

## **AMENDMENT TO THE CALIFORNIA TAHOE CONSERVANCY'S 2018–2023 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Purpose of this Amendment**

The purpose of this amendment is to provide strategic guidance on how to advance racial equity within the mission of the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy). This amendment adds to the Conservancy's 2018–2023 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) by providing a guiding principle, a strategic plan goal, and four strategies that will advance racial equity and better serve all Californians, regardless of race.

### **Need for an Amendment**

Historical actions by federal, state, and local governments have created and maintained racial inequity through law, policy, funding, programs, and organizational culture. Institutionalized policies and practices continue to perpetuate injustice throughout the nation, the State, and the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin). Government agencies at all levels are increasingly reflecting on, assessing, and improving their policies and practices to rectify historical discrimination and avoid future inequities.

Governor Gavin Newsom's Administration, the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), and the Conservancy are working to acknowledge historical wrongs and combat structural racism and bias in state institutions. For example, in 2020, the California Strategic Growth Council adopted a landmark resolution committing member agencies and organizations (including CNRA) to taking action to promote racial equity. The resolution includes commitments to actively engage communities and stakeholders to gather public input; integrate racial equity into agency leadership, operations, programs, policies, and practices; identify and implement concrete and measurable actions to achieve racial equity; and work with state boards, departments, and offices to align and advance the Council's commitment to racial equity.

Additionally, in 2020, the Governor released a Statement of Administration Policy on Native American Ancestral Lands requiring state entities to seek opportunities to support California tribes' co-management of and access to natural lands that are within a California tribe's ancestral land, and to work cooperatively with California tribes that are interested in acquiring natural lands in excess of state needs.

Over the last two years, the Conservancy began taking concerted efforts to increase racial equity in working towards the goals of the Strategic Plan. The Conservancy is now in the early stages of racial equity action planning yet lacks overall strategic guidance on how to advance racial equity within the Conservancy's mission.

The Strategic Plan, adopted by the Conservancy Board in December 2018, describes how the Conservancy will address state, regional, and Basin priorities in coordination with its many agency and stakeholder partners. The Plan does not include clear considerations for promoting racial equity.

This amendment will enhance the Conservancy's efforts to: incorporate racial equity planning and actions into operational plans; participate in local and statewide initiatives to further racial equity and tribal engagement goals; and increase capacity for projects and programs that enhance racial equity, access for all, and tribal community efforts.

### **Changes to the Strategic Plan**

The Strategic Plan contains 12 principles that the Conservancy uses to guide all of its work. The guiding principles are:

1. Put the Conservancy's lands at the center of the agency's work.
2. Link daily land management responsibilities with strategic initiatives and increased grant-seeking.
3. Integrate multiple resources to produce multiple project benefits.
4. Inform decision-making with the best available science.
5. Take climate change into account in all planning and investment decisions, including designing projects and programs with enough flexibility to respond to future impacts.
6. Seek to collaboratively identify and implement the Basin's highest priority projects, regardless of land ownership.
7. Monitor and adaptively manage projects to increase scientific knowledge, improve project outcomes, and provide the greatest possible value.
8. Cultivate public-private partnerships, including foundations and impact investors, to create efficiencies and secure the funding necessary for transformative projects and initiatives.
9. Recognize the integral role of administrative and executive functions to the success of all the Conservancy's work.
10. Maintain the organizational flexibility necessary to fill institutional gaps, implement projects through novel agreements, and use diverse funding opportunities.
11. Use all available financial tools and labor resources to accomplish work.
12. Put the professional expertise of all staff to the highest value use.

This amendment adds a **new guiding principle to the Strategic Plan:**

- 13. Ensure that all Conservancy programs and partnerships integrate elements for advancing racial equity.**

The Strategic Plan currently includes five goals and 22 strategies to achieve those goals. The goals are:

1. Steward Conservancy Lands and Protect Basin Communities from Wildfire
2. Restore the Resilience of Basin Forests and Watersheds
3. Provide Public Access and Outdoor Recreation for All Communities
4. Foster Basinwide Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Communities
5. Strive for Organizational Learning and Excellence

This amendment adds a **new goal to the Strategic Plan, further described with its corresponding strategies in the section below:**

**6. Promote Racial Equity and Help Make the Basin a Safe and Welcoming Place for All**

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**Goal 6**

**Promote Racial Equity and Help Make the Basin a Safe and Welcoming Place for All**

**Accomplishments**

In 2020, the Conservancy participated in the Capitol Collaborative on Race and Equity (CCORE), a community of 15 state agencies that are collaborating to learn, engage, and implement actions that embed racial equity into agency culture, policies, and practices. Participating staff graduated from the CCORE training program in late 2021. As a result, the Conservancy has taken steps to improve equity through changes in hiring, procurement, communications, and program priorities.

The Conservancy has put new practices in place to reduce bias and expand outreach in hiring and procurement. The Conservancy has also recognized the need to communicate more effectively with people of different backgrounds and cultures, and has begun translating more informational and outreach materials, as well as making them more representative of the diversity of all Californians.

In addition to shifting internal practices, the Conservancy is also focusing on broader engagement with external communities and organizations. This work has included increasing coordination with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California (Washoe Tribe) to develop co-management opportunities. It has also included developing opportunities to expand equitable access by piloting grants that will provide positive experiences for people and communities who face challenges in accessing or enjoying Lake Tahoe.

**Challenges**

Although the Conservancy has begun taking steps in promoting racial equity, significant work lies ahead, and the Conservancy will face multiple challenges moving forward.

The Conservancy is in the early stages of racial equity action planning, and therefore has not yet identified the most important opportunities for promoting racial equity through its lands and programs. Although considerable data exist to document

pervasive racial inequity at the state and national level, most existing data cannot easily be distilled to the scale of the Basin, with its complex mix of multiple states, counties, and municipalities. This means the Conservancy must engage directly with communities of color and underserved groups to better understand challenges and opportunities.

The Conservancy has only begun in the past two years to build organization-wide skills for promoting racial equity, therefore it currently has limited internal capacity and expertise to better engage diverse communities. In addition to internal limitations, the Conservancy must also thoughtfully schedule, prioritize, and coordinate its requests for engagement with community groups and tribes because all organizations have finite time and capacity to respond to large volumes of requests.

The Conservancy's broad mission provides unique opportunities to advance statewide goals and policies. However, state processes can introduce challenges in implementing innovative programs and projects to promote racial equity. For example, the Conservancy's state funding sources are usually focused on discrete resource goals, making it difficult for the Conservancy to link racial equity, tribal engagement, infrastructure, and natural resources through integrated planning and projects. In addition, the Conservancy's enabling legislation has not been thoroughly updated in over thirty years despite major changes in statewide priorities, including racial equity and tribal engagement.

### **Strategies**

To meet these challenges, the Conservancy must commit to eradicating racism and implicit bias, listen to diverse voices to understand problems and solutions, and act on a clear agenda to combat inequities and implicit bias.

This work will include taking steps to build meaningful relationships and trust between the Conservancy and members of communities who have been historically underserved by government. The Conservancy will engage with and listen to communities both inside and outside of the Basin to build more inclusive projects and programs. This engagement is critical because the Conservancy is not representative of the diverse cultures and backgrounds of people in the Basin and throughout California.

The Conservancy will also enhance collaboration with California Native American tribes. The Conservancy will emphasize collaboration with the Washoe Tribe because the Conservancy's jurisdiction is entirely within the homeland of the Washoe People. In the past, state agencies often focused on completing the minimum of formal consultations required by state law. The Conservancy aims to shift more to substantial collaboration and co-management. This work may include knowledge exchange, jointly planned projects, cultural burning, expanding access for cultural use, and the return of ancestral lands.

The Conservancy will integrate actions for promoting racial equity throughout all its programs, projects, partnerships, and initiatives. To support continued racial equity action planning, the Conservancy recently entered into an agreement with a consultant who is providing assistance for trainings, community engagement, and research. Insights gained via community engagement and research will inform the Conservancy's annual operational plans and will also provide foundational information for the development of the Conservancy's next strategic plan.

To enact its sixth goal—Promote Racial Equity and Help Make the Basin a Safe and Welcoming Place for All—the Conservancy will implement the following four strategies:

- A. Conduct racial equity action planning and integrate actions into the Conservancy's annual operational plans.
- B. Participate in statewide initiatives to share best practices and align the Conservancy's work with the State's racial equity and tribal engagement goals.
- C. Engage the community and collaborate with partners to identify actions that better meet the needs of Native American tribes, Lake Tahoe Basin residents and visitors, and all Californians.
- D. Increase internal capacity for engaging with community-based organizations and community members.