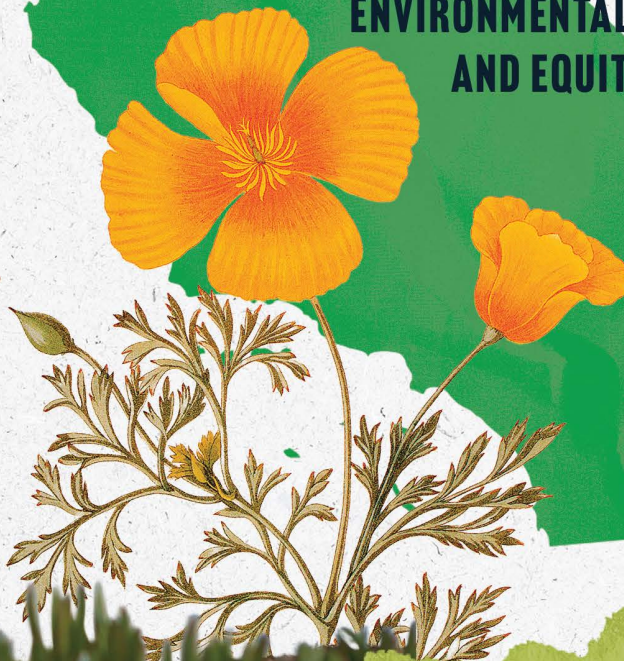




Helping All Californians

THRIVE

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
AND EQUITY POLICY



CALIFORNIA
NATURAL
RESOURCES
AGENCY



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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

California is an incredible place. From our majestic mountains to our stunning coast, from our forested north to our desert south, our state has something for everyone. Almost 40 million people make their home here. We have welcomed people from around the world to California who have helped us generate one of the largest and most dynamic economies on earth and remarkably diverse and dynamic communities.

Our California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) is working to help people and nature thrive together. Over 25,000 employees are committed to this work: protecting communities from wildfire, building our water security, restoring natural places, protecting fish and wildlife, driving a clean energy transition, helping people get outdoors, and so much more.

At the CNRA, we envision a California where all of our communities and residents share in the benefits of our natural and cultural resources and are also resilient to environmental challenges. In all the work we do, we want to ensure that all Californians benefit from what our state can offer and that we protect our most vulnerable residents. I am proud to share here our equity and environmental justice policy, which has been updated to help ensure that we can achieve this vision.

This updated policy is straightforward. It calls for broad public input to inform government decisions, funding processes that enable all communities to access resources, and recruiting from the broadest pool of talent for our agency. It also helps us to achieve these principles across specific policy areas.

We recognize that our agency over its history has made mistakes that we can learn from. We need to be open to honest feedback if we are committed to improving how we serve Californians. Accordingly, I'm thankful to the many groups and leaders who provided input to help us update this policy. It's much stronger because of it.

Onward all together,

Wade



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy is the result of years of partnership with community members, environmental justice organizations, community-based organizations and tribal members who generously shared their time, lived experience, and expertise. From communities fighting for healthier environments and those pushing for fairness in state government, to conversations at CNRA's 2023 Justice Rising Summit, meetings held across the state, and the thoughtful review of this policy, your engagement shaped and strengthened this work at every stage.

We look forward to continuing these conversations with both longstanding and new partners as we strengthen these recommendations and policies in the years ahead, working toward a future where all Californians can thrive in healthy, safe, and resilient communities. We are also deeply grateful to the department-level environmental justice and equity leads who helped translate community input into meaningful state action. Together, this document reflects our shared commitment to advancing environmental justice for all.

- Deputy Secretary for Equity and Environmental Justice Noaki Schwartz, 2026



Document design by Kimberly Milruya and Sydney Anderson. Cover by Kimberly Milruya.
Image cover credits, from top left: Tahoe Conservancy, Paddle for Peace, Ocean Protection Council.



VISION AND PURPOSE

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) envisions a state where everyone has access to parks and open spaces, clean air, clean energy, clean water, thriving wildlife and the healing benefits of nature. This updated policy outlines how CNRA and its member departments, conservancies, boards, and commissions will work toward that future. This policy builds on existing state environmental justice law and affirms CNRA's commitment to complying with [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#).

This policy is intended to apply to and be adopted by CNRA and all our departments, commissions, boards, and conservancies (departments) and serves as a foundation from which departments may develop addendums specific to their authorities. It balances consistency with flexibility, recognizing the unique roles, mandates, and capacities of each entity within CNRA. This policy establishes clear expectations for leadership and staff by defining standards and practical actions to expand public participation in government decision-making, state funding, recruitment outreach, and other core functions. It is also meant to align with and reinforce existing department policies focused on fairness, access, and reducing environmental harms in vulnerable and underserved communities, while providing a shared framework that CNRA entities can use when developing or updating their own internal policies.

These steps are necessary because, despite decades of conservation and natural resource protection, the benefits of these efforts have not been shared equitably across California. Historically, government has played a central role in shaping who could and could not access nature. Over time, these practices became embedded in institutions and decision-making processes, resulting in concentrating environmental harms in communities already overburdened by industrial activity. For example, policies such as redlining¹ further reinforced these inequities by steering Black and other communities of color to underserved neighborhoods with limited access to investment, infrastructure, and healthy environments. The impact of these practices persists today: many communities continue to face disproportionate pollution, extreme heat, and limited access to clean water, electricity, parks, and open spaces.

Because government played a key role in shaping these outcomes, it has both a role and responsibility to address these impacts now and work to improve its policies and practices to better serve all Californians. CNRA and its entities are committed to improving access to nature, reducing environmental harms, and expanding participation in decision-making so that the benefits of conservation and natural resource protection are more equitably shared across California. We are also committed to working towards ensuring decisions don't exacerbate already vulnerable and overburdened communities.

Together, these commitments reflect CNRA's mission to help all Californians and nature thrive together. This policy explains how we will put that promise into action.

¹ Legal Information Institute, "redlining," Cornell Law School, April 2022, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/redlining>.

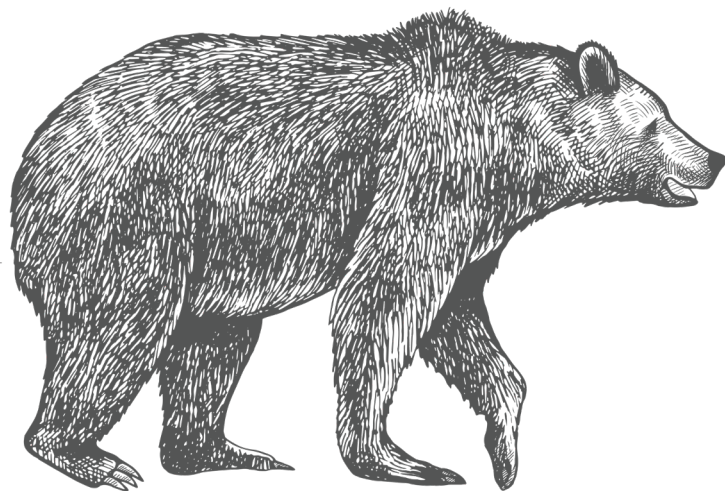
INSTITUTIONALIZING THIS POLICY ACROSS OUR AGENCY

This section outlines the broad actions CNRA entities will take to institutionalize and implement this policy. These actions provide overarching framework for putting the policy into practice. For further guidance on how these principles are or can be applied to CNRA's priority areas -- including climate change action, water, energy, outdoor access, coasts and oceans, and environmental conservation and biodiversity -- please refer to Applying the Policy Across CNRA Priority Areas and the definitions in the Appendices.

CNRA will update this document every Administration term as needed and will work with all of our departments, commissions, boards, and conservancies to ensure they:

- **Adopt and embed the policy across programs and functions.** Ensure this policy informs decision-making across all programs, policies, funding, planning, and public-facing activities.
- **Turn the policy guidance into strategic action.** Identify specific actions entities will take to advance this policy in their departmentwide strategic plans, initiatives or policies.
- **Assign leadership responsibility to ensure implementation.** Designate one or more senior leaders with decision-making authority to oversee environmental justice and equity efforts, to ensure fair access to resources, government processes, and opportunities.
- **Establish community communication channels.** Create multiple ways for members of the public to connect with environmental justice and equity staff, such as a central page for equity and EJ issues, a central email, phone line, office hours or other in-person and virtual options. Consider a quarterly virtual meeting with community groups to meet with leadership.
- **Track and publicly share progress.** Regularly inform the public about improvements in processes, decisions, and actions that advance equitable service to and resources for all Californians through multiple channels such as social media, websites, reports or CNRA's annual documents such as [Thriving Together](#).²

² Thriving Together Equity Year In Review, California Natural Resources Agency, Sept. 2025, https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Equity-and-Environmental-Justice/Equity-and-Environmental-Justice-Policies/Sept2025_EquityYearIn-Review_2024.pdf



ENSURING A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE AGENCY: OVERVIEW OF CORE GOALS

This section identifies the strategic pillars, goals, and specific actions that are important to ensure equitable and inclusive government services and resources. These actions are not exhaustive and CNRA entities are encouraged to adopt additional measures as needed.

I. ENGAGEMENT: ENABLING BROAD INPUT BEFORE DECISION-MAKING

CNRA is committed to creating a welcoming, respectful environment and ensuring communities affected by our work can have a real voice in decisions that affect their environment and daily lives. Early and meaningful engagement with communities helps build trust, improve outcomes, and reduces conflicts later. People are more likely to participate when we remove or resolve barriers such as holding meetings during work hours, limited internet access, confusing government jargon, lack of language translation and interpretation, or repeated requests for feedback even after a community has made their position clear.

Tribal communities often face similar challenges as other marginalized populations. Tribal governments are sovereign nations and CNRA is committed to partnering with California Native American tribes and engaging in formal consultations utilizing [CNRA Tribal Consultation Policy](#),³ individual department's tribal consultation policies, and work closely with department tribal liaison and tribal affairs teams. When working with Indigenous communities not formally represented by a tribe, staff should utilize this policy.

³ "Tribal Consultation Policy, Best Practices, and Resources," California Natural Resources Agency, 2018, <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Tribalaffairs/TribalConsultation>.

In 2024 CNRA hosted the agency's first ever conference bringing together community members, EJ organizations and state leadership that featured listening sessions and panel discussions on the state of natural resource management across California.

Photo by California State Parks





Environmental justice organizations, community members and state officials on a tour in Wilmington and Long Beach in 2025.

GOAL 1: EARLY AND COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC OUTREACH PLANNING

- 1.1 Identify and engage affected communities early.** Use relevant tools, including but not limited to the [Vulnerable Communities Platform](#), CalEnviroScreen and [other data tools](#) at the start of a project, policy, or plan to identify communities that may be impacted, which communities should be engaged and whether language services are needed. Whenever possible, layer multiple tools to identify communities which may be left out such as some tribes. Staff should utilize the [Tribal Consultation Policy](#) when identifying and working with California Native American tribes.⁴
- 1.2 Build trust and partner with trusted community messengers.** Partner with trusted community leaders and local organizations that have expertise in reaching residents to strengthen participation and foster trust between government and communities
- 1.3 Coordinate outreach across agencies.** When multiple departments or agencies are working on the same effort, coordinate outreach as early as possible to cut down on duplicative meetings and input requests so communities receive clear, consistent information. If you do not know whether other departments or agencies are involved, try to find out.
- 1.4 Plan for engagement.** Budget time and resources for public engagement and tribal consultation whenever possible and compensate for this expertise by building this into grant agreements or through other sources such as foundation funding.
- 1.5 Diversify outreach strategies.** Use additional community outreach strategies beyond mailing, such as social media, phone canvassing, email and personal engagement.

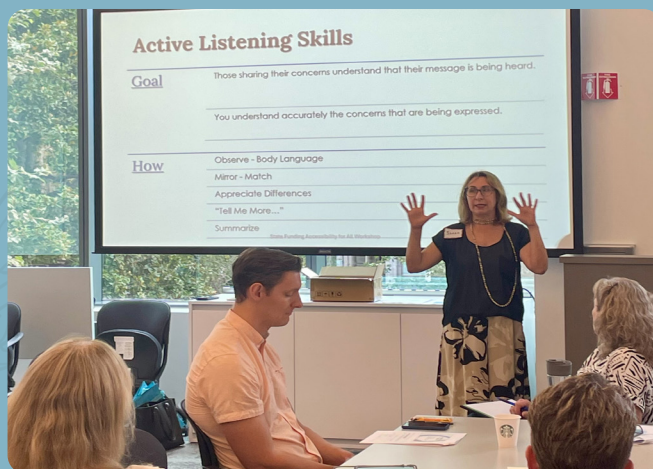
⁴ "Tribal Consultation Policy, Best Practices, and Resources," California Natural Resources Agency, 2018, <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Tribalaffairs/TribalConsultation>.

GOAL 2: WELCOMING AND RESPECTFUL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- 2.1 Give advance notice of meetings.** State entities are required to announce public meetings at least 10 calendar days in advance but aim for more time when possible, so community members can plan and feel prepared. Share meeting information through traditional government channels, social media and community outlets.
- 2.2 Make meetings easier to attend.** Whenever possible hold key meetings in or near the impacted community, at times convenient for working residents, in trusted locations near public transit, with free or low-cost parking, child-friendly activities, and snacks or near places to eat.
- 2.3 Make meetings welcoming.** Look for neutral community spaces whenever possible. Ensure sufficient signage to find the venue, staff who can greet attendees and provide answers to questions (bilingual as needed). Do not engage the services of private security or law enforcement unless they are already required at the venue or a credible threat to public safety has been clearly demonstrated.
- 2.4 Adopt and implement standards to address disruptive, threatening, or discriminatory conduct at public meetings.** State staff and appointed board members will work to ensure all members of the public feel welcome by (1) establishing [baseline codes of conduct](#)⁵ that prioritize respect and courtesy; (2) training presiding officers to distinguish protected speech from disruptive, threatening, or violent behavior; and (3) managing meetings by enforcing time and decorum rules; addressing hateful remarks in a way that maintains First Amendment rights and prevents chilling effects on public participation; ensuring the safety of targeted individuals; consulting legal counsel as needed; and involving security officers or law enforcement if behavior escalates to disruption, threats, or violence, with adjournment as a last resort.

5 Orange County Human Relations Commission, Free Speech vs Hate Speech Practical Guidelines for Managing Public Forums, County of Orange California. Jan. 2014, <https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/free-speech-vs-hate-commission-guidelines-12.12.2013.pdf?1442364939>.

Department of
Conservation Outreach
and Engagement Advisor
Sarah Rubin leading a
training with grant staff
from across CNRA to
improve engagement
skills with applicants.





- 3.1 Offer multiple ways to participate.** Provide both in-person and virtual meeting options whenever possible. Offer multiple opportunities to comment during meetings and allow comments by email, letter, or other formats.
- 3.2 Share information and material in advance.** Provide relevant public documents well before meetings or events so the public has time to review. For topics with significant public interest, consider creating [one-page FAQs](#)⁶ in plain language that can be translated, with links to key resources, details on how to participate and what decisions are within the state's control.
- 3.3 Meet language needs.** Use multiple mapping tools such as the Census' American Community Survey, CalEnviroScreen⁷ to identify key languages spoken in a targeted area and provide ways for community members to request help with [language needs](#)⁸ at meetings such as an email or phone contact. Aim to hire certified interpreters and translators, but if services are not available, allow extra time during public comment when community members bring their own interpreter to a meeting.
- 3.4 Build internal language support capacity.** Enable existing staff to obtain language certification as Bilingual Certified Employees (BCEs), which offers a pay differential, to help meet basic language needs and ensure that professional interpreters and translators provide accurate services. Employees should contact their language coordinator or the EEO Program to start the process.
- 3.5 Ensure American with Disability Act (ADA) compliance.** Draft electronic documents to meet [ADA Standards](#).⁹ Designate a staff contact and provide a mechanism such as a link on a meeting agenda for the public to request accommodation at meetings such as wheelchair access or other needs.

6 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on Coastal Commission Hearing on the City of Long Beach Belmont Beach and Aquatics Center, California Coastal Commission, n.d., https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/assets/env-justice/BelmontAquaticComplex_FAQ.pdf.

7 Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, "Draft CalEnviroScreen 5.0," State of California, 28 January 2026, <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/draft-calenviroscreen-50>.

8 Spanish Resources, California Coastal Commission, n.d., <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/assets/spanish/Spanish-Resources-Flyer-in-English.pdf>.

9 Andrew Kirkpatrick et al., Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 W3C Recommendation. World Wide Web Consortium, 06 May 2025, <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>.

GOAL 4: CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT DECISION MAKING

- 4.1 Explain limits.** Be transparent about the state's legal obligations, authority, and constraints so community expectations are clear from the beginning.
- 4.2 Be clear about decisions.** From the beginning, clearly explain what decision is being made, how it will be made, and how community input will be used. Do not overpromise or suggest options that are not available. Be upfront if a project will move forward in some form so communities understand where they can participate in the process. When possible, inform the community how their input was applied.
- 4.3 Use what you hear.** Incorporate input from public engagement and, where appropriate, tribal consultation into key documents such as strategic plans, development proposals, land management plans, grant agreements and more. Include relevant details such as pollution burdens, population characteristics, climate hazards and cumulative impacts.

GOAL 5: COMMUNITY-CENTERED OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 5.1 Support community benefits.** Support well-designed agreements developed with input from the affected community and trusted community leaders. Incorporate relevant commitments into permits or contracts with enforcement mechanisms whenever possible.
- 5.2 Include workforce benefits.** When feasible, consider including project labor agreements or funding that expands training opportunities, local hiring, and local access to jobs.
- 5.3 Be willing to change course.** If a project lacks community support, consider revising it, conditioning it, relocating it, or discontinuing it to better meet local needs, where feasible and where the state has control over siting. Work with the affected community or communities.





II. FUNDING: ENABLE ALL COMMUNITIES TO ACCESS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

CNRA and its entities administer billions of dollars in grant funding. These investments help advance climate action, economic opportunity, environmental protection, public health, education, and community-led solutions across California. To ensure these benefits reach communities equitably, CNRA and its entities will prioritize identifying and removing structural barriers that limit access to funding, such as lengthy or complex application processes, burdensome reporting requirements, and limited technical assistance. By prioritizing usability, accessibility, and successful project delivery, funding programs can better support a diverse range of communities and deliver meaningful, lasting benefits especially to communities who need it most.

GOAL 6: EARLY AND INCLUSIVE OUTREACH AND ASSISTANCE

- 6.1 Announce funding access opportunities early.** Share information in multiple ways and platforms about upcoming grant programs during program development and well before applications open so communities and organizations have time to prepare.
- 6.2 Use plain language and share information through multiple channels.** Communicate eligibility, timelines, and application requirements in [plain language](#),¹⁰ and share information through state websites, email lists, social media, and community-based outlets.
- 6.3 Provide technical assistance ahead of deadlines.** Offer office hours, workshops, one-on-one consultations, and online resources for prospective applicants well before application deadlines.
- 6.4 Build staff capacity for equitable engagement.** Train grant managers and program staff on cultural awareness and respectful communication when working with underserved communities and tribes.
- 6.5 Evaluate outreach effectiveness.** Review past grant programs to identify gaps in participation, geographic reach, or applicant diversity, and adjust outreach strategies accordingly. Collect applicant and grantee feedback to improve future programs.

¹⁰ "Plain Language Equity Standard," Office of Data and Innovation: Innovation Hub, 2026, <https://hub.innovation.ca.gov/content-design/plain-language-equity-standard/index.html>

GOAL 7: MORE ACCESSIBLE GRANTS

- 7.1 Comply with the Climate Bond guidance documents.** Comply with [guidance documents](#)¹¹ outlining how best to improve grant programs across CNRA and how to work with tribes and community groups to more effectively distribute funding to benefit all Californians.
- 7.2 Keep grant information current and easy to understand.** Maintain up-to-date grant webpages with clear descriptions of program goals, eligibility, timelines, and requirements written in plain language.
- 7.3 Clearly state eligibility.** Explicitly identify eligibility for community-based organizations, non-profits, and tribal governments, consistent with statutory authority and state law. Clearly outline the types of projects eligible for funding and specific costs eligible for advance pay or reimbursement.
- 7.4 Reduce application burden.** Use short pre-applications or concept proposals to help applicants determine project fit and avoid unnecessary work on full applications.
- 7.5 Provide staff assistance.** Ensure program staff can assist potential applicants with their specific program and process-related questions. Ensure assistance is publicized and available.
- 7.6 Provide guidance and transparency.** Publish program guidelines, scoring criteria, and evaluation methods in advance, and offer feedback to unfunded applicants to support future success.
- 7.7 Be upfront about the requirements of managing a state grant.** Before applicants develop their proposal, ensure they are aware of the reporting, accounting, and performance requirements of state funding, and the limitations on what the state can pay for, advance payments, and indirect cost rates.
- 7.8 Support cash flow for grantees.** When feasible, allow advance payments when requested and implement advance pay in a manner that meets grantee needs, improves program efficiencies and safeguards state funds.
- 7.9 Support equitable access to grant-related technology.** Explore the use of technology and AI-enabled supports to help reduce barriers to applying for state funding, particularly for communities and organizations without dedicated grant-writing capacity or prior experience with state processes.
- 7.10 Coordinate across programs to reduce grantee burdens.** Whenever possible, identify complementary grant programs across our agency and coordinate with these programs to streamline and align processes to reduce administrative burdens.

¹¹ "Prop.4 Department Guidance Documents," California Natural Resources Agency Prop 4 Climate Bond, 2026, <https://bondaccountability.resources.ca.gov/Home/Prop4Documents>.

GOAL 8: ADVANCE EQUITY IN FUNDING DECISIONS

- 8.1 Meet or exceed equity funding targets.** Wherever possible, designate carve-outs and award at least 40% of available funding in each grant program to projects benefiting tribes, disadvantaged, severely disadvantaged, and vulnerable communities, even when not required by statute.
- 8.2 Require meaningful community engagement.** Seek early tribal and public input to develop program guidelines and to improve programs over time. When possible, require applicants to describe how tribes and communities will be engaged in project design and implementation and incorporate these commitments into scoring criteria.
- 8.3 Include community voices in decision-making.** Seek out diverse communities and perspectives when drafting grant program guidelines which describe evaluation criteria and scoring. Consider establishing advisory committees with local community and tribal representation who can provide input and feedback on department programs and provide stipends whenever possible.
- 8.4 Support workforce development.** Consider earmarking a percentage of grant funds and/or prioritizing applications to include workforce development opportunities, such as on-the-job training, certificate trainings relevant to projects, hosting interns, providing mentorship and other ways of bridging employment gaps to make careers more accessible when utilizing Conservation Corps services.
- 8.5 Utilize multiple screening tools.** Whenever possible utilize multiple screening tools and data sets to identify underserved communities, including historically hard-to-reach populations that may not be captured by screening tools due to data gaps or limitations.
- 8.6 Maximize impacts and benefits.** Consider training partnerships, targeted hiring requirements, and labor standards in state-funded programs that expand opportunity and support broad workforce development goals consistent with applicable law.



GOAL 9: SUPPORT PROJECT SUCCESS AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- 9.1 Partner to build implementation capacity.** Identify ways to work with communities that lack administrative or technical capacity – offering flexibility where possible, help with problem solving and technical assistance -- so they can successfully implement complex projects.
- 9.2 Measure success by outcomes, not by number of grant awarded.** Design grant programs to prioritize project impacts and long-term community benefit, providing implementation support and flexibility when needed. Evaluate project and program successes and shortcomings with participants, recognizing what went well and opportunities for improvement.
- 9.3 Support long-term investments.** When feasible, offer multi-year funding and phased planning-to-implementation pathways, and prioritize implementation funding for projects that have already received planning support.
- 9.4 Prioritize utilizing California Conservation Corps (CCC).** When applicable to a project, prioritize the use of services from the CCC, certified community conservation corps, tribal corps or workforce development programs engaged in similar conservation and restoration work and serving similar communities for project implementation or tribal corps, for project implementation. Use the CCC consultation process to request their services as described here: [CCCs Consultation Process](https://ccc.ca.gov/collaborate/consultation/).¹²

¹² Grant Consultation, California Conservation Corps, 2026, <https://ccc.ca.gov/collaborate/consultation/>.



III. WORKFORCE: RECRUITING AND RETAINING CALIFORNIA'S FULL DIVERSITY OF TALENT

CNRA and its entities employ more than 26,000 people in a wide range of fields including science, administration, law, accounting, engineering, information technology, law enforcement and more. The agency is committed to recruiting, building and maintaining a highly qualified professional staff drawn from the broadest pool of candidates, ensuring a wide range of perspectives and experiences to better address the needs of the most diverse state in the country. To support this effort, CNRA and its entities opened a [Career Center](#)¹³ with the goal of helping applicants at all stages of the process, including finding positions in the state workforce, developing resumes, filling out applications and practicing interviews. Departments, conservancies, boards, and commissions are expected to leverage these resources and implement the following workforce strategies.

GOAL 10: EXPANDED RECRUITMENT POOLS

10.1 Promote the CNRA Career Center. Add a link to the [CNRA Career Center](#)¹⁴ on each department webpage and provide support for its resources whenever possible.

10.2 Broaden applicant evaluation criteria. If appropriate to the position requirements, include interview questions assessing job-related experience working with a broad range of communities, about practical on-the-ground problem-solving, and other competencies beyond formal education when evaluating candidates.

10.3 Highlight inclusive workplace policies in job postings. Include a core values statement in job postings (CNRA has approved language if needed) to ensure descriptions and duty statements allow employees to participate in activities and trainings that support a respectful and welcoming workplace.

10.4 Promote non-traditional job benefits. Identify and advertise workplace features and benefits that may attract a broader range of candidates, such as accessibility, training or certifications, all gender bathrooms, onsite childcare and lactation rooms, work-life balance policies, employee support programs, and training opportunities for advancement.

10.5 Use diverse recruitment channels. Share job announcements broadly through education, workforce, and community-based outreach channels including public schools, adult education programs, career fairs, community organizations, workforce development programs, underserved communities and other non-traditional outlets to reach a wider pool.

10.6 Implement equitable interview practices. Ensure interview panels reflect a range of perspectives and skill sets, and assign trained interview leads who have completed CalHR's interview chair training. CNRA entities are encouraged to extend this training to additional staff.

¹³ "Career Center" California Natural Resources Agency, 2018, <https://resources.ca.gov/Careers>.

¹⁴ "Career Center" California Natural Resources Agency, 2018, <https://resources.ca.gov/Careers>.

GOAL 11: STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

- 11.1 Provide training to enhance cultural competence and community engagement.** Strongly support and encourage staff participation in trainings that deepen understanding of California Native American tribes and the state's rich and diverse cultures, improve community engagement skills, and strengthen relationships with local communities (e.g., Department of Conservation's [RUBIN Inclusive Engagement Model](https://www.conservation.ca.gov/index/Documents/Outreach-Engagement/RUBIN%20Race%20and%20Equity%20Focused%20Engagement%20Model%20January%202024%20for%20Web%20Posting.pdf)).¹⁵
- 11.2 Foster an inclusive and welcoming workplace.** Support participation in employee resource groups, commemorative month events and efforts to organize other activities that promote inclusion.
- 11.3 Plan for and develop pathways into state careers.** Partner with programs such as the California Conservation Corps and California Volunteers to create internships, fellowships, and career development programs that lead into CNRA positions. Plan for funding these internships when possible.
- 11.4 Monitor workplace culture and staff needs.** Conduct regular, anonymous surveys to assess staff satisfaction about organizational culture, onboarding, training, and resources, and use the survey results to improve workplace policies and practices.
- 11.5 Support career growth.** Provide clear pathways for career mobility through mentorship programs and [upward mobility programs](#).
- 11.6 Support equitable access to training and technology.** Support training, including emerging technologies, to help level the playing field for staff who may not have formal natural resources backgrounds and to support skill-building, innovation, and career advancement.

¹⁵ RUBIN Inclusive Engagement Model, California Department of Conservation, Jan. 2024, <https://www.conservation.ca.gov/index/Documents/Outreach-Engagement/RUBIN%20Race%20and%20Equity%20Focused%20Engagement%20Model%20January%202024%20for%20Web%20Posting.pdf>.

State staff from agencies and departments across California participating in the Sacramento Pride March.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CNRA ENTITIES, PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS AND EXISTING POLICIES

This appendix provides an overview of CNRA member entities, including their primary areas of focus. Links to relevant equity- or environmental justice-related policies, including this one, can be found on the [CNRA website](#).

AGENCY

California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)

Focus Areas: All

Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP)

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Water; Climate Change Action

DEPARTMENTS

California Conservation Corps (CCC)

Focus Areas: Outdoor Access; Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Climate Change Action

Department of Conservation (DOC)

Focus Areas: Outdoor Access; Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Energy; Climate Change Action

Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Focus Areas: Outdoor Access; Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Climate Change Action

Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Climate Change Action

Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks)

Focus Areas: Outdoor Access; Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Climate Change Action

Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Focus Areas: Water Management; Climate Change Action; Energy; Outdoor Access

Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety

Focus Areas: Energy; Climate Change Action

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Board of Forestry

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Climate Change Action

California Boating and Waterways Commission (Parks)

Focus Areas: Water; Outdoor Access

California Coastal Commission

Focus Areas: Coast and Ocean; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

California Energy Commission (CEC)

Focus Areas: Energy; Climate Change Action

California Fish and Game Commission (CDFW)

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

California State Lands Commission

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Energy; Coast and Ocean; Climate Change Action

California State Parks Commission

Focus Areas: Outdoor Access; Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity

California Water Commission

Focus Areas: Water; Climate Change Action

Central Valley Flood Protection Board

Focus Areas: Water; Climate Change Action

Colorado River Board of California

Focus Areas: Water; Energy; Climate Change Action

Delta Protection Commission

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Water; Climate Change Action

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC)

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Coast and Ocean; Climate Change Action

Wildlife Conservation Board

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

Appendices

State Parks and Recreation Commission

Focus Areas: Outdoor Access; Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access

Boating and Waterways Commission

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access

State Historic Preservation Office Commission

Focus Areas: Historic Preservation; Conservation; Access

CONSERVANCIES

Baldwin Hills Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

California Tahoe Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Water; Climate Change Action

Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

Salton Sea Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access

San Diego River Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Water; Climate Change Action

San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

San Joaquin River Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

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Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Focus Areas: Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Outdoor Access; Climate Change Action

State Coastal Conservancy

Focus Areas: Outdoor Access; Coast and Ocean; Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Climate Change Action

COUNCILS

Delta Stewardship Council (DSC)

Focus Areas: Water; Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity; Climate Change Action

Ocean Protection Council (OPC)

Focus Areas: Coast and Ocean; Climate Change Action

[Council Equity Plan](#)

APPENDIX B: APPLYING THE POLICY ACROSS CNRA PRIORITY AREAS

This appendix provides practical guidance on how CNRA and its member entities can embed these principles and practices across their work. It focuses on the Agency's core priority areas: climate change action, water, energy, outdoor access, coasts and oceans, and environmental conservation and biodiversity. CNRA aims for entities to embed the policy's principles into program design, funding decisions, and implementation strategies to deliver meaningful, lasting benefits for all Californians, especially communities most affected by environmental challenges. The actions included below were identified by the CNRA entities and community-based organizations, are not exhaustive, and are intended to support a consistent, flexible application of the policy across the Agency, recognizing the distinct roles, authorities, and capacities of each CNRA entity.

CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

In the coming decades, California will continue to face worsening climate impacts, including life-threatening heat waves, prolonged droughts, destructive wildfires, rising sea levels, storms and flooding. These impacts hit hardest in communities with long histories of disenfranchisement and underinvestment, leaving them more vulnerable with fewer resources to prepare for and recover from disasters. For example, historically redlined neighborhoods often have fewer trees and more pavement, making them significantly hotter during heat waves and increasing health risks for already struggling residents. CNRA is committed to addressing climate change in line with the [California Climate Adaptation Strategy](#) which aims to protect and strengthen climate vulnerable communities.

Integrate and Increase Community Resilience

- **Increase awareness of resilience programs** – Increase education and awareness of state programs and grant opportunities that support strengthening climate-vulnerable communities. Update websites regularly to ensure information is accessible, current and relevant.
- **Assess community vulnerability** – Conduct, require, or support climate vulnerability assessments to determine a community's exposure risk, sensitivity to climate impacts, and capacity to prepare, adapt, and recover.
- **Use climate justice resources** – Apply tools and reports such as the [California Climate Change Assessment's](#)¹ Racial Equity and Climate Justice, and Tribal and Indigenous Communities synthesis reports to inform policies and programs.

Prioritize Vulnerable Communities

- **Engage communities in decision-making** – Work with vulnerable communities in research, planning, education, and monitoring, and in the development, funding, and implementation of projects and policies addressing climate change.

¹ California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment, State of California, 27 Aug. 2018, <https://climateassessment.ca.gov/>.

- **Prioritize vulnerable communities** - Prioritize communities that are the most vulnerable when implementing or funding climate adaptation programs and projects, including capacity building, and enhancing social resilience.
- **Implement nature-based solutions** - Integrate nature-based solutions into climate strategies that repair harms, improve public health, preserve and protect traditional cultural resources and landscapes, increase access to nature, empower residents, and create economic opportunities in vulnerable communities.
- **Protect communities from negative impacts** - Prioritize development that safeguards vulnerable communities from climate impacts and avoids projects that can harm communities, such as sea walls that protect private structures but reduce broader public access, cause coastal erosion or flooding in adjacent unprotected areas.

WATER

California's history of water management and land use planning has resulted in some communities still grappling with polluted groundwater, inadequate infrastructure and higher costs for basic water access. California is working to modernize its water systems to ensure all communities have access to clean, safe and affordable water. CNRA is committed to advancing water equity and resilience, putting community voices at the forefront of planning and decision-making, and improving environmental conditions for all Californians.

Educate Communities

- **Provide guidance on engagement** - Offer clear guidance on best practices for involving community members in water resource decisions.
- **Support residents** - Increase public awareness of resources and provide transparent datasets when possible to help communities advocate for their needs.

Enhance Water Access and Infrastructure

- **Support safe water programs** - Implement programs that increase access to safe, reliable, and affordable water supplies.
- **Offset potential rate increases** - Support programs that help off-set potential rate increases for underserved communities when permitting new facilities, whenever possible. This includes disincentivizing wasteful infrastructure projects, subsidizing repair and maintenance costs for income burdened households and educating communities on how these subsidies can indirectly assist them with lower rates.
- **Plan for flood and drought resilience** - Support small-community regional planning with state oversight when possible.
- **Prioritize high-need areas** - Ensure water infrastructure improvements focus on maintaining and improving service reliability for low-income communities.
- **Integrate climate resilience** - Incorporate climate resilience strategies into water management plans to prepare communities for extreme weather and new precipitation patterns, such as developing contingency plans or long-range water management planning.

ENERGY

Discriminatory land use policies have historically concentrated industrial and fossil fuel-based infrastructure in underserved communities, exposing residents to higher levels of pollution, limited access to green spaces and increased environmental risks. Past policies also excluded tribes and underserved communities by failing to provide the basic infrastructure needed for access to electricity. CNRA departments are working to correct these inequities while overseeing the safe operation and decommissioning of abandoned oil and gas facilities, advancing conservation efforts that protect public health, preventing resource degradation and supporting the state's clean energy transition. CNRA is committed to ensuring that investments in clean energy infrastructure deliver real benefits to underserved communities by involving them in decision-making and policies that reflect their needs and priorities.

Address Burdens

- **Remediate past harms** – Support and advance strategies to address impacts caused by the energy sector such as restoration of contaminated areas, expanded air monitoring, investing in open spaces and ensuring new energy projects reduce pollution.
- **Improve infrastructure reliability** – Strengthen energy systems to provide safe, equitable, and reliable access across all communities.
- **Ensure environmental and community impacts are fully considered** – Advance policies that ensure that clean-energy developers are not creating new burdens or adding harm to any preexisting conditions and cumulative impacts. Provide state oversight when possible.

Manage Oil and Gas

- **Ensure safe decommissioning** – Oversee the safe closure of abandoned oil and gas facilities, prioritizing retirements in underserved communities. Whenever possible, consider opportunities to turn these into community assets such as parks or open space.
- **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions** – Advance policies that cut emissions from existing operations and support the transition to clean energy sources.

Promote Clean Energy

- **Support clean energy growth** – Shift California away from fossil fuels by developing renewable and clean energy production that avoids repeating past harms.
- **Increase energy access and resilience** – Ensure underserved and tribal communities benefit from clean energy technology adoption and decentralized energy systems.
- **Prioritize zero-emission technologies** – Use low- or zero-emission technologies during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning when feasible to minimize pollution burdens.

Distribute Benefits Equitably

- **Prioritize high-need communities** – Prioritize engagement and program design to better direct benefits of energy resources and investments toward communities with the highest identified needs, including underserved and overburdened communities.

- **Ensure equitable access to clean energy** – Support adoption of clean technologies in underserved areas.
- **Support community benefits agreements** – When feasible, encourage agreements that provide jobs, training, or other benefits that a potentially impacted community supports.

OUTDOOR ACCESS

Historically, land-use policies deprived tribes and underserved communities of full access to open spaces, which has led to the unequal distribution of trees, parks, and coastal access. More than 60% of residents in California still live in areas with less than three acres of parks or open space per 1,000 residents. The California [Outdoors for All initiative](#),² CNRA and its member entities are committed to creating more parks and outdoor spaces in communities that need them the most, supporting programs to connect people who lack access, fostering a sense of belonging for all Californians in the outdoors, and more. The goal is to expand equitable access, where all Californians can experience the physical, mental and social benefits of nature regardless of who they are or where they live.

Establish Spaces for People and Nature to Thrive

- **Develop and improve outdoor spaces** – Build outdoor recreation areas in low-income areas, create connectivity with underserved neighborhoods, and increase access to public trust lands.
- **Provide low-cost transportation** – Design projects that offer free or low-cost transportation to outdoor spaces, with long-term planning for sustainability.
- **Support affordable accommodations** – Prioritize funding and streamlined processes to build and promote low-cost coastal accommodations.
- **Increase free access opportunities** – Explore way to provide low- or no-cost access to state parks, beaches, parking, and equipment rentals for low-income communities.

Foster Belonging

- **Share diverse stories and programs** – Include diverse stories and images of California through programming, interpretive materials, art and signage at outdoor spaces, cultural and historic places and museums.
- **Rename derogatory features** – Support renaming derogatory geographic features and place names to create inclusive spaces.
- **Improve language access** – Prioritize translation and interpretation for programs, materials, and public-facing staff.
- **Ensure ADA compliance** – Prioritize ADA compliance and remove barriers to access such as fake “no parking signs,” private encroachments onto public lands, fake curb cuts and more.
- **Co-Create with and partner with tribes** – Work with tribes to support tribal stewardship through ancestral land return, collaboration – including co-management, and access.

² “Outdoors for All: Providing Equitable Access to Parks and Nature,” California Natural Resources Agency, 2023, https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Access-for-all/Outdoors_for_All_Strategy_English.pdf

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- **Co-Create with tribes on protections of Tribal Cultural Resources** – Work with tribes to avoid impacts to Tribal Cultural Resources and permanently protect Tribal Cultural Resources through the use of cultural easements or other measures and when avoidance isn't available co-create mitigation measures to reduce impacts to tribal cultural resources.
- **Engage communities in design** – Work with communities to identify amenities and other benefits when designing parks and open spaces.
- **Collaborate with nonprofits** – Partner with communities and local non-profits to manage outdoor access in a way that responds to community priorities.
- **Coordinate with schools and local governments** – Work with school districts and regional governments to enhance green schoolyards and identify opportunities for school playgrounds to fill park gaps through joint-use agreements.

COAST AND OCEAN

California has more than 1,100 miles of coastline and one of the world's most diverse coastal and ocean ecosystems, which is critical to the state's identity, economy and environmental health. The coast serves as California's largest public park and the coastal economy generates an estimated \$51 billion annually across industries. While state laws guarantee the public's right to access the coast, barriers such as affordability, distance, lack of transportation and even illegal restrictions imposed by some coastal homeowners limit access for underserved communities and tribes. Sea level rise could worsen these challenges, with studies showing up to two-thirds of Southern California's beaches potentially disappearing by 2100. CNRA and its member entities are committed to advancing equitable coastal recreation, healthier natural spaces and stronger coastal resilience.

Enhance Coastal Access

- **Prioritize projects expanding access** – Support projects that improve public transportation from inland areas to the coast, increase affordable accommodations, and build accessible facilities.
- **Create partnerships for access** – Partner with other state agencies, local governments and community groups to create programs that provide low-cost or free coastal recreation and educational opportunities.
- **Promote access rights** – Increase education and outreach that raise awareness about public access rights, available coastal access, and other publicly available resources.

Conserve Biodiversity and Build Resilience

- **Develop ecological projects** – Develop and support initiatives like Ocean Corps that combine ecological health, resilience, job or training opportunities, and economic benefits.
- **Advance community-informed research** – Support research informed by and developed with underserved communities and tribes to strengthen coastal and ocean conservation and resilience.

- **Protect coastal ecosystems long-term** – Prioritize long-term conservation of coastal ecosystems to provide benefits to underserved communities, including climate resilience, access to clean beaches, sustainable fisheries, etc.

Engage Communities in Decision-Making and Stewardship

- **Include underserved communities in planning** – Work with underserved communities in state planning, funding and projects that affect the coast and ocean to ensure their priorities are reflected in final decisions.
- **Support tribal stewardship** – Advance tribal stewardship of coastal and ocean resources by advancing land return, collaboration, access, and integrating traditional ecological knowledge into coastal management.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY

California is home to more species of plants and animals than any other state. Of the estimated [5,500 plant species](#)³ found here, 40% are found nowhere else on Earth. Urban development, pollution and climate change, however, have degraded some iconic landscapes. Conservation is not only about protecting scenic beauty, it's about sustaining the ecosystems that people and the planet depend on. Public health and ecological health are deeply interconnected. CNRA and its member entities are working to conserve California's ecosystems with a commitment to equity that will provide meaningful benefits for all. Through initiatives such as the [Pathways to 30x30 Strategy](#),⁴ the state is committed to conserve 30% of lands and coastal waters by 2030, while achieving the key objectives of protecting and restoring biodiversity, expanding access to nature, and mitigating and building resilience to climate change.

Strengthen Partnerships

- **Engage communities in conservation planning** – Work with underserved communities to shape conservation efforts at the state and local level. Provide avenues for feedback and adjust based on their input.
- **Create economic opportunities** – Include strategies and prioritize projects that also create economic opportunities for local communities, such as job training programs or economic incentives for local businesses.
- **Co-develop projects** – Co-develop and fund research, monitoring and restoration projects with California Native American tribes, ensuring projects respect and protect cultural resources.
- **Facilitate collaborative research** – Facilitate efforts that integrate Indigenous knowledge with scientific research to enhance conservation outcomes.

³ "Protecting Biodiversity," California Natural Resources Agency, 2018, <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Protecting-Biodiversity>.

⁴ 30x30 California, California Natural Resources Agency, 2021, <https://www.californianature.ca.gov/>.

Health and Environmental Equity

- **Target high-need areas** – Prioritize initiatives that target areas with high pollution levels and limited access to open spaces, ensuring that they help to improve air and water quality and community resilience.
- **Support healthy spaces** – Prioritize projects that support the health and well-being of underserved communities, ensuring these spaces offer features like safe walking paths and access to parks and open spaces.
- **Include health equity assessments** – Support the inclusion of health equity assessments in project planning to evaluate potential cumulative impacts on public health and ensure benefits are equitably distributed.
- **Ensure compliance with regulations** – Ensure environmental restoration projects comply with regulatory requirements to avoid, minimize and mitigate harms to natural resources and do not exacerbate existing burdens.
- **Integrate water and land management** – Consider water management and land acquisition as complementary strategies to support conservation and enhance watershed health.

APPENDIX C: DEFINITIONS

California Native American tribes: California Native American tribes include federally recognized California Native American tribes or a non-federally recognized tribes.

Climate adaptation: Climate adaptation is an action or set of actions that reduces climate risk. Strategies and actions designed to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impacts of climate change, such as wildfires, droughts, heat waves, sea level rise, and floods.

Climate resilience: Climate resilience describes a state of readiness to face climate risks, such as extreme heat, flooding, drought, wildfire, and sea level rise. 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, dangerous floods, or wildfires – that will become more frequent or intense as the climate changes. However, good resilience planning can also address related chronic events, such as worsening air quality and population migration.

Community Benefit Agreements: Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) can be legally binding contracts that can shape the impact of large-scale projects on local communities. These agreements, which can be negotiated between a community and developer, ensure development initiatives provide tangible benefits to potentially impacted communities and address potential negative consequences. When done right, such agreements can strengthen a project and foster collaboration between project developers and community stakeholders by integrating community needs directly into development plans.

Disadvantaged, Underserved, Marginalized: 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 document 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.

Environmental Justice: The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. The 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

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waste and other hazardous facilities in underserved communities 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

Equity: The fair and just distribution of resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, tailored to meet the specific needs of different communities. Equity recognizes historical and systemic disparities and seeks to remove barriers that prevent full participation. It differs from environmental justice, which focuses on addressing and preventing disproportionate environmental harms, but is closely connected, as equity provides the framework for ensuring policies and programs achieve fair outcomes for those most affected.

Nature-Based Solutions: Land management practices that increase the health and resilience of natural systems, unlocking their ability to durably store carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions over time.

Redlining: Redlining refers to a set of racist policies initiated by the federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), established in the 1930s as part of the New Deal to address the Great Depression. The HOLC created maps for over 200 cities across the United States, categorizing neighborhoods into zones of investment risk. Neighborhoods deemed "risky" or "hazardous" were outlined in red, primarily based on the racial and ethnic composition of the area, particularly where Black and other communities of color resided. These maps, often created with input from local realtor associations, led to systemic disinvestment in communities of color by denying them access to mortgages, loans and other financial services. This lack of access to homeownership, which is the primary vehicle for building wealth in the U.S., contributed to enduring racial wealth gaps, as white families were able to accumulate generational wealth through home equity while families of color were systematically excluded.

Technical Assistance: Support provided to grant applicants or communities to improve participation and project success, including workshops, one-on-one guidance, and training.

Vulnerable Communities:¹ Climate vulnerability describes the degree to which natural, built, and human systems are at risk of exposure to climate change impacts. Vulnerable communities experience heightened risk and increased sensitivity to climate change and have less capacity and fewer resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from climate impacts. These disproportionate effects are caused by physical (built and environmental), social, political, and/or economic factor(s), which are exacerbated by climate impacts. These factors include, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, income inequality, and disability. People facing multiple forms of marginalization and inequality will confront more intense climate change impacts and barriers to recovery.

¹ "Climate Equity and Vulnerable Communities," CA Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, 2026, <https://lci.ca.gov/climate/icarp/vulnerable-communities.html>.