

State of California
Ocean Protection Council

EQUITY PLAN

October 2022



Ocean Protection Council

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Bilingual Services

A final version of the Equity Plan is available in Spanish at <http://www.opc.ca.gov/equity>.
Please contact: Maria Rodriguez at maria.rodriguez@resources.ca.gov with any language
considerations or requests.

Servicios Bilingües

Una versión final del Plan de Equidad está disponible en español en
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Call to Action

State law mandates the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) 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. This requires equitable efforts that provide benefits to all Californians through intentional and sustained actions.

A first step in this commitment requires OPC to recognize significant current and past injustices in the State of California and our nation. OPC acknowledges the painful history of genocide against Native American tribes and recognizes their interwoven connection to stewardship of the environment. OPC also acknowledges the well-documented prejudices and barriers experienced by marginalized and underserved communities throughout the state in terms of access to nature and regulatory decision-making processes.

This Equity Plan (Plan) represents OPC's comprehensive commitments to advancing equity across ocean and coastal policies and actions in California and strengthening internal efforts to create a more inclusive workplace at OPC. The Plan outlines priorities, milestones, and outcomes to increase communication and outreach; provide targeted funding and technical assistance; improve staff training and capacity; strengthen environmental justice policies; and further integrate community science, community expertise, and tribal expertise and knowledge into decision-making. The Plan builds from leadership and policies consistent with Governor Newsom's Administration and individual state agencies to address social and environmental inequities statewide.

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Introduction

Equity and Environmental Justice at California's Ocean and Coast

California is home to a growing population that is increasingly diverse. At the time of this Plan's adoption, more than 39 million people, or one-eighth of all residents in the United States, are projected to live in the state and although no single race or ethnic group represents the majority of California residents, communities of color make up 65% of the state's population.

For many populations, the legacy of institutional and structural racism results in the persistence of generational, environmental injustices.¹ Government actors have historically perpetuated such injustices through discriminatory land use practices targeting communities of color, the mobilization of settlers to displace California Native American tribes and communities, the intensification of environmental pollution and burdens on such groups², and the desecration of sacred lands and cultural resources. These inequalities, in addition to harmful policy decisions, socio-economic shifts, judicial findings, and the state's increasing population, widen these disparity gaps.³

As a government agency, the OPC recognizes the need to acknowledge these injustices and take action to address inequity within our agency and as part of the policies and programs we carry out for the communities we serve. Equitable access to the coast and the protection of coastal natural resources for all Californians is essential to remediate this harm. As the Coastal Commission notes in its Environmental Justice Policy, adopted in 2019, "taking an environmental justice approach to coastal policy requires a fundamental rethinking of who is connected to the coast, and how." OPC aims to support the different values and priorities that

¹ CalEPA. 2021. "[Pollution and Prejudice](#)."

² Roller et al., 2019.

³ California Coastal Commission. 2019. "[Environmental Justice Policy](#)."

communities, particularly California Native American tribes and environmental justice communities, bring to California coastal and ocean science, protection, and restoration.⁴

This Plan is a living document that will guide OPC to develop policymaking and research procedures that incorporate the knowledge, perspectives, needs, and desires of underrepresented groups across California. Through the development of equity policies and procedures, OPC, along with other governmental agencies and external partners, can act as changemakers to provide more equitable access to internal policy, engagement, funding and science approaches, in ways that elevate an ocean and coastal system that is vibrant for all. In particular, OPC seeks to advance equity across California by uplifting California Native American tribes and environmental justice communities through internal and external approaches. The Plan is a seminal step for advancing inclusive policy development and helps implement Goal 2 of OPC's [Strategic Plan to Protect California's Coast and Ocean: 2020-2025](#) (Strategic Plan), "Advance Equity Across Ocean and Coastal Policies and Actions."

OPC as a Changemaker for California Coastal and Ocean Policy and Research

OPC's singular position within the California state government offers a unique opportunity to connect community perspectives and needs to influence equitable policy making at multiple scales. The [California Ocean Protection Act \(COPA\)](#) established OPC as a Cabinet-level state policy body nested within the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) that implements the Governor's priorities for coastal and ocean policy. Specifically, OPC protects California's coast and ocean by advancing innovative, science-based policy and management, making strategic investments, and catalyzing action through partnerships with state agencies and external partners to improve efficiency and effectiveness. These strategies are inclusive of broader management, stewardship, and collaboration with community partners engaging in

⁴ Ibid.

efforts to protect coastal and ocean health in California. [Appendix A](#) provides additional context on OPC's core functions.⁵

Through the implementation of its [Strategic Plan](#), OPC is embarking on numerous equity initiatives that are concurrent to the development of the Equity Plan. Collaborative efforts include OPC's Tribal Engagement Strategy, an initiative to improve consultation and engagement with California Native American tribes, integrate tribal priorities into the conservation and restoration of coastal natural resources, identify opportunities for increased access, co-management, and ancestral land return, and advance tribal stewardship of California's coastal and ocean ecosystems. OPC is also working collaboratively with state agencies involved in coastal public access to support ongoing planning and project implementation to increase equitable public access to and along the ocean by 2025.

Collaborative partnerships with state agencies on the forefront of regulatory, policy, and financial decision-making and action around California's coast and ocean are critical to advancing equitable policy and research that is inclusive of community perspectives and needs. This Plan calls for ongoing collaboration with federal, state, tribal, and local governments, universities, research institutions, non-profits, educators, industry, community members, and additional stakeholders to advance collective environmental justice and equity priorities.

About the Equity Plan

The Equity Plan is a guiding document for OPC Councilmembers and staff to advance equity and environmental justice within the Council and along the California coast. By approaching equity efforts as both internal and external to OPC, the Plan proposes measurable actions that empower the agency to create solutions for strategic leadership and partnership, inclusive cultural and recruitment practices, improved engagement and funding distribution, comprehensive sourcing of knowledge, and advanced access to ocean and coastal spaces.

⁵ [Appendix A](#) provides additional context on OPC's core functions.

Throughout the Equity Plan, there is an emphasis on addressing the environmental injustices experienced by the coastal and inland communities OPC works with. OPC recognizes that achieving equity may not be enough to alleviate the injustices some communities experience and understands that environmental justice principles and practice are core to advancing community access, health, and decision-making.

The Equity Plan highlights the equity priorities within coastal and ocean policymaking and research that are primed for statewide action. Importantly, the goals, objectives, and strategies proposed in the Plan are a product of a collaborative design process that engaged OPC staff, OPC leadership, the public, and [OPC's Environmental Justice Advisory Group](#), a 13-member group of stakeholder representatives from seven regions across the state. More details on the Environmental Justice Advisory Group, which OPC convened to co-author and facilitate the development of the Plan, can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Equity Plan Goals

OPC's ocean and coastal priorities and the voices of OPC's Environmental Justice Advisory Group led to the development of four goals focused on core areas (Engagement, Inclusive Workplace, Policy, and Science) that advance equity and justice within the state and the Council.

Equitable Outreach, Engagement, and Funding

Goal 1: Establish and implement more equitable and sustainable community engagement and funding methods to expand and enhance opportunities for ocean and coastal projects, policies, and research.

Building an Inclusive Workplace and Workforce for California's Coast and Ocean

Goal 2: Create a more inclusive workplace through creative and equitable employee recruitment and retention, building staff fluency on equity and environmental justice, and increasing internal staff capacity.

Designing Equitable Ocean and Coastal Policymaking

Goal 3: Lead equitable ocean and coastal policymaking in California.

Integrating Equity in Coastal and Ocean Science and Research

Goal 4: Lead the state in a comprehensive approach to coastal and ocean science through intentional investments in research and monitoring that value and integrate broader knowledge sources.

These four core areas and corresponding goals and strategies will support the transformative policy and research OPC was designed to facilitate by establishing direct and measurable procedures to advance equity.

Equity Plan Implementation

As OPC's inaugural comprehensive Equity Plan, the Plan recommends strategies to establish the foundation for existing and future needs. During the implementation process, baseline analyses will help inform performance measures, such as benchmarks and other metrics, to provide a systematic process to track progress and accountability. To improve implementation, sustain accountability, and operationalize equity within the organization, OPC commits to biennial assessments to:

1. Evaluate progress and conduct reporting; and
2. Identify future updates to the Plan (e.g., changes and refinements to recommendations) based on assessment outcomes.

OPC will report on Equity Plan progress and milestones on a quarterly basis leading up to the biennial assessment. OPC may utilize quantitative, qualitative, and anecdotal data as potential metrics to inform reporting.

OPC Tribal Engagement Strategy

OPC has embarked on a separate but parallel process to engage with California Native American tribes. The OPC Tribal Engagement Strategy, scheduled to be considered for adoption by the Council by the end of 2022, will provide a framework for enhanced partnership between OPC and tribes on ocean and coastal matters. The Tribal Engagement Strategy, which was developed through consultation and collaboration with tribes, provides specific actions that OPC will undertake to enhance tribal engagement in all aspects of its work. It further provides OPC's approach to respectfully seek, discuss, and consider the views of tribes, primarily through robust government-to-government consultation, but also through other engagement approaches as appropriate.

OPC's Tribal Engagement Strategy and Equity Plan are intended to be complementary documents. While the Tribal Engagement Strategy is specifically focused on government-to-government relationships with California Native American tribes, this Equity Plan includes and addresses recommendations to support tribal governments and communities outside of the government-to-government engagement context.



Equitable Engagement, Outreach, and Funding

Goal 1: Establish and implement more equitable and sustainable community engagement and funding methods to expand and enhance opportunities for ocean and coastal projects, policies, and research.

OPC is committed to working collaboratively with people of all abilities, multilingual populations, and low literacy populations. Many California communities, particularly low-income and communities of color, face a lack of resource investment and are consistently excluded from policy decisions that directly impact their environmental health and quality of life. Meaningful community outreach, engagement, and funding are important pathways to mending relationships and establishing partnerships with environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes and communities. OPC recognizes that following this approach requires CNRA and OPC to provide adequate resources and support in ways that are representative and proportional to each communities' needs.

OPC holds two significant roles within CNRA that advance meaningful outreach, engagement, and funding opportunities for equity and environmental justice. First, as a convener for all coastal and ocean state agencies, OPC can identify opportunities and linkages between interagency groups and community partners. Second, as a funder, OPC is further able to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of state resources allocated by OPC and its interagency partners. As one example, in 2021, OPC initiated a dedicated pathway for funding environmental justice communities for multi-benefit water quality projects through Proposition 1 funding that resulted in [\\$7.5 million in investments](#). Through this process, OPC staff provided technical assistance and community capacity building opportunities to support proposal development, including guidance for project-specific engagement strategies that emphasized social and economic benefits for communities.

Goal 1: Establish and implement more equitable and sustainable community engagement and funding methods to expand and enhance opportunities for ocean and coastal projects, policies, and research.



Objectives:

- 1.1. OPC will continue to work with the CNRA Assistant Secretary of Equity and Environmental Justice to identify capacity needs and develop recommendations for additional resources as needed for environmental justice engagement across all departments and agencies that focus on California’s coast and ocean, including seeking authorization and funding for potential additional positions to support CNRA and OPC equity efforts.



Strategies:

- 1.1.1. Dedicate organizational capacity⁶ to implement the OPC Equity Plan and future equity plans.
 - Upon adoption in 2022, designate at least one staff member with experience working on equity issues to spend a minimum 50% time on OPC Equity Plan implementation.
 - In addition to designating one staff member, include roles and responsibilities related to equity, environmental justice, and community engagement in job descriptions for all OPC staff by the end of 2023.
 - Annually assess OPC staff capacity and need for additional resources to support ongoing implementation.
 - Contingent on annual needs assessment and additional secured funding, determine the need for an additional full-time staff position to coordinate and address ongoing equity and environmental justice needs by 2024.

⁶ At the time of this Plan’s adoption in 2022, OPC’s organizational capacity consists of 15 staff positions, and 2 annually rotating Sea Grant fellows.

- Biennially assess implementation of the Equity Plan to track/evaluate progress, report, and inform updates to future equity plans.
- 1.1.2.** Seek additional funding, as needed, for specific equity-related investments that will be identified after each biennial assessment and provide recommendations to ensure ongoing and sustainable funding for implementation beyond 2024. Identify agency partner needs and gaps through close collaboration with CNRA and other coastal and ocean state agencies by: 1) coordinating and sharing engagement resources, strategies, and tracking environmental justice initiatives; and 2) addressing systemic challenges related to management, science, policy, funding and communications.
- Dedicate at least one OPC staff member to participate in CNRA’s Environmental Justice Working Group.
 - Continue to participate in the NOAA-facilitated Environmental Justice Coastal Interagency Coordination Group.
- 1.2.** Expand and enhance outreach, education, external communications, and knowledge-sharing opportunities through inclusive language and targeted, culturally-responsive engagement with communities and tribes.

 **Strategies:**

- 1.2.1.** Seek authorization to compensate community-based organizations, community members, and members of California Native American tribes for their time and expertise provided to OPC as community partners or participants in engagement and outreach opportunities. *(See Objectives 1.4, 1.5, and 4.2 for direct application.)*
- 1.2.2.** By 2024, assess OPC’s current and on-going opportunities for community outreach, engagement, and education knowledge-sharing to establish a baseline to inform benchmarks and other metrics on these efforts to measure future progress and identify potential gaps.

1.2.3. Determine needs and improvements for meeting and material accessibility for the public.

- Identify translation and interpretation needs for OPC’s public materials, meetings, and events, where services that are accessible to people of all abilities, multilingual populations, and low literacy populations are needed. Continue to provide all electronic information, and technology shared through webpage communications, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design (ADA compliant).
- Ensure that public-facing documents, including external communications, materials, and reports are written in plain language⁷, using a coherent and easily readable style.
- Actions designed to increase public participation specifically for quarterly OPC Council meetings are described in Goal 3, Strategy 3.3.2.

1.2.4. By 2024, in partnership with environmental justice communities and tribal communities, assess internal processes and timelines to create flexibility in establishing meaningful opportunities for communities to engage and/or participate in coastal projects, policies and research.

1.2.5. By 2024, in partnership with environmental justice communities and tribal communities, develop a community outreach and engagement plan that outlines guidelines, actions, and timelines for OPC communications with environmental justice communities.

⁷ As defined by California Government Code Section 6219(a): each department, commission, office, or other administrative agency of state government shall write each document that it produces in plain, straightforward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style.

- 1.2.6.** Train staff and collaborate with CNRA partner agencies to include Land Acknowledgements and adopt asset-based language to describe California communities in all reports, communications, and project materials.
 - 1.2.7.** Coordinate with OPC’s grantees to ensure recognition of the role, history, and stories of California Native American tribes and environmental justice communities in funded projects.
 - 1.2.8.** With community involvement, develop and/or update OPC acknowledgement and signage guidelines to require accessible interpretive signage/materials that recognize historical and environmental significance and utilize culturally-inclusive language and community perspectives.
- 1.3.** Expand and augment support for projects and programs that directly benefit environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes, including multi-sector approaches. Work with environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes to identify meaningful disbursement of funds.

 **Strategies:**

- 1.3.1.** By 2023, measure the amount of OPC grant funding allocated for projects and programs that directly benefit environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes to establish OPC’s baseline funding.
- 1.3.2.** By the end of 2024, create sustained, multi-year funding opportunities that allow for long-term, flexible investments for environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes.
 - By 2024, assess OPC’s dedicated bond funds and other funding sources to redefine priorities and redistribute resources to ensure equitable budget and dedicated funds are allocated for EJ communities and California Native American tribes.

- By 2025, develop multi-sector partnerships among various stakeholder groups, such as non-profit, private, and public organizations, to secure funding investments for EJ communities and California Native American tribes.
- 1.3.3.** Fund inland projects both within and led by environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes that improve coastal watersheds and public health.
- 1.3.4.** Fund community-science programs and projects both with and led by environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes.
- 1.3.5.** Fund education and outreach efforts that directly benefit environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes.
- Support ocean, coast, and watershed education and outreach.
 - Explore collaborations with state agencies with existing grant programs, such as State Coastal Conservancy and Coastal Commission.
 - Encourage grantees to engage and develop partnerships with schools, school districts, students, youth groups, community and cultural centers, and families.
- 1.3.6.** Through OPC-funded projects and programs, identify opportunities that optimize local economic benefits for community members through workforce development, youth training and other community capacity-building structures.
- 1.3.7.** By 2023, create a pilot small grants program in partnership with community-based organizations to benefit small and short-term projects across coastal regions that create positive impacts in California’s environmental justice and tribal communities.

- 1.4.** By 2024, ensure OPC projects and actions are informed by community needs by incorporating community engagement into every OPC project and funding opportunity, as appropriate.

 **Strategies:**

- 1.4.1.** To develop a baseline on community engagement, assess current and past OPC projects since adoption of OPC’s [Strategic Plan to Protect California’s Coast and Ocean 2020-2025](#).⁸
- 1.4.2.** Continue to require OPC projects to identify, budget for, and include community engagement opportunities, when appropriate, and be informed by local community needs, such as by tribes, community-based organizations, or impacted individuals. This could include community-based science work, community workshops, advising on communication of or dissemination of research findings, providing expertise on local context, project location or design, and more.
- 1.4.3.** For each approved-funding opportunity, continue to require OPC staff to engage in at least one site visit with community engagement partners. As time allows, OPC staff will engage with projects through newsletters, community events, and more, as determined by community engagement partners.
- 1.4.4.** Require equitable engagement and collaboration between OPC-funded entities and community partners.

⁸ OPC establishes a goal of enhanced community engagement within Objective 2.2 of the [OPC Strategic Plan to Protect California’s Coast and Ocean 2020-2025](#) (*Enhance Engagement with Underserved Communities*).

- Embed a commitment to equity and environmental justice, including principles for meaningful engagement, as part of all OPC funding opportunities and ensure accountability.

1.5. Expand opportunities for environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes to access OPC funding by enhancing grant processes.

Strategies:

1.5.1. Review application evaluation criteria and scoring approaches for current and ongoing OPC funding opportunities. Implement updates to prioritize and advance projects both within, led by, or otherwise informed by, environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes, that provide meaningful benefits to communities.

1.5.2. Solicit feedback for improvement from previous and potential grantees on application processes, grant guidelines, and reporting requirements.

- Survey existing and potential grantees regarding barriers to the OPC grant application process.
- Update OPC's General Conditions and Budget Guidelines for Grantees to provide clarity, consistency, and flexible guidance, where possible and consistent with California law, for new and existing grantees.
- Remain flexible throughout the grant process to support the needs of grantees and communities.
- Consistent with California law and individual funding source requirements, consider providing advance-payments for a percentage of grant-funded work.
- Explore pathways for establishing a peer-to-peer network of previous, existing, and new grantees to serve as a collaborative learning exchange program.

1.5.3. Expand outreach for each OPC funding opportunity across communities to target community-based organizations, grassroots organizations, and California Native American tribes.

1.5.4. Expand technical assistance opportunities.

- Create internal roles and/or hire technical assistance experts to work directly with grant applicants.
- Identify priority communities in need of technical assistance, including Disadvantaged and Severely disadvantaged communities (DACs and SDACs)⁹, California Native American tribes, and communities that score above 80% on [CalEnviroScreen](#) results.
- Host workshops, informational sessions, webinars, and dedicated office hours to provide guidance on grant applications and process.
- Partner with community-based organizations to develop and distribute technical assistance materials.
- Explore ways to create flexible application processes for communities with limited access to technology.

1.5.5. Explore opportunities to streamline grant funding processes and EJ projects for community partners across CNRA’s coastal agencies by coordinating overlapping efforts and identifying efficiencies. Develop and implement recommendations if feasible.

- Continue meeting with state agency coastal partners and CNRA EJ and Equity working groups for resource, insight, and knowledge sharing. *(See related Strategy 1.1.2.)*

⁹ As defined by the California Water Code Section 79505.5a: “Disadvantaged community is a community with an annual median household income that is less than 80% of the statewide annual median household income.”

- By 2023, contribute to recommendations for CNRA's Equity and EJ framework with a focus on the intersection of coastal and ocean issues.
- By 2024, with coastal agency partners, develop an implementation blueprint for recommended processes.

Building an Inclusive Workplace and Workforce for California’s Coast and Ocean

Goal 2: Create a more inclusive workplace through creative and equitable employee recruitment and retention, building staff fluency on equity and environmental justice, and increasing internal staff capacity.

California is one of the most racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse places in the nation.¹⁰ However, the field of ocean policy and science does not currently represent the racial or ethnic composition of the state and the many vibrant communities that rely on California’s coastal and ocean resources, environment, and economy.¹¹ Increasing diversity at OPC, and more broadly across the fields of ocean policy and science to reflect the diversity of California, requires state agencies like OPC to strengthen career pathways that support students and community partners not often reflected in these educational and professional tracks.

Opportunities to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) within OPC are critical and achievable. In 2021, OPC staff completed a ten-week, 30-hour training program that connected cultural proficiency principles to the values and vision of OPC, and explored intersections, barriers, and bridges to the agency’s work. The program, led by Dr. Kikanza Nuri-Robins, was developed specifically for OPC to address internal and external equity efforts across projects and programs. OPC also launched its first-ever paid summer internship program in 2021, to advance early career opportunities by providing undergraduate college students the opportunity to work on coastal and ocean science, policy and management efforts in California. The program received wide interest, with more than 140 applications

¹⁰ McPhillips, Deidre. 2020. [“Measuring Racial and Ethnic Diversity in America’s Cities.”](#) U.S. News.

¹¹ Johri, Shaili, et al. 2021. [Pathways to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Marine Science and Conservation.](#) Policy and Practice Reviews.

submitted for the five positions available.¹² OPC seeks to improve workforce diversity in coastal and ocean policy work by coordinating with state agencies and developing relationships with learning institutions to advance a more inclusive recruitment program that addresses barriers to eligibility and accessibility.

OPC recognizes that as it aims to build a more diverse and inclusive workplace, it must parallel this effort with internal policies and practices that consistently advance equity and environmental justice, foster a diverse workplace culture, and value employees for their unique contributions and expertise. Internally, this will require applying an equity lens to every phase of workforce development to examine practices and policies that may reflect implicit bias and institutional racism—policies that regardless of intent, may result in outcomes that favor one population or background over another-- and adopting practices that are more equitable.¹³ This approach is most successful when led by agency leadership and interagency partners, and informed by the public. OPC and CNRA leadership are committed to increasing awareness of equity and environmental justice within the workplace, supporting the Agency’s equity efforts, and improving staff capacity for inclusive action.

¹² Ocean Protection Council. 2021. [*State of California Coast and Ocean Annual Report 2021*](#).

¹³ CalEPA. 2020. [*Practices to Advance Racial Equity in Workforce Training*](#). CalEPA.

Goal 2: Create a more inclusive workplace through creative and equitable employee recruitment and retention, building staff fluency on equity and environmental justice, and increasing internal staff capacity.



Objectives:

2.1. Become a leading organization in the effort to create a more diverse ocean and coastal science and policy workforce throughout the state.



Strategies:

2.1.1. Work with CNRA and other relevant state agencies to create a plan to recruit and retain a diverse workforce by expanding eligibility and accessibility and reducing institutional barriers for applicants.

- Identify opportunities to adjust OPC job requirements to expand accepted education qualifications and experience, to consider more diverse skill sets as valid qualifications.
- Identify potential job classifications that allow for more accessibility to a wider pool of candidates.
- Participate in CNRA’s Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Working Group.
- Partner with CNRA agencies on recruitment strategies that include, but are not limited to:
 - Coordinating with CNRA departments to share recruitment resources including recruitment staff.
 - Evaluating and implementing HR strategies to expand diverse, equitable, and inclusive practices.
 - Leveraging the CNRA Career Center, which provides career counseling, workstations, and assistance for the application, minimum qualifications, statement of qualifications, and exam processes.

- When possible, identifying potential recruitment staff that are well-versed in diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies.

2.1.2. Implement equitable procurement methods to engage more diverse and smaller contractors.

- Target outreach to California State certified Small Businesses (SB) and Disadvantaged Veteran Business Enterprises (DVBE).
- Embed a commitment to equity and environmental justice as part of all contracts and ensure accountability.

2.2. Strengthen career pathways to OPC through new partnerships and increased organizational visibility.

Strategies:

2.2.1. Develop career exploration events and programming for students of community colleges, UCs (University of California), California State Universities (CSUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), tribal colleges, and Minority-Serving Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Professional Organizations to engage with OPC, including stipends or other support to ensure equitable access.

- Create a pilot outreach program and communications strategy to engage college juniors and seniors.
- Ensure that outreach is geographically diverse and includes non-coastal communities.
- Target three universities serving priority environmental justice communities - across Southern, Central, and Northern California.
- Each OPC staff member to participate in or host at least two (2) ocean science and policy career or education panels annually.

2.2.2. Continue to expand the 10-week paid OPC internship program to help prepare undergraduate college students from diverse backgrounds for careers in coastal management and environmental sciences.

- Continue to expand OPC’s recruitment reach to schools serving or within marginalized or less-considered communities, including tribes and communities experiencing financial, transportation, and geographic barriers.
- Continue to formalize a mentor-mentee relationship for each intern.
- Continue to provide pre-determined project options for optimal productivity and work quality for interns’ future endeavors.
- Advise and encourage other state agencies to carry out similar internship programs.
- Identify funding pathways to support OPC internship program stipends for required in-person meetings and/or travel.

2.2.3. Develop a 10-year strategy to build relationships with all community colleges, CSUs, UCs, HSIs, HBCUs, tribal colleges, and Minority-Serving STEM Professional Organizations with environmental and marine science programs. By 2025, engage at least two community colleges, two CSUs, one Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) UC, and one HBCU.

2.3. Continue to assess organizational structure and staffing to: 1) identify staffing needs; 2) clarify roles and responsibilities; 3) create a plan to build capacity and support staff; and 4) embed equity and create an inclusive workplace.

Strategies:

2.3.1. Build in formalized equitable practices for new hires to reduce barriers to entry, foster a culture of inclusion, and increase retention.

- Consistently review standard onboarding process for relevant updates and add standard racial justice and environmental justice resources by 2023.
- Implement flexible location remote work policies.

- Create a mentorship program for new hires, connecting them with a more senior staff person who is not their direct supervisor in order to transfer institutional knowledge and provide support during hiring transitions.

2.3.2. Investigate methods that promote retention of staff and improve those mechanisms, including work environment and culture.

- Create an anonymous yearly staff survey to gauge attitudes towards organizational culture, capacity needs, onboarding structure, and dedication to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.
- Assess and recommend improvements in OPC’s HR and administration that can build capacity to support an inclusive workplace for diverse staff. This could be based on staff input from the survey described above.
- Explore and implement strategies to improve communication and transparency around organizational opportunities for growth, anticipated changes, and constraints.

2.3.3. By 2024, assess and evaluate institutional barriers for upward mobility at OPC. By 2025, explore and implement opportunities to provide promotional growth opportunities across departments within CNRA.

2.4. Increase opportunities for staff to continue to build their understanding of environmental and racial justice as it relates to California’s coast and ocean.

 **Strategies:**

2.4.1. Identify external professional development opportunities or training related to environmental and racial justice learning opportunities and provide staff stipends.

2.4.2. By 2025, OPC will develop an implementation plan to standardize equity training for all staff. Implementation actions should include at minimum:

- Implement an equity onboarding training.

- Curate required readings and resources for new staff members, including materials on California Native American tribes.
- Require participation in a cohort-based racial equity training.
- Invest in continued professional development around equity and environmental justice literacy.
- Require implicit bias training.
- Require cultural humility training related to California Native American tribes.
- Include racial equity work/training in job duties.

Designing Equitable Coastal and Ocean Policy Making

Goal 3: Lead equitable ocean and coastal policymaking in California.

Many California communities face historical exclusion from policy decisions that directly impact their health and quality of life, often as a result of governmental process design, inaction, or intentional exclusion. These barriers and ongoing inequities vary according to the racial, economic, and distinct geographic circumstances of individual communities in California, with tribal and environmental justice communities experiencing disproportionate impacts.¹⁴ To address ongoing institutional barriers, OPC will take action to meaningfully engage underrepresented communities in policy-making spaces.

As outlined in the California Ocean Protection Act, OPC provides cross-jurisdictional coordination, science-based resources, and strategic investments to state agencies and external partners involved in the protection of California's coastal and ocean resources. OPC is therefore committed to developing internal and external partnerships to inform and strengthen policy processes across California's state departments. The agency is further committed to developing and supporting policies that prioritize environmental justice communities by improving access and participation for residents and representatives to the state's decision-making processes.

Key to OPC's approach is empowering community members and other stakeholders to provide comments and meaningful input on policies and research by providing access to policy-making resources and establishing protocols to integrate feedback actively and responsively. As part of this goal area, OPC outlines the various ways it currently engages to further advance ocean and coastal policy, including new approaches to increase public participation and collaboration.

¹⁴ California Coastal Commission. 2019. [Environmental Justice Policy](#).

Goal 3: Lead equitable ocean and coastal policymaking in California.



Objectives:

- 3.1.** OPC will adopt an environmental justice policy for California’s ocean and coasts by 2023.



Strategies:

3.1.1. In partnership with environmental justice communities, tribal communities, and other stakeholders, develop OPC’s environmental justice policy for California’s coast and ocean that:

- Involves a collaborative process with environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes designed to optimize intentionality, accountability, and is consistent with and references existing environmental justice policy frameworks, such as Coastal Commission’s Environmental Justice Policy, Coastal Conservancy’s JEDI Guidelines, CalEPA’s Environmental Justice Program, State Lands Commission’s Environmental Justice Policy, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission’s Environmental Justice and - Policies, and CNRA’s Environmental Justice Policy;
- Identifies objectives that reduce the unique or compounded human health and safety risks in environmental justice communities by reducing exposure to pollution and climate stressors, and expanding equitable access to healthy coastal and natural resources;
- Identifies objectives that address regional data gaps and priorities for environmental justice communities and tribal communities;
- Explores opportunities to streamline policy-recommendations and programs between coastal interagency partners (see related Strategy 1.1.2);
- Integrates relevant data, such as [CalEnviroScreen](#), collected by CalEPA and CNRA partner agencies to guide policies and programs to promote environmental justice policy efforts.

- OPC's Equity Program Manager develops and presents at least one informational session per region to community partners on impacts, development, and implementation of OPC's environmental justice policy.
- 3.1.2.** Report implementation progress of OPC's environmental justice policy for California's coast and ocean on a quarterly basis. *(See related Strategy 3.1.3 and 3.3.1 for application.)*
 - 3.1.3.** Require OPC staff to include findings in staff recommendations that provide an explanation of environmental justice implications and/or considerations for each OPC policy, program, action, or funding proposal, where applicable.
- 3.2.** Support transformative growth and equity awareness of the Council through training opportunities and by seeking members that reflect the communities and diversity of California, for ex-officio legislative and public seats.

Strategies:

- 3.2.1.** Identify and implement strategies to improve the regional and professional diversity of OPC Councilmembers to be inclusive of members with lived or work experience in communities disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices and social inequities.
 - 3.2.2.** Require annual equity training for OPC Councilmembers, including but not limited to, cultural humility training, training on historic and current injustices experienced by California Native American tribes and environmental justice communities, and training on historical exclusionary zoning and residential practices in California.
- 3.3.** Continue to increase public participation in ocean and coastal policy making.

»» Strategies:

- 3.3.1.** Create a standing agenda item at every quarterly OPC Council meeting to provide progress updates on: Equity Plan implementation, or other relevant equity and environmental justice issues.
- 3.3.2.** Create pathways for direct engagement with public members representing environmental justice and tribal communities that can provide recommendations to help OPC best implement the OPC Equity Plan. Seek authorization for compensation and funding to public members and community partners involved in helping OPC accomplish the goals and objectives of this Plan.
- 3.3.3.** Reduce barriers to public participation by increasing meeting accessibility for quarterly OPC council meetings. *(See related Strategy 1.2.3.)*
 - Continue providing an option for virtual public participation at Council meetings in a manner consistent with state law, as in-person meetings resume.
 - As in-person meetings resume, make Council meetings more geographically accessible across the state by adopting an annual meeting calendar that includes at least (1) Council meeting per year in more inland areas accessible by public transit to allow for greater participation. Explore ways to increase meeting accessibility through technology and adjusting meeting times.
 - As in-person meetings resume, seek assistance to ensure adequate technological access for public Councilmembers to participate in quarterly Ocean Protection Council meetings, in a manner consistent with state law.
 - Develop criteria to guide and disseminate informational materials in culturally-inclusive and accessible languages, such as languages spoken by those communities where funding is being prioritized or awarded.

- Provide guidance that easily explains the public participation process for OPC Council meetings, including Council protocols, procedures, and public comments.

3.4. Establish partnerships with environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes to identify regional priorities and implement actions that address the impacts of climate change across California coastal watersheds, including sea level rise, coastal flooding, increased coastal temperatures, and the ocean-based economy.

(Objective adapted from OPC Strategic Plan, Goal 2, Action 2.2, Target 2.2.2.)

»» Strategy:

3.4.1. Develop a statewide community needs assessment for relevant science and research programs at OPC to identify priority needs and actions for California’s coast and ocean.

3.5. Expand coastal access to ensure equity in both physical access and quality of experience for all communities across California.

»» Strategy:

3.5.1. Coordinate with the CNRA Deputy Secretary for Access to align coastal access within the “Outdoors for All” initiative.

- Leverage and support ongoing efforts of state agency partners, such as Coastal Commission, Coastal Conservancy, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and State Parks, to improve coastal access.
- Continue to prioritize equitable public access to and along the ocean, coast, and shoreline, through OPC’s projects, policies, and programs, as well as ongoing research to identify opportunities for increased access.

3.6. Advance “Healthy Ocean” policy and science.

»» Strategies:

- 3.6.1.** Through partnerships with environmental justice communities, California Native American tribes, and other state agencies, develop a shared state definition of “healthy oceans” grounded in human health and well-being, ecosystem-based science, and the intrinsic value of ecosystems and species by 2023. This will be used as part of the State of the Coast and Oceans Report Card, to be completed in 2025 (*see OPC Strategic Plan Target 2.5.1*).
- 3.6.2.** Coordinate with CNRA and its respective agencies and departments to implement [California’s “30x30” Initiative](#), to advance equity and opportunity¹⁵ for all regions of California in the context of conserving ocean biodiversity and supporting human health.

¹⁵ Refer to CNRA’s [“Using Nature-Based Solutions to Advance Equity Advisory Panel Summary Document”](#) for recommendations on how to advance equity and opportunity under California’s 30x30 and Climate Smart Lands.

Integrating Equity in Coastal and Ocean Science and Research

Goal 4: Lead the state in a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to coastal and ocean science through intentional investments in research and monitoring that value and integrate broader knowledge sources.

The nation's current scientific workforce does not adequately represent the demographic diversity of the general population, and subsequently, does not adequately reflect the diversity of knowledge.¹⁶ This results in a broad, systemic exclusion of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), lived experiences, and additional forms of cultural knowledge in the scientific field, workforce, and in agency decisions informed by science and research. OPC acknowledges a need to expand sources of science and scholarship to adequately address the scientific needs and goals of California Native American tribes and communities, coastal communities experiencing environmental injustices, and communities that are underrepresented in the field of ocean and coastal science. As laid out in the following objectives and strategies in Goal 4, OPC commits to supporting science that enhances the experiences, needs, and understanding of California communities.

OPC advances scientific monitoring, research and analysis to ensure that management, policy and funding decisions are informed by the best available science, including tribal expertise and TEK. OPC's ability to lead on science and science-informed policies is based on partnerships with the academic and research communities, within California and beyond, which includes California's two Sea Grant Programs and OPC's Science Advisory Team (OPC SAT). The OPC SAT, which is administered by OPC's non-profit partner California Ocean Science Trust (OST), is a working group of more than 20 interdisciplinary scientific experts, that provides foundational

¹⁶ Kozlowski, et al. 2022. "[Intersectional inequalities in science.](#)" Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

scientific guidance to advance OPC’s strategic priorities. This body informs OPC’s policy and management decisions, and in 2021, produced reports to address issues related to MPAs, ocean acidification, and microplastics.¹⁷

In recent years, significant progress has also been made toward more meaningful tribal engagement in research efforts, such as MPA management. For example, California’s MPA Statewide Leadership Team now includes four regional Tribal representatives to ensure that Tribes are directly involved in the development of MPA policy. Additionally, OPC’s Tribal Marine Stewards Network, established by four partner tribes (Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation, Resighini Rancheria, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians, and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band) and supported by two nongovernmental organizations (California Indian Environmental Alliance and Ecotrust), focuses on MPA monitoring rooted in shared priorities among tribes and the State.¹⁸ OPC seeks to improve tribal consultation, engagement, and partnership statewide with the forthcoming Tribal Engagement Strategy, anticipated to be brought before the Council for adoption before the end of 2022

¹⁷ Ocean Protection Council. 2021. [*State of California Coast and Ocean Annual Report 2021*](#).

¹⁸ Ocean Protection Council. 2020. Staff Recommendation: [*Tribal Marine Stewards Network Pilot Program*](#).

Goal 4: Lead the state in a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to coastal and ocean science through intentional investments in research and monitoring that value and integrate broader knowledge sources.



Objectives:

- 4.1.** Consult with California Native American tribes to implement pathways for the consideration of tribal expertise (including tribal-led research and monitoring) and Traditional Ecological Knowledges in coastal and ocean management decisions, and co-develop research, monitoring, and restoration projects with tribes. *(Objective adapted from OPC Strategic Plan, Goal 2, Action 2.1, Target 2.2.1.)*



Strategy:

- 4.1.1.** Consistent with OPC’s Tribal Engagement Strategy, co-develop and fund research, monitoring, and restoration projects with California Native American tribes.
 - When possible, develop such projects in partnership with tribes rather than seeking to include tribes in projects that are already planned or under way.
 - When this is not possible, work with tribes and the research community to identify tribal researchers, including graduate students, interested in partnering with OPC and the academic community on specific projects or initiatives.
 - As part of CNRA’s “Cutting the Green Tape” initiative, identify ways to improve efficiencies and minimize regulatory burden for tribal-led restoration projects.
- 4.2.** Collaborate with California Native American tribes, environmental justice communities, and community partners such as: community-based organizations, colleges and universities, research organizations, including community science groups, and local stakeholders, to include Traditional Ecological Knowledges, tribal expertise, local

knowledge, social science, historical context, and lived experiences into ocean and coastal science, and research.

Strategies:

- 4.2.1.** Coordinate regional consultations with environmental justice and tribal community partners statewide to collect and integrate existing community science and research into OPC projects and programs, as appropriate.
- 4.2.2.** When possible, include tribal governments and community partners in scoping science and research projects and related funding opportunities to inform research questions. *(See related Strategy 1.4.2 and 4.2.3 for application.)*
- 4.2.3.** At the early stages of research scoping, develop questions to assess whether inter- and transdisciplinary approaches should be considered or integrated into study. Where applicable, research questions should be designed to:
 - Assess potential environmental justice and equity impacts from research to human populations or affected communities.
 - Assess human dimensions by analyzing different ways humans use, experience, value or depend on ocean and coastal resources.
- 4.2.4.** Augment research budgets to allow potential engagement opportunities from interdisciplinary science backgrounds/disciplines and local/regional community groups, as appropriate. *(See related Strategy 1.4.2.)*
- 4.3.** Embed representation, consultation, and engagement of environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes in OPC's science and research.

Strategies:

- 4.3.1.** By 2024, work with Ocean Science Trust to conduct an assessment to support the advancement of diverse representation within the Science Advisory Team. This assessment should include at minimum:

- Demographic composition of the SAT
- Diverse composition of expertise across Strategic Plan goals (coastal/marine science, environmental justice, urban planning, engineering, water scientists, MPA scientists, etc.)
- Identifies barriers towards a more diverse advisory team

4.3.2. By 2024, strengthen the OPC Science Advisory Team (SAT) by expanding scientific expertise across a range of disciplines, knowledge types, tribal expertise, Traditional Ecological Knowledges, and institutions or organizations, including experience working with environmental justice communities and/or California Native American tribes.

4.3.3. Improve accessibility to coastal and ocean research and data by partnering with state agency, community, and tribal governments and communities to develop a public platform that includes data and reports produced and/or reviewed by OPC and state agency partners.

4.3.4. Organize two (2) community workshops per coastal region with environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes and communities to co-develop region-specific metrics and indicators for community health and resilience by 2023.

Appendix A: OPC's Core Functions

(Appendix 3 of OPC's [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#))

As directed by the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA), OPC protects 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 advance policy, and coordinating relevant agency activities across jurisdictional, programmatic, and regional boundaries. OPC uses each of the following diverse categories of tools to identify and implement solutions that improve ocean governance, increase stewardship, and advance scientific understanding necessary to protect and conserve coastal and marine resources and the communities that rely on them.

Ecosystem-Based Governance

California currently faces environmental stressors in a highly siloed manner, often undertaking management approaches for one type of ecosystem, habitat, or geographic area without considering their interconnected nature. For example, our forests are part of watersheds that drain into streams and rivers, which then flow into our estuaries, bays, and coastal waters.

Through COPA, the state charged OPC with providing a unifying lens to preserve, protect, and manage California's unparalleled wildlands and natural resources, from land to sea. OPC accordingly provides guiding principles for ecosystem-based ocean and coastal management, in recognition of the fundamental interconnectedness of humans and natural systems. OPC advances these system-based governance responsibilities through leadership, integration, and coordination of relevant state laws, policies, and institutions.

Sample Actions:

- Convene quarterly meetings of state agency heads with jurisdiction over ocean and coast to ensure coordination and prompt action on pressing issues.

- Ensure ecosystem and biodiversity conservation approaches provide multi-use benefits where feasible, including climate resilience, ecosystem health, carbon sequestration, and public health benefits. Optimize the economic benefits of various biodiversity conservation approaches, with a particular focus on green jobs and the blue economy.

Science

Science is critical to informed decision-making and is a foundational component of California's initiatives to protect and enhance the health of the coast and ocean. California houses many of the leading environmental researchers and institutions on the planet, with tools including remote sensing, conservation genomics, climate and ecological modeling, and others that, when utilized optimally, help California make more effective policy and management decisions.

Consistent with its charge under COPA, OPC ensures that the best available science is applied to adaptive conservation and management of the state's natural systems.

OPC works to integrate science into California's policy and management decisions by:

1. Funding applied scientific research and monitoring that increases our understanding of ecological, economic and social vulnerability to potential impacts and the efficacy of various conservation and management approaches;
2. Convening scientific experts to synthesize information and develop findings that can root policy development in cutting-edge science;
3. Coordinating with agency, academic, and other partners to identify and address critical data gaps; and
4. Ensuring that conservation and habitat restoration projects use the latest science and restoration techniques, especially with regard to climate resiliency.

Two important partners support OPC in these efforts. First, the OPC Science Advisory Team (OPCSAT), a statutorily created, interdisciplinary team of distinguished scientists, supports OPC's science-based actions and decisions. The OPC-SAT identifies emerging environmental

and scientific challenges related to the ocean and coast; evaluates the scientific underpinnings and technical merit of state actions and decisions; provides advice and translates scientific knowledge related to state priorities; and acts as a broader conduit to the scientific community.

Second, the California Ocean Science Trust (OST), a statutorily created, independent non-profit, serves as OPC's Science Advisor and administers the OPCSAT on behalf of OPC. OST's collaborative team helps lead projects and initiatives that draw together diverse perspectives to synthesize, interpret, and share science towards sound policy, funding, and management efforts.

In addition to prioritizing increased understanding of coastal and ocean ecosystems, OPC recognizes the importance of ensuring data from state-funded research projects are available and readily accessible for use by scientists, decisionmakers, stakeholders, and the public.

Sample Action:

- Complete scientific analysis of existing monitoring data to determine the ability of California's marine protected areas to provide ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change. Identify data gaps and fund additional research; recommend management actions to enhance the role of MPAs in improving ocean health and building resilience to climate-driven impacts.

Partnerships

In drafting COPA, the California Legislature identified a need for the state to coordinate governance and stewardship of the state's coastal and ocean systems, particularly given the corresponding— and oftentimes overlapping – mandates and jurisdictions of relevant state regulatory, planning, and conservation agencies. OPC plays a leading role in coordinating the policy direction and efforts of these state agencies to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Among other actions, OPC works to establish and maintain strong relationships with agency leadership and staff, convene needed interagency working groups, collaboratively identify and

address data gaps, share fiscal and human resources, and help establish a strategic and ecosystem-based vision for protecting California's coast and ocean.

In addition, OPC leverages state efforts with those of local, federal, and tribal governments; tribal communities; academic and research institutions; non-profits; community groups; fishermen; and other stakeholders. Through working groups, advisory bodies, and collaborative projects, OPC integrates state activities with the broader management, stewardship, and research efforts of partners outside state government who have professional, personal, and cultural expertise and are equally invested in protecting coastal and ocean health in California.

Sample Action:

- Coordinate and align state agencies, in collaboration with local governments, to provide universal and equitable access to the coast, including consideration of ease and convenience of traveling to and within natural areas, and the quality, health benefits, and educational value of the experience.

Policy

OPC works closely with the Governor's office, the Legislature, and agency partners to craft and implement science-based policies, identify gaps in policy and law, and inform legislation at both the state and federal levels. Consistent with the state's leadership in integrated ocean governance, OPC seeks to align decision-making to protect ocean health by: developing guidance documents and actions plans, mobilizing and coordinating state policy action against threats facing our coast, collaborating with partner agencies to ensure policy decisions are consistent and grounded in the precautionary principle, and identifying and recommending needed changes in state policy and law to the Legislature and the Governor.

OPC is also actively engaged in driving policy at the international level, not only by taking action that provides a model for global efforts, but by establishing goals and guidance to accelerate ocean conservation and adaptation action around the world. One example is the Ocean-Climate Action Agenda,¹⁵ developed collaboratively by OPC and non-profit partners to

increase ocean-related climate policy ambitions at California's 2018 Global Climate Action Summit.

Sample Action:

- Research law and policy approaches in other states and countries related to climate resilience approaches to land, water, and ocean policy and management decision making, and make recommendations for changes in state and federal law and policy as appropriate.

Funding

OPC collaboratively manages various funding sources towards efficient support of strategic investments in scientific research and monitoring, collaborative policy development, and restoration and other projects that will improve conditions for ocean and coastal ecosystems and California communities. Funding sources include bond funds, General Fund monies, special funds, and Once-Through Cooling Interim Mitigation Funds.

Sample Action:

- In collaboration with local governments, support pilot projects along the coast that demonstrate the efficacy of various climate adaptation strategies, including nature-based solutions as a preferred approach to building coastal resilience to climate change impacts.

Communication

Regularly updated, relevant data and data products build public and decisionmaker stewardship over our shared coast and ocean. OPC strives to be a leader in open, clear, responsive, communication with partners and stakeholders, and prioritizes inclusive public engagement in all initiatives.

Sample Actions:

- Create a California State of the Coast and Ocean Report Card that will provide regular information and accountability to the public.
- Research and implement communications approaches and tools that help reach a wider audience and constituency, such as outreach in languages spoken by communities where research, projects, or programmatic work are taking place.

Appendix B: The OPC Equity Plan Environmental Justice Advisory Group

The goals, objectives, and strategies proposed in the Plan are a product of a collaborative design process that engaged OPC staff, OPC leadership, and [OPC's Environmental Justice Advisory Group](#), a 13-member group of stakeholder representatives from seven regions across the state.

Members of the Environmental Justice Advisory Group are listed below.

Statewide

Karla Garibay García, Azul

Karla Garibay Garcia is a Project Manager at Azul, who is passionate about working with BIPOC communities at the intersection of environmental and social justice policy. This Spring, Karla will graduate with a Master's in Environmental Science and Management with a specialization in Coastal Marine Resources Management from the Bren School at UCSB. Prior to joining Azul, Karla consulted for and lobbied on behalf of conservation, equitable access, and environmental justice nonprofits in Sacramento. Karla has experience in environmental justice, marine conservation, international climate policy, air quality, tropical deforestation, and strategic environmental communication.

Marce Gutiérrez-Graudiņš, Azul

Marce Gutiérrez-Graudiņš is the Founder and Executive Director of Azul, a San Francisco-based grassroots organization that works with Latinxs throughout the Americas to protect the ocean and coasts. Azul interweaves deep cultural fluency and grassroots organizing to secure policy outcomes that helped shape California coastal conservation policy with people at the core and continue to move justice-driven policy nationally – it launched in 2011 as the first U.S. organization devoted to elevating Latinx voices in marine conservation. Marce is also one of five women founders of the Ocean Justice Forum, launched in 2021.

An environmental justice advocate at the forefront of ocean and climate justice policy initiatives, Marce began her career in commercial fishing and aquaculture which ignited a spark in her to halt overfishing farming and fight business as usual in the depletion of fish and marine life. She works alongside community and coalition partners, as well as international ocean-climate activists, to ensure the health and safety of the ocean that sustains us and of the people in proximity to environmental injustices in their coastal and inland communities.

She serves as a member of the California Coastal Conservancy's governing board, is an expert advisory group member for the United Nations Environment Program on Marine Litter and Microplastics and is a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's California Expert Assessment Group for the Green List. She is also on the advisory board of the Ocean Foundation and an advisory group co-chair for Heartwired to Love the Ocean, a project of Goodwin Simons Strategic Research and Wonder: Strategies for Good.

Marce is also an award-winning advocate for her longstanding commitment to marine conservation and community protection work, she has also delivered expert congressional testimony as a witness to the House Natural Resources Committee's Legislative Hearing on the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act of 2021. The Azul team, with Marce at the helm, was instrumental in the California bans on the sale of shark fins and single-use plastic bags. Her thought leadership is visible from local to global-level panels and summits to the opinion and editorial pages of publications including the Washington Post to the UN and Azul's report, *Neglected: Environmental Justice Impacts of Plastic Pollution*.

A native of Tijuana, Mexico, Marce now makes Southern California home with her family.

José G. González, Latino Outdoors

José González is an experienced and passionate speaker, artist, nature-lover, science communicator and educator who founded Latino Outdoors. Through his work and organization, he aims to build a cross-community network of nature inclusivity groups to connect people of all races, genders, orientations, socio-economic statuses and religions. In addition to Latino Outdoors, he worked in Latino outreach and education for the Tuolumne

River Trust and wrote as the main contributor for the environment desk of Latino News Daily. José holds a master's degree in natural resources and environment from University of Michigan, and a bachelor's degree from University of California – Davis. He is a recipient of the National Wildlife Foundation's National Conservation Education Award, the Kenji Award and the Murie Center's Rising Leader Award. His work has been featured by Outside Magazine, The Hill, Sacramento Bee and NBC News.

North Coast

Rhiannon Lewis-Stephenson, Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)

Rhiannon Lewis-Stephenson is a communications and outreach coordinator for the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) in Arcata, CA. In this role, she works collaboratively with community members, agencies, and other organizations to protect important habitats and their inhabitants on the North Coast. Rhiannon firmly believes that everyone should be able to have access to nature and is focused on creating a sustainable and equitable future that values diverse human and ecological communities.

San Francisco Bay and Delta

Michelle Pierce, Bayview Hunters Point Community Advocates

Michelle Pierce, Executive Director, has 20 years of experience working in sustainability and social justice. She has professional experience and training in commercial toxics reduction and business sustainability, including managing several projects with the San Francisco Department of the Environment. She is particularly adept at cultural competency and policy design, both of which were nurtured and polished while completing the Global Partners MBA Program. She has an extensive history in environmental justice and activism in Bayview-Hunters Point, and currently serves on task forces and advisory committees for the City's Board of Supervisors and the SF Public Utilities Commission.

Paige Tengeluk, Public Health Advocates

Paige Tengeluk (she/her) was born and raised in Saipan and identifies as Pacific Islander: Palauan. Paige is passionate about decolonizing our lands, cultures, and lifestyles because she is tired of watching Indigenous people and lands being destroyed by capitalism. She has witnessed the effects of climate and environmental racism firsthand—from seeing the effects of warming waters on Saipan’s traditional food supply; to watching as one of the strongest El Nino events in history that hit Palau in 2016; to learning how her current home in Modesto has been exploited and harmed by the oil and agro-business industries.

A graduate of Modesto Jr. College and San Francisco State University, Paige is active in many environmental justice organizations including: San Joaquin Valley Environmental Justice Steering Committee, Rise Stockton Coalition, CA Pan-Ethnic Health Network’s (CPEHN) Having Our Say Coalition, the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition, and she was selected as a fellow for the 2021 California Ocean & Climate Justice Fellowship.

Monterey Bay/ Central Coast

ileana Ortega Brunetti, Santa Cruz Community Ventures

ileana Ortega Brunetti has worked with rural Latino communities in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties for over 15 years. She has extensive cross-sector experience including marine conservation, education, and economic inclusivity. She is a life-long resident of the North Central Coast and represents the Monterey Bay area.

Santa Barbara/ Central Coast

Teresa Romero, Coastal Band of Chumash

Teresa Romero is an enrolled member of the Coastal Band of Chumash, serves as the Environmental Director for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, is a member Syuxtun Plant Collective, a traditional plant collective focusing on tending, gathering and preparation of traditional plants. Teresa has served on the MPA Statewide Leadership Team as a Tribal Representative since 2019. Teresa has worked for over 20 years assisting Tribal Communities

on projects, such as acquiring lands for the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians, protecting Treaty Rights (Little River Band of Ottawa Indians) and preserving traditional cultural knowledge for her Chumash community. Teresa has deep ties to her traditional homelands and the ocean.

Los Angeles/ South Coast

Carlos Morán, Council for Watershed Health

With advanced degrees in social work, Carlos Moran's experience includes designing and implementing high impact strategies that intersect mental health, public health and environmental justice. He regularly engages diverse range of communities to advance placed based solutions that drive large scale, multi-benefit investments in Los Angeles' most economically, environmentally and health stressed communities. Carlos also serves as adjunct faculty in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. where he teaches graduate courses in policy, research & program evaluation, and human behavior.

Patricia Flores Yrarrázaval, Orange County Environmental Justice

Patricia Jovel (PJ) Flores is an activist, scholar, and writer from Santa Ana, California, who has dedicated her life to organizing for a world that holds Black and Indigenous communities, communities of color, and our interconnected environments with care, respect, and dignity. Since graduating with her B.A. in Ethnic Studies from UC Berkeley in 2015, Patricia has worked in labor organizing, environmental justice, immigration law, mental health care, and education, all while continuing to advocate for the rights of incarcerated people and the defense of indigenous sacred sites, and advancing her career as a writer of fiction and poetry.

As Executive Director of Orange County Environmental Justice, Patricia leads campaigns to address environmental lead contamination, water pollution, and climate change throughout the region, by centering the voices of those most impacted by these issues, and by building bridges between local Indigenous communities and communities of color in defense of the water, land, and air that we all call home.

San Diego/ South Coast

Angela Kemsley, WILDCOAST

Angela Kemsley is the Conservation and Communication Manager of WILDCOAST. Based in San Diego, Angela manages WILDCOAST's Natural Climate Solutions program in California, leading blue carbon ecosystem restoration, carbon sequestration studies, and climate action planning. Angela is a social ecologist with a passion for connecting people with their coastal and marine spaces and getting people involved with the conservation of their natural areas.

Lesford Duncan, Outdoor Outreach

Lesford Duncan, MPH, is the Senior Director of Programs at Outdoor Outreach, an organization that, since 1999, has helped over 18,000 youth explore their world, challenge themselves, and discover what they're capable of, promoting positive youth development and resilience.

Through their Leadership Program, Outdoor Outreach introduces and prepares diverse youth for career pathways in outdoor recreation, conservation, and advocacy. Lesford has a career background in developing programs, partnerships, and policies that enhance the health and resilience of children and families.

Prior to joining Outdoor Outreach, he consulted for youth development nonprofits, and worked in child welfare, cultural competency, and behavioral health at the County of San Bernardino. Lesford received his B.S. in Biology from the University of Florida, and MPH in Health Policy and Leadership from Loma Linda University. He is also a Senior Fellow with the Atlantic Fellows for Health Equity, ultramarathon runner, and avid hiker and outdoorsman.

Sonia Díaz, Outdoor Outreach

Sonia Díaz is the Public Policy Manager for Outdoor Outreach, an organization that, since 1999, has helped over 18,000 youth in San Diego explore their world, challenge themselves, and discover what they're capable of, promoting positive youth development and resilience.

Through their Leadership Program, Outdoor Outreach introduces and prepares diverse youth for career pathways in outdoor recreation, conservation, and advocacy. Sonia received her B.A. in Sociology from the University of Chicago and has spent over a decade in various roles

working for nonprofits in the areas of policy advocacy, fundraising and grant writing, nonprofit development, volunteer recruitment, and project management.

She served as a California Senate Fellow and Legislative Aide to State Senator Sheila J. Kuehl where she staffed and analyzed bills covering environmental issues and health policy. She then went on to become the Legislative Advocate for Heal the Bay advancing legislation to protect our oceans from plastic pollution and assisted with organizing advocacy efforts during the map adoption process for the state's marine protected areas (MPAs). She is an avid hiker, ultramarathoner, and enjoys introducing others to new urban trails in the community.

Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

The following key terms and definitions, including abbreviations and acronyms, provide readers with a shared understanding on how these terms are defined for the purpose of this document. Definitions are derived from state agency sources unless otherwise noted.

Asset-based language: Language that views the diversity that community members bring, including culture, language, disability, socio-economic status, immigration status, and sexuality as characteristics that add value and strength to communities.¹⁹ Asset-based language avoids words and phrases that look at situations or people from a “deficit” lens that prioritize what might be missing and instead focuses on strengths and potentials.²⁰

California Native American tribes: California Native American tribe means a federally recognized California Native American tribe or a non-federally recognized California Native American tribe that is on the contact list maintained by the [Native American Heritage Commission](#).²¹

California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA): The California Natural Resources Agency oversees and supports more than 26 distinct departments, conservancies, and commissions. Over 21,000 Californians work within CNRA all across the state to meet its 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.” OPC is one department within CNRA.

¹⁹ California Department of Education. 2021. [Asset-Based Pedagogies](#). California Department of Education.

²⁰ HERE to HERE. 2020. [The HERE to HERE Language Guide: A Resource for Using Asset-Based Language with Young People](#). HERE to HERE.

²¹ CA Assembly Bill No. 2225 Resource conservation: traditional ecological knowledge: land management plans. 2021-2022.

Climate resilience: Climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate. Climate resilience is often associated with acute events – like heat waves, heavy downpours, hurricanes, or wildfires – that will become more frequent or intense as the climate changes. However, good resilience planning also accounts for chronic events, like rising sea levels, worsening air quality, and population migration.²²

Community engagement: In the context of the OPC Equity Plan, community engagement entails conducting outreach to, collaborating with, and co-creating with communities to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, relationships, and decision-making processes. It also includes the process of working collaboratively with groups of people who are affiliated by geographic proximity, special interests, or similar situations with respect to issues affecting their well-being.²³

Community partner: In the context of the OPC Equity Plan, community partners include tribes, community-based organizations, colleges and universities, and research organizations.

Community science: In the context of the OPC Equity Plan, community science refers to scientific nodes of inquiry (research, monitoring, and analysis) that is inclusive of diverse forms of knowledge, and is driven, led, or implemented by local communities, and characterized by place-based knowledge, social learning, collective action, and empowerment.²⁴

Culture: Culture refers to a system of shared meanings that is expressed through patterns of customs, practices, and thoughts. A person’s Culture can come from any combination of his,

²² Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. 2019. [What is Climate Resilience, and Why Does it Matter?](#) Center for Climate and Energy Solutions.

²³ National Institutes of Health. 2011. [Principles of Community Engagement: Second Edition.](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

²⁴ Definition adapted from: Anthony Charles, et al. 2020. [Community science: A typology and its implications for governance of social-ecological systems.](#) Environmental Science & Policy. Volume 106, Pages 77-86.

her, or their: age; education level; ethnicity; geographic origin; gender; group history; language; life experiences; religious or spiritual beliefs and practices; sexual orientation; and socio-economic class. Culture is dynamic, changes with time, and is learned and transmitted by members of a particular community.²⁵

Cultural humility: The practice of self-reflection on how one’s own background and expectations impact a situation, of openness to others’ determining the relevance of their own identities to any given situation, and of committing to redress the effects of power imbalances.²⁶

Disadvantaged, Marginalized, Underserved: SB 1000 (Leyva) (Ch. 587, Stats. 2016) added *Government Code Section 65302(h)(4)(A)*, expanding the definition of “disadvantaged communities” for the purpose of general plans to mean “an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code or an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.”

This Plan uses the terms “disadvantaged”, “marginalized” and “underserved” interchangeably; it intends to encompass not only the definitions contemplated by SB 1000, but also to include other low-income and minority populations that are disproportionately burdened by or less able to prevent, respond, and recover from adverse environmental impacts.

Diverse, Diversity: The variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance.²⁷

²⁵ CA Senate Bill No. 1000, [Land use: general plans: safety and environmental justice](#). 2015-2016.

²⁶ American Library Association

²⁷ University of California, Office of Diversity and Engagement. [“Policies.”](#) Accessed May 2, 2022.

Environmental justice: The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.²⁸

The United States has a history of racial discrimination that has persisted in multiple forms. During the 20th century, the civil rights movement sought to secure legal rights that were held but not fully realized by African Americans and other marginalized populations. The concept of environmental justice emerged out of this movement to describe the application of civil rights and social justice to environmental contexts. For example, the cumulative effect of siting a disproportionate number of toxic waste and other hazardous facilities in disadvantaged, urban communities of color has led to disproportionate impacts from pollution and lack of environmental services, such as clean drinking water, clean air, and access to parks and open space.

Environmental justice communities: Communities that are environmentally- and economically-stressed that experience environmental health inequities which contribute to persistent environmental health disparities. *(Based on conversations with the OPC Environmental Justice Advisory Group.)*

Equity: This Plan uses the term “equity” as defined in the context of social and racial equity, where “equity” refers to the fairness of achieving outcomes for all groups and no one factor, such as race, can be used to predict outcomes.²⁹ This Plan intends to advance equity by increasing access to power, redistributing and providing additional resources, and eliminating barriers to opportunity for environmental justice communities and California Native American tribes.³⁰

²⁸CA Assembly Bill No. 1826, [Environmental justice](#), 2019-2020.

²⁹ The Local & Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity. 2015. [Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government: A Resource Guide to Put Ideas into Action](#).

³⁰ The Greenlining Institute. 2022.” [Moving Our Country Forward](#).”

Inclusive: Environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued as a fully participating member. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. Inclusion integrates the fact of diversity and embeds it into core institutional mission and functioning.³¹

Ocean Protection Council (OPC): The Ocean Protection Council (OPC) was created pursuant to the [California Ocean Protection Act](#) (COPA), which was signed into law in 2004 by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The mission of the OPC is to ensure that California maintains healthy, resilient, and productive ocean and coastal ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations. The OPC is committed to basing its decisions and actions on the best available science, and to promoting the use of science among all entities involved in the management of ocean resources.

Ocean Protection Council Science Advisory Team (OPC SAT): The Ocean Protection Council Science Advisory Team (OPC SAT) provides scientific analysis and advice to the OPC and works to ensure that OPC policy and funding decisions are informed by the best available science. The OPC SAT was established in 2008 to help meet the goals of the California Ocean Protection Act, and offers a critical venue to bring state leaders and scientists together around pressing ocean and coastal challenges. The OPC SAT takes on a range of topics with emphasis on state priorities to address issues impacting coastal and marine ecosystems in California.³²

Ocean Science Trust (OST): Ocean Science Trust was created by the [California Ocean Resources Stewardship Act \(CORSA\)](#), passed in 2000. Recognizing the value of independent science and the opportunity to better connect the wealth of scientific expertise in academia with policy and management decisions in the state, CORSA mandates the creation of a science trust ‘to seek and provide funding for ocean resource science projects and to encourage

³¹ University of California, Davis: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. 2020. “[Glossary](#).”

³² California Ocean Protection /Council. “[OPC Science Advisory Team \(OPC-SAT\)](#).” Accessed May 2, 2022.

coordinated, multiagency, multi-institution approaches to ocean resource science'. Every day the Ocean Science Trust team is committed to implementing this important legislation. In the context of the OPC Equity Plan, the Ocean Science Trust is addressed in relation to its role as facilitator of the Ocean Protection Council Science Advisory Team (OPC SAT).³³

Marine Protected Area (MPA, MPAs): Marine protected area (MPA) means a named, discrete geographic marine or estuarine area seaward of the high tide line or the mouth of a coastal river, including any area of intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora and fauna that has been designated by law, administrative action, or voter initiative to protect or conserve marine life and habitat. MPA classifications include marine life reserves (the equivalent of the state marine reserve classification), state marine parks, which allow recreational fishing and prohibit commercial extraction, and state marine conservation areas, which allow for specified commercial and recreational activities, including fishing for certain species but not others, fishing with certain practices but not others, and kelp harvesting, provided that these activities are consistent with the objectives of the area and the goals and guidelines of this chapter.

MPAs are primarily intended to protect or conserve marine life and habitat, and are therefore a subset of marine managed areas (MMAs), which are broader groups of named, discrete geographic areas along the coast that protect, conserve, or otherwise manage a variety of resources and uses, including living marine resources, cultural and historical resources, and recreational opportunities. Marine managed area classifications include state water quality protection area, state marine cultural preservation area, and state marine recreational management area.

Racial Justice: The proactive process of reinforcing and establishing a set of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts,

³³ California Ocean Trust. "[Science accelerating progress for a healthy coast and ocean.](#)" Accessed May 2, 2022.

and outcomes for all individuals and groups impacted by racism. The goal, however, is not only the eradication of racism, but also the presence of deliberate social systems and structures that sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.³⁴

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM): STEM education encompasses the processes of critical thinking, analysis, and collaboration in which students integrate the processes and concepts in real world contexts of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, fostering the development of STEM skills and competencies for college, career, and life.

Social Justice: A process, not an outcome, which seeks fair (re)distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; empowers all people to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential; and builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action.³⁵

Tribal expertise, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK): The knowledge held by indigenous cultures about their immediate environment and the cultural practices that build on that knowledge. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) includes an intimate and detailed knowledge of plants, animals, and natural phenomena, the development and use of appropriate technologies for hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture, and forestry, and a holistic knowledge, or “world view” that parallels the scientific discipline of ecology.

TEK can provide a fundamental tool for restoration and conservation management. Before European American contact, Native American tribes managed and stewarded California’s terrestrial and marine resources using traditional ecological knowledge and a wide array of traditional practices and techniques to maintain an environment capable of supporting large,

³⁴ Center for Study of Social Policy. 2019. [Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding.](#)

³⁵ Center for Study of Social Policy. 2019. [Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding.](#)

thriving human, plant, and animal populations. Today, tribes continue to use these practices, which vary from tribe to tribe, but are generally focused on ecosystem interconnectivity, respecting the carrying capacity of the land, and viewing humans as an integral part of the environment.³⁶

³⁶ CA Assembly Bill No. 2225, [Resource conservation: traditional ecological knowledge: land management plans](#), 2021-2022.

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Cover: A family enjoying the beach. By Lawrence Crayton.

Page 8: Members of the Wiyot Tribe at a land return celebration in 2022. By Kellie Brown.

<https://www.opc.ca.gov/2022/08/wiyot-land-return>



www.opc.ca.gov