

RACIAL EQUITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Summary

The California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) is continuing its commitment to embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of its work. Over the last two years, the Conservancy has worked with the Equity and Wellness Institute (EqWI) to build the Conservancy's capacity to achieve racial equity goals, to better engage with the communities it serves, and develop a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP).

The development of the REAP was a comprehensive process that included data review and best practices research, internal and external interviews, community listening sessions, community-based participatory research, and staff and Board trainings.

Staff completed the REAP in early September. The REAP builds upon EqWI's research and recommendations developed over the past two years. The REAP guides the Conservancy's efforts to advance racial equity and support for underserved communities through internal improvements, improved external collaboration, and increased equitable public engagement.

Staff designed the REAP to complement the Conservancy's newly adopted 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, particularly given the Strategic Plan commitment to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and racial equity principles. The Strategic Plan provides the Conservancy's overarching equity vision as it sets out the goals and strategies in support of its mission. In the REAP, the Conservancy outlines operational actions to work within its mission to ensure our actions reduce, not perpetuate, inequity. The Board, community, and staff discussions that were integral to development of the Strategic Plan were also incorporated into the REAP.

The REAP further addresses state equity mandates, including Executive Order (EO) N-16-22, which directs state agencies to take additional actions to embed equity into their missions, policies and practices, and EO N-15-19, which acknowledges and apologizes on behalf of the State for the historical "violence, exploitation, dispossession and attempted destruction of tribal communities." The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) has further urged agencies to take meaningful and accountable actions towards racial equity. Advancing racial equity and environmental justice is inherent and central to CNRA-led initiatives such as Pathways to 30x30 and Outdoors for All.

The REAP is organized into five goals. Each of the goals includes a summary of related challenges and several actions that the Conservancy will build into operational plans for staff to implement. The REAP includes five goals:

1. Embed Racial Equity in the Conservancy's Culture

Goal 1 focuses on continuing our internal growth and understanding of institutional racism and historical regional inequities, and their implications for Conservancy work.

2. Enhance the Conservancy's Capacity to Address Racial Equity

Goal 2 recognizes the significant workload required to address racial equity and provides actions that will improve staff capacity to implement the REAP.

3. Improve Equity in Hiring and Retention

Goal 3 acknowledges that the current Conservancy staff and Board do not reflect California's diversity. Under this goal, the Conservancy will take actions to improve hiring and retention practices, and support career development, particularly for staff of color.

4. Maintain and Strengthen Commitment to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California

Goal 4 further strengthens the Conservancy's relationship with and commitment to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California by improving the visibility of the Washoe Tribe, supporting Tribal practices, and increasing Tribal involvement in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

5. Improve Community Engagement and Communications

Goal 5 includes a robust set of actions that focus on improving the Conservancy's relationship with the community, enhancing communications to better meet community members where they are (including reducing language barriers and improving engagement during project development), and uplifting communities facing the greatest inequities through expanded partnerships and funding opportunities.

Staff will begin implementing the REAP immediately.

Attachments

1. Conservancy Racial Equity Action Plan

Conservancy Staff Contact

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