69% of the Water Boards’ management is white. Similarly, the 2019 American Community Survey data show that 63% of California’s population comprises Black, Indigenous, and people of color, compared to only 43% of the Water Boards’ workforce and 31% of the Water Boards’ management. As the Water Boards broaden the recruitment, promotion, and retention of a diverse workforce, they are better able to understand and connect with the BIPOC communities they serve, improve customer service and response, and advance their outward facing racial equity and environmental justice work.

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------|--|
| Actions for 2023 | | | | |
| Review existing data, and new data to be collected and produced by CalHR, on demographics of Water Boards staff. Disaggregate data by Region, Division, Office, position classification, etc. and publish findings to the Racial Equity Webpage. | DAS | OIMA, EEO | 3 | Post report on the demographics of Water Board workforce to the Water Board’s Racial Equity Webpage. |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------|--|
| Review and revise the “Immediate Action Plan for Advancing Workforce Diversity” to improve long-term effectiveness of strategies to recruit, promote, and retain BIPOC staff. | DAS | ALL | 3 | Immediate Action Plan is revised and distributed to all Water Boards hiring managers. |
| Increase recruitment for job openings and internship opportunities at high schools, community colleges, colleges, universities, workforce development networks, and community-based groups that serve BIPOC communities in California. Collaborate with Regional Water Boards on future recruitment efforts. | DAS | ALL | 3 | Track the number and type of recruitments, such as in-person job fairs and visits. |
| Update the Water Boards’ website to include additional guidance for prospective applicants on how to navigate the state’s hiring process, with a focus on successfully applying for Water Board positions. | DAS | ALL | 2 | Employment assistance public webpages are revised and updated to provide additional resources for prospective applicants |
| Require implicit bias and racial equity training for all hiring panelists, supervisors, and State and Regional Board Members. | DAS | ORPP | 3 | Develop a plan to provide and require implicit bias and racial equity training for staff by January 2024. |
| Future Actions | | | | |
| Develop a long-term diversity and equity recruitment and retention strategy that: creates a community/academia-to-Water Boards pipeline and a staff-to-leadership pipeline; creates equitable opportunities for BIPOC staff to apply for promotions; explores opportunities to expand available job classifications; and enhances staff engagement and satisfaction. Incorporate strategy into the Water Board’s workforce and succession plans. | DAS | ALL | 1 | |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------|------------------------|
| Develop a paid youth employment program for high school students to work in Water Board offices to help develop the high school to Water Board employment pipeline. | DAS | | 1 | |

Goal 2b: Foster a culture of inclusion and belonging.

CHALLENGE: The Water Boards understand the need for, and the importance of, inclusion and belonging. Inclusion and a sense of belonging promote employee involvement, connection, and empowerment. Inclusion and belonging support the benefits of diversity and are critical for an innovative, energized workplace. Internal racial equity and implicit bias trainings offer knowledge, awareness, and protections; however, more is needed to fully foster a culture of inclusion and belonging at the Water Boards.

In April and May 2020, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) collaborated with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) to survey staff of all CalEPA Boards, Departments, and Offices to establish baseline progress toward efforts to advance racial equity. Overall, the Water Boards’ staff survey responses indicate that more work is needed to further normalize racial equity, and the findings led to a specific recommendation for the Water Boards to center racial equity work on the perspectives and experiences of Black staff. In addition, the results indicated a need to train Water Boards staff to enhance their understanding of racial equity, racism, implicit bias, cultural competency, and similar concepts. The feedback about training was reinforced during racial equity employee listening sessions held in 2021. Overall, Water Boards staff strongly support additional training and tools for advancing racial equity and stronger communication with staff.

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------|---|
| Actions for 2023 | | | | |
| Develop a mentorship program that allows employees, including BIPOC staff, to connect with others who may have similar experiences and to provide coaching on career growth and advancement. | DAS | ALL | 3 | Guidance on the Water Board’s internal mentoring program is finalized. Mentoring program implementation has begun. |
| Update roundtable charters or workplans to include racial equity, and include racial equity discussions as a standing agenda item on roundtables. | DWQ | Regions | 1 | # of roundtables with updated charters and/or workplans to include racial equity. |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|---------------------|-------|--------------------------------|
| Distribute the second, biannual racial equity survey to the Water Boards to measure staff understanding of racial equity. | OIMA | | 3 | Survey response rate above 60% |
| Develop educational materials for staff to improve understanding of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) processes for submitting racial discrimination/harassment complaints and following up after a complaint has been submitted. | EEO | | 2 | Materials developed |
| Future Actions | | | | |
| Develop evaluations for managers to assess their skills and abilities to foster environments of inclusion and belonging. | DAS | | 1 | |
| Develop a method to collect feedback from staff about the Water Boards' Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) processes, and to communicate any changes made to the process. | EEO | | 1 | |
| Support development of a staff-led framework for Water Boards affinity groups and support employee participation and leadership. | EXEC | OCC, DAS, ALL | 1 (R) | |
| Support employee participation and leadership in CalEPA affinity groups. | EXEC | OCC, ALL | 3 | |

Strategic Direction #3

Activating BIPOC Community Wisdom and Sharing Power

Fostering open communications for voices of Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities; building power in BIPOC communities by cultivating authentic relationships and engaging communities as partners for racial equity; offering ongoing training, education, and dedicated resources to raise awareness of the Water Boards' role in managing the state's water resources; and incorporating wisdom from Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities in Water Boards' decision-making processes.

Goal 3a: Engage with BIPOC communities by providing effective language access services and accessible communications.

CHALLENGE: California is one of the most linguistically diverse states in the country with more than 200 spoken languages. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 estimates indicate that 44% of Californians ages five and older speak a language other than English at home. In addition to linguistic diversity, there also are many ways Californians communicate and receive information. The Water Boards' communication methods and styles are often too technical and difficult to reach or resonate with the communities they serve.

The Water Boards acknowledge that robust translation and interpretation services are a key part of fostering open communications with all the communities they serve. In 2021, the State Water Board started tracking the number of written translations and oral interpretation services provided statewide. A total of 448 documents were translated in 13 different languages, and 60 oral interpretations were provided.

The Water Boards have offered training to staff who participate in the environmental justice roundtable or who are tribal coordinators for their respective region, division, or office to share best practices for how to engage with communities and tribal governments. To ensure the Water Boards can connect and communicate with all Californians, the Water Boards must build on these efforts, further advancing language access and expand development of equitable and inclusive communications and engagement approaches.

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------|--|
| Actions for 2023 | | | | |
| Cultivate relationships with ethnic and multi-language media in BIPOC communities and build capacity to explain and contextualize water policy information. | OPA | Comms | 1 (R) | # Direct conversations with ethnic and multi-language media professionals in BIPOC communities # Articles published in new multi-language media outlets |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|------------------|-------|---|
| Review and evaluate existing photo library inventory and identify gaps to diversify photos so that our communications material better reflect California's people. Create guidance for staff on use of culturally sensitive imagery, such as for Native American ceremonies, and avoiding images that reinforce racial stereotypes. | Comms | OPA, OPP | 1 | Establish a baseline by counting the number of photos featuring people of color posted on social media in 2022. In 2023, compare progress to the baseline. Diversify photos used on social media to better reflect the demographics of California (25% increase in people of color photos used). |
| Add racial equity, diversity, and inclusion guidance to the Water Boards' existing editorial style guide, including plain language writing, using acronyms, a racial equity glossary of terms, and culturally sensitive and gender-inclusive language, etc. | Comms | OPP | 1 | Revisions to the editorial style guide completed In 2023, create a rollout plan for distributing and explaining the style guide to all Water Boards staff by January 2024. |
| Revise the Water Boards' public comment webpages and instructions to better describe the process and improve access to participation. | Comms | OPP, DIT | 1 | Webpage revisions completed |
| Create a new public notice template to be used by Water Boards staff. The template will use plain language, have an intuitive layout, communicate potential racial equity impacts, and explain how participant input will be considered. | OPP | Exec, OCC, Comms | 2 | Public notice template completed |
| Finalize language access guidance document and deliver training to Water Boards staff on language access laws and best practices. | OPP | EEO, OCC, | 3 | Guidance completed |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| Implement a form that the public can use to request language services. Distribute the form via public notices, the Water Boards website, and social media. | OPP | | 2 | Online form published |
| Expand the Spanish language glossary to include more terminology related to water. Use glossary to ensure consistent and accessible use of terminology. | OPP | | 3 | # New terms added every quarter |
| Future Actions | | | | |
| Expand the Water Boards' social media reach by increasing multi-language content and working with external communicators and BIPOC influencers interested in racial equity and environmental justice. | Comms | OPA, OPP | 1 | |

Goal 3b: Remove barriers for community access and participation in water decision-making by providing resources for capacity building, including funding, training, and education.

CHALLENGE: The Water Boards recognize that their processes and policies—along with historical, linguistic, and economic inequities—often present barriers to meaningful participation where communities can easily understand the Water Boards’ mission; contribute their expertise, experiences, and perspectives; and/or actively engage in decision-making. Removing these barriers and establishing new, resilient systems will require equitable community representation and participation. Barriers the Water Boards acknowledge and have begun to address include: language barriers, use of technical jargon in Water Boards’ materials, lack of internet or computer access to participate in virtual meetings, the time and places where meetings are scheduled, potential loss of wages due to participants taking time off to participate, lack of culturally relevant information, lack of financial support for community capacity building, and lack of Black, Indigenous, and people of color representation at public meetings, etc.

In addition to the efforts to optimize communication and engagement, the Water Boards are hosting more hybrid public meetings (in-person or virtual option), hosting more meetings outside of regular business hours, and recording meetings to improve accessibility in the communities we serve. There

is great potential to enhance and expand on these efforts, and to make other opportunities and resources available to maximize community access and participation.

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|-------------------------------|-------|---|
| Actions for 2023 | | | | |
| Improve Water Board participation in community-based environmental violations monitoring meetings (IVAN meetings). | OE | | 1 | Improve and track participation in IVAN meetings and training by Water Boards staff. |
| Develop guidance document for improving/streamlining enforcement complaint process to improve responsiveness to community complaints. | OE | | 1 | Duplicate complaint pathways eliminated, outdated complaint links removed, and email addresses from Water Board web pages are updated Guidance document disseminated and implemented |
| Develop a form for members of the public to submit questions or requests. Distribute the form via public notices, the Water Boards website, and social media. | OPP | Comms | 2 | Online form published |
| Continue to update the external contact list on a quarterly basis and expand curated lists for groups and leaders working on racial and environmental justice. | OPP | | 3 | # New contacts added to list per quarter |
| Coordinate the second cohort of the Facilitation and Training Pool to train Water Boards staff on how to engage with communities effectively, how to design and manage engagement processes, and how to navigate challenging conversations. | OPP | Racial Equity Training Cohort | 3 | # Staff members trained and certified as Water Boards facilitators # Meetings, workshops, and trainings facilitated by Facilitation and Training pool members |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|------------------|-------|--|
| Develop guidance and templates for developing outreach and engagement plans that support equitable public participation, engagement, and community and tribal partnerships. | OPP | Comms | 2 | Completed best practices guidance document |
| Develop a template and guidance for creating and using community profiles to inform engagement strategies, for planning equitable and accessible meetings, and for using plain language in document development. | OPP | | 2 | Completed community profile template |
| Create a local workforce development pilot through the SAFER drinking water program to address barriers to maintaining sustainable drinking water solutions in small, disadvantaged communities. | OPP | DDW, DFA | 2 | Completed pilot strategy document |
| Develop a community capacity building pilot fund to: 1) compensate tribal and BIPOC community partners for their time and expertise; and 2) support tribal- and community-led projects that address environmental clean-up projects. | OPP | DFA, OE, Regions | 2 | Completed funding pilot charter presented to the Board |
| Purchase constituent relationship management (CRM) software to improve, focus, and monitor engagement with BIPOC communities and tribes. | OPP | DIT, Comms | 2 (R) | Completed procedures for inputting data and using tool |
| In consultation with BIPOC communities, non-governmental organizations, and tribes, expand press distribution lists with a racial equity lens and add media contacts who represent and are connected with BIPOC communities | OPA | OPP | 1 | # New media contacts that represent and are connected with BIPOC communities |
| Future Actions | | | | |
| Develop and maintain a list of pro-bono attorneys on the Water Boards' website for public access. | OCC | DIT | 1 | |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|--|-----------|--------------|-------|------------------------|
| Develop videos to describe the Water Boards' processes, how decisions are made, and how people can be involved; post videos in multiple languages or with a variety of subtitle options to the Water Boards' website and share via social media. | Comms | OPP, ORPP | 1 (R) | |
| Evaluate, report, and develop technical solutions to address usability issues throughout the Water Boards' website for those who have limited internet connectivity and who access the website via mobile devices. | DIT | ALL | 2 | |
| Develop educational materials for program areas to learn fundamental best practices when completing web requests and page redesigns. Materials will cover page layout, information hierarchy and content prioritization as well as digital accessibility/universal design principles for commonly used webpage elements (tables, links, headings, buttons, forms, etc.). | DIT | Comms | 1 (R) | |

Goal 3c: Consult, collaborate, and partner with BIPOC communities in decision-making processes.

CHALLENGE: The Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities the Water Boards' serve are local experts who have a deep understanding of their specific needs and strengths. Public feedback indicates that communities most impacted by the Water Boards' work are unclear about the Water Boards' role(s) in managing water resources and how decisions may affect their community. In addition, Water Boards' decision-making processes and structures often do not center the expertise or vision of Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities.

This feedback provided the Water Boards with insights that have guided its racial equity work. In addition to the training and the other approaches to optimize engagement described above, the Water Boards have collaborated for nearly a year with community partners, tribes, and communities impacted by racial inequities on the most impactful actions to include in this action plan to implement

the principles and goals of the Racial Equity Resolution. In addition, best practices and new policies, such as the Tribal Consultation Policy, have been established to support meaningful collaboration. The Water Boards have engaged with BIPOC communities and tribal governments on ongoing water resource/quality priorities related to the Human Right to Water; the protection of tribal cultural uses and subsistence fishing; and the cleanup of contaminated sites. However, the Water Boards recognize more opportunities must be created for BIPOC communities and tribes to incorporate needs and priorities in Water Boards programs, policies, and decisions. Centering the Water Boards' work and decision-making on BIPOC communities will ensure that Water Boards programs benefit all Californians and reflect the Water Boards' commitment to sharing power. To achieve racial equity, the Water Boards must co-create frameworks that uphold equitable consultation, collaboration, partnership and empowerment of BIPOC communities and tribes from conception through implementation of its work.

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|-------------------|-------|---|
| Actions for 2023 | | | | |
| Implement Assembly Bill 2108 (2022) by developing guidance on using racial equity data to identify potential environmental justice water quality impacts, engage with communities potentially impacted, and develop findings based on data and outreach. | DWQ | Regions, OPP, OCC | 2 | # New resources developed providing guidance on implementation of Assembly Bill 2108 Type and # of DWQ templates updated (e.g., project charters, outreach plans) to include racial equity and environmental justice data considerations |
| Provide briefings for legislators who represent geographic areas with a high percentage of BIPOC communities to help inform them of Water Boards' resources and community participation processes, and to better understand barriers to implementation and hear suggestions for how to overcome them. | OLA | ALL | 1 | # Briefings held Geographic diversity of participants' elective office included in briefings Diversity of type of elective offices contacted |
| Update Tribal Affairs webpage to include a table of current tribal consultation opportunities for all Water Boards projects subject to AB 52. | OPP | | 1 | Webpage completed |

| Actions | Lead Role | Support Role | Stage | Performance Indicators |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------|------------------------|
| Future Actions | | | | |
| Develop a list of recurring community meetings and an approach for attending to share information, receive feedback, answer questions, address concerns, and build relationships. | OPP | | 1 | |
| Develop a Native American history and tribal affairs best practices training for Water Boards staff in partnership with the CalEPA Tribal Advisory Committee. | OPP | ORPP | 1 | |
| Develop guidance for identifying, working with, and equitably compensating tribal cultural monitors. | OPP | DFA | 1 (R) | |
| Develop an outreach plan to raise awareness about State Water Board and Regional Water Board vacancies and the process to apply to be considered for a board member appointment. | OCC | OPP, Comms | 1 (R) | |