
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

May 9, 2024

PUBLIC NOTICE OF AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT: DRAFT RACIAL EQUITY RESOLUTION AND STAFF REPORT

Dear Interested Party,

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan Water Board) invites you to comment on the *Draft Resolution Condemning Racism, Xenophobia, Bigotry, and Racial Injustice and Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism in the Lahontan Region* (Draft Racial Equity Resolution) and Staff Report on the Draft Racial Equity Resolution for the Lahontan Region (Staff Report). The Lahontan Water Board is the California state agency responsible for water quality protection in the [Lahontan Region](#) (Region 6), which extends from the Oregon border south through the Mojave Desert and east of the Sierra Nevada crest.

Racial equity occurs when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and when outcomes for all groups are improved. Join the Water Boards as we work toward a future where we preserve, protect, and restore drinking water and water resources for all Californians, and where race is not a predictor of professional outcomes for Water Boards employees.

PARTICIPATION OPTIONS

Review the Available Documents

Review the Draft Racial Equity Resolution and Staff Report at the following website:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/programs/racial-equity/

Physical copies of the available documents may be mailed to you upon request by calling (760) 243-4261.

Submit Comments

Please email your written comments to Lahontan@waterboards.ca.gov and include "Draft Racial Equity Resolution" in the subject line. If you do not have access to the Internet, please submit your written comments to:

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
Attention: Anna Garcia
15095 Amargosa Rd building 2 suite 210
Victorville, CA 92394

DR. AMY HORNE, CHAIR | MICHAEL R. PLAZIAK, PG, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Comments on the Draft Racial Equity Resolution are due by June 24, 2024.

Comments received after this date may not be considered by the Lahontan Water Board.

The Lahontan Water Board is scheduled to review and consider adoption of the Draft Racial Equity Resolution at the August 21-22, 2024, Board Meeting.

Stay Involved

Subscribe to receive email notifications about racial equity and environmental justice efforts at the Lahontan Water Board, including meeting schedules, draft and proposed documents, Board hearing information, and environmental analysis.

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/reg6_subscribe.html

Fill in your email and name and click the **Racial Equity & Environmental Justice** box, and then select the submit button.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Draft Racial Equity Resolution is to accept responsibility for confronting structural and institutional racism and advancing racial equity within the Lahontan Water Board's purview, and to align with the [State Water Resources Control Board's ongoing racial equity efforts](#). The Water Boards envision a California where 1) race no longer predicts the access to, or quality of, water resources; 2) Water Boards employees at all organizational levels reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of California; and 3) a racial equity lens is consistently applied to Water Boards' decision-making processes.

Following the State Water Resource Control Board's adoption of a State Water Board Racial Equity Resolution and development of the State Water Board Racial Equity Action Plan, the Lahontan Water Board created a Racial Equity Working Group to increase employee awareness, conduct internal and external engagement to identify and prioritize opportunities to advance racial equity, and develop a Racial Equity Resolution and a Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan (Action Plan). Please see the Draft Racial Equity Resolution and Staff Report for more information.

NEXT STEPS

The Lahontan Water Board will consider all comments received during the public comment process before finalizing the Draft Racial Equity Resolution and bringing it to the Lahontan Water Board for consideration at the August 21-22, 2024, Board Meeting.

Pending adoption of the Racial Equity Resolution, the Lahontan Water Board anticipates increasing efforts to develop the Action Plan. The Action Plan may contain proposed actions the Lahontan Water Board will take to make progress towards its racial equity and environmental justice goals. It may also contain supporting ideas and measurements of success, including metrics, milestones, data, and other indicators that can be used to indicate successful completion of actions or to track progress toward actions over time.

The Lahontan Water Board will collaborate with the public to create the Action Plan through listening sessions, public workshops, and meetings. Once the Action Plan has

been drafted it will be made available for public review and comment prior to Board consideration.

Please share the above information with anyone you know to be interested in this matter. Any questions regarding this notice should be directed to Anna Garcia, Equity and Justice Coordinator, at Anna.Garcia@Waterboards.ca.gov or (760) 243-4261.

Thank you,

Lahontan Water Board Racial Equity Working Group

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
LAHONTAN REGION**

**DRAFT
RESOLUTION R6-2024-0010**

**AFFIRMING THE LAHONTAN WATER BOARD'S COMMITMENT TO CALIFORNIA
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 2021-0050
(RESOLUTION CONDEMNING RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, BIGOTRY AND RACIAL
INJUSTICE AND STRENGTHENING COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY,
DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, ACCESS, AND ANTI-RACISM) IN SUPPORT OF RACIAL
EQUITY IN THE LAHONTAN REGION**

WHEREAS, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region (Lahontan Water Board) finds that:

**Affirmation of the Lahontan Water Board's History and of State Water Board
Resolution No. 2021-0050**

1. The Lahontan Water Board's jurisdiction (Region) is 570 miles long and spans 39,210 square miles. The Region includes the highest (Mt. Whitney) and lowest (Death Valley) points in the contiguous United States, and the topography of the rest of the Region is diverse. Variations in geology, geography, topography, and climate support a diverse array of plant and animal communities and water resources. There are 3,170 miles of streams, over 700 lakes, 345 groundwater basins, and two Outstanding National Resources Waters (ONRWs) designated under the Federal Clean Water Act, Mono Lake, and Lake Tahoe. The Region's water resources support multiple municipal and domestic, recreational, agricultural, industrial, and environmental uses of water, and the Region contains many high quality alpine and sub-alpine surface waters.
2. The people within the Lahontan Region have been affected by a legacy of racially exclusive policies, xenophobia, bigotry, and racial injustice. For example, in the early 1900s, tribal communities in the Owens Valley or Payahuunadü were subjected to water diversions from streams and ditches by the City of Los Angeles such that agricultural lands became less productive in order to support the city's growing demand for water. Consequently, Owens Lake ran dry and dust from the dry lakebed became a health concern to residents in the Owens Valley from harmful PM10 particulates in the air. In later years, during World War 2, the Owens Valley was also the site of one of two Japanese relocation centers (concentration camps) in the State. From 1942 to 1945 tens of thousands of Japanese-American citizens were uprooted from their homes in parts of California, Oregon, and Washington and sent to either the Manzanar Relocation Center in the Owens Valley or to the Tule Lake

Relocation Center in Modoc County. To this day, race predicts the availability of safe drinking water and the collection, treatment, and reuse of wastewater. To progress towards a future where race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, the Lahontan Water Board acknowledges that the Board and its associated authority was established within a larger societal framework, including redlining and segregation, that perpetuated inequities based on race.

3. As part of the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), the shared mission of the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards), collectively Water Boards, is to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.
4. Public Resources Code section 30107.3 defines environmental justice as, "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." Similarly, the United States Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as, "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work." As used within this document, environmental justice communities are those communities that have historically received disparate treatment in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies based on the race, culture, income, or national origin of the people living within those communities.
5. The Water Boards are a member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and have adapted its definition of racial equity: racial equity occurs when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and outcomes for all marginalized communities.
6. The Water Boards' mission is strengthened by committing to racial equity, environmental justice, and equitable, culturally relevant outreach that promotes meaningful engagement in decision-making processes from potentially impacted communities. The Water Board is working toward a future where race no longer predicts the access to or quality of water resources a person can access.
7. The Water Boards acknowledge and condemn inequities, past and present, in water quality, access, and affordability, and are proactively working to eliminate the structures and practices that perpetuate these inequities.

8. Since 2012, California law (California Water Code, §106.3) has declared that every person in the state has a right to clean, safe, and affordable drinking water. Ensuring that every person in California has access to clean, safe, and affordable drinking water requires first acknowledging that many of California's most critical water quality problems find their roots in policies that intentionally disadvantage communities of color, including a historic lack of investment in drinking water and waste infrastructure within these communities. Clean, Safe, and affordable drinking water should be available to all people regardless of race.
9. In fall 2020, the State Water Board established a Racial Equity Team, which was directed to establish a foundation of internal and external engagement that values listening and collaborating to drive action, drafting a resolution on racial equity to be considered for adoption by the State Water Board, and to developing a subsequent racial equity action plan to implement the resolution and drive the Water Boards' efforts to institutionalize racial equity.
10. On November 16, 2021, the State Water Board adopted Resolution No. 2021-0050, Condemning Racism, Xenophobia, Bigotry, and Racial Injustice and Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism (State Water Board Resolution). The State Water Board Resolution acknowledged the role racism has played in creating inequities in affordability and access to clean and safe water, committed to advancing racial equity within the Water Boards and the communities they serve, directed its staff to develop a racial equity action plan, and encouraged the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards to adopt similar resolutions.
11. In fall 2022, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (Lahontan Water Board) Executive Officer convened a staff led Racial Equity Working Group (REWG) to identify and prioritize opportunities to integrate racial equity into Lahontan Water Board programs and practices. The REWG's focus is to increase employee awareness, conduct internal and external engagement to identify and prioritize opportunities to advance racial equity, and to develop a Regional Racial Equity Resolution (RE Resolution) and a Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan (Action Plan). The purpose of the RE Resolution and Action Plan is to formalize the Lahontan Region's commitment and efforts to advance racial equity and environmental justice.
12. On January 18, 2023, the State Water Board's Racial Equity Team presented their Racial Equity Action Plan to the State Water Board. The State Water Board's Racial Equity Action Plan includes specific actions the State Water Board will take to address racial inequities, as well as metrics to measure progress. With their Racial Equity Action Plan, they envision a sustainable California where race no longer predicts where clean water is available or who has access to it.

Acknowledging Racism and Environmental Inequities in the Lahontan Region

13. Historically, decision-makers representing government agencies used race to establish structures and systems that continue to deliver disparate outcomes, including wealth, health, educational, and environmental inequities.
14. Many federal, state, and local laws and policies were designed explicitly to prevent people of color from fully participating and receiving benefits. Black, Indigenous, Latino, people of color (BIPOC), underrepresented and disadvantaged communities, as well as multi-ethnic and multi-racial groups have suffered nature deprivation, exposure to pollution, forced labor or isolation, segregation and/or exclusion, unequal access to health, economic, and social services, and other injustices both across California and within the Lahontan region.
15. As in the rest of California, Native American Tribes within the Lahontan Region have endured systemic and institutional racism. Settlers and their governing authorities took Indigenous land and resources by unjust and inequitable means resulting in the loss of tribal lands and resources essential to their spiritual, cultural, and economic well-being and livelihoods. Settlers also sometimes engaged in genocide and imprisonment of Native American Tribes. The Lahontan Water Board acknowledges that conditions for California Native American Tribes remain inequitable due to bias, prejudice, systemic, and institutional racism that continues to (a) prevent equal access to resources and institutions, (b) undermine cultural, governmental, and natural resources sovereignty, and (c) limit protection from harms and injustices.
16. Direct and indirect risks and harms to ecosystems, public health, economies, and infrastructure from climate change have fallen disproportionately upon underrepresented and disadvantaged communities who are least able to prepare for and recover from these impacts such as heat waves, drought, and flooding.

Advancing Racial Equity and Environmental Justice in the Lahontan Region

17. The Water Boards' workforce does not fully reflect the racial composition of the state. United States Census Bureau data collected via the 2019 American Community Survey show that 37% of California's population is white, yet the Water Boards' workforce census data from 2020 show that 57% of the Water Boards' workforce and 69% of the Water Boards' management is white. Similarly, the 2019 American Community Survey data show that 63% of California's population comprises Black, Indigenous, and people of color, compared to only 43% of the Water Boards' workforce and 31% of the Water Boards' management. In 2019, the Water Boards released the document, "Immediate Hiring Practices Action Plan for Advancing Workforce Diversity at the Water Boards," which aligns with CalEPA's "Practices to Advance Racial Equity in Workforce Planning." Both documents were developed to articulate the benefits of a diverse workforce and to identify practices to advance racial equity. The Water Boards' plan directs hiring managers and supervisors to take specific short-term actions to improve workforce diversity while a more holistic plan is being developed.

18. The Lahontan Water Board acknowledges that a diverse workforce is necessary to protect water quality for all communities in the Lahontan Region. A diverse workforce promotes a broad array of life experiences and viewpoints and brings a diverse perspective to resolve the Water Boards' most challenging issues and helps to improve community engagement. The Lahontan Water Board will benefit from increased diversity to ensure that staff and leadership reflect the diverse communities that we serve.
19. The Lahontan Water Board acknowledges that its workforce is split between two regional offices, in Victorville and South Lake Tahoe. Whilst there is a geographical divide between office locations, staff of the Lahontan Region work as one cohesive unit to protect, enhance, and restore the waters of the Lahontan Region. Staff are tasked with the same mission, share the same regional goals and priorities, and work together despite geographic separation.
20. The Lahontan Water Board prioritizes staff's participation in implicit bias and racial equity trainings conducted by the State Water Board's Training Services.
21. The Lahontan Water Board strives to incorporate racial equity and environmental justice considerations into all water quality decisions and regulatory actions.
22. The Lahontan Water Board supports CalEPA's "Plan to Achieve Racial Equity" to 1) improve access to data and information on racial equity; 2) improve communication with communities and partners; 3) improve language access; 4) advance racial equity trainings for the CalEPA workforce; and 5) improve workforce hiring, retention, and promotion practices to advance racial equity within the environmental protection role that each board, department, and office shares with CalEPA.
23. The Lahontan Water Board recognizes the need to further address racial inequity and environmental injustice. The Lahontan Water Board will exercise its leadership and regulatory authority to ensure clean water is available to all communities for all purposes and incorporate racial equity and environmental justice considerations into all water quality decisions and regulatory actions. Through this Resolution and future actions, the Lahontan Water Board and its staff commit to better representing and serving Lahontan Region communities by 1) addressing the connection between protecting and managing water quality and systemic and institutional racism and 2) fostering greater workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion within the agency.
24. The Lahontan Water Board strives to implement regulatory activities and water quality projects in a manner that treats all people fairly, and that protects historically vulnerable, marginalized, underrepresented, and disadvantaged communities from harm. The Lahontan Water Board envisions clean water for human uses, wildlife viability, and environmental resource protection for current and future generations. Through our core values of integrity, accountability, transparency, respect, and balance, we strive in the implementation of our mission to restore, enhance, and preserve the quality of the Region's surface waters and groundwaters.

Racial Equity Goals Across Water Quality Programs

25. The Lahontan Water Board implements a variety of water quality programs to protect beneficial uses of groundwater and surface water in the Region. In accordance with the State Board Resolution No. 2021-0050, water quality program implementation across the Region will include evaluation of permitting, inspection, and regulatory oversight actions to ensure racially equitable outcomes from those actions. Resources will be made available to ensure racial equity and environmental justice initiatives are successful, to include outreach to BIPOC communities influenced by Lahontan Water Board permit actions, to facilitate staff access to racial equity training programs, and to integrate CalEnviroScreen tools for understanding the cumulative environmental burden on BIPOC communities from regulated discharges and unauthorized spills.
26. Public Notice: The Lahontan Water Board provided notice of its intention to consider this matter at a public meeting and provided an opportunity for interested persons to comment on the tentative resolution and its attachments. The draft resolution and its attachments were mailed to the interested persons and regulatory agencies and posted on the Board's website.
27. Public Meeting: The Lahontan Water Board, at a public meeting, heard and considered all comments pertaining to this matter.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board:

1. Condemns acts of racism, xenophobia, bigotry, white supremacy, and institutional and systemic racism; adopts racial equity, diversity, and inclusion as core values; and acknowledges the role of government agencies in redressing racial inequities and dismantling institutional and systemic racism.
2. Commits to making racial equity, diversity, inclusion, and environmental justice central to our work as we implement our mission so that the access to the beneficial uses of water that the Lahontan Water Board protects, and outcomes we influence, are not determined by a person's race and the benefits are shared equitably by all people.
3. Commits to ensuring our work and decision-making address the disproportionate impacts on BIPOC individuals represented in the most vulnerable communities and in unsheltered populations, while ensuring the full benefits of the Lahontan Water Board's programs for all people.
4. Commits to improving outreach and engagement with BIPOC, underrepresented and disadvantaged communities by meeting people in their communities and spaces to

seek out their perspectives to increase accessibility and participation in the decision-making process.

5. Reaffirms our commitment to improving communication, working relationships, and co-management practices with California Native American Tribes in the Lahontan Region, including seeking input and consultation on the Water Boards' rules, regulations, plans, policies, and programs to advance decisions and policies that better protect California's water resources. The Lahontan Water Board recognizes and values tribes' traditional ecological knowledge and historic experience with managing California's water resources since time immemorial.
6. Commits to improving access to healthy, natural spaces by fostering pollution prevention, water quality improvement, and habitat restoration in BIPOC, underrepresented and disadvantaged communities. The Lahontan Water Board will also prioritize coordination and permitting of proposed projects involving compensatory mitigation, water quality improvements, and habitat restoration within underrepresented and disadvantaged communities.
7. Reaffirms our commitment to the protection of water quality in all communities, including BIPOC communities disproportionately burdened by environmental pollution through actions including, but not limited to:
 - a. Cleanup of contaminated soil, soil vapor, and groundwater;
 - b. Control of wastes discharged to land and surface water;
 - c. Restoration of impaired surface waters and degraded aquifers; and
 - d. Promotion of multi-benefit water quality projects.
8. Commits to prioritizing financial assistance, increasing technical assistance, and supporting local capacity-building to advance positive water quality outcomes that benefit BIPOC, underrepresented and disadvantaged communities served by the Lahontan Water Board.
9. Affirms our commitment to uphold California's human right to water law, upholding the State Water Board's human right to water resolution, and demonstrates that every human being in California—including people from BIPOC communities — deserve safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, sanitation, recreation, and spiritual purposes.
10. Commits to implementation of those components of the State Water Board's Resolution No. 2017-0012, Comprehensive Response to Climate Change, that involves the Lahontan Water Board and implementation of the Lahontan Water Board's Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy Resolution No. R6T-2019-0277 to address, in part, the disproportionate effects of extreme hydrologic conditions on BIPOC communities, prioritizing:

- a. The right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible drinking water and sanitation; and
 - b. Sustainable management and protection of local surface water and groundwater resources.
11. Reaffirms that all Lahontan Region staff and Board members work together as one organization regardless of geographic differences in office locations. Staff and Board members share the same mission, regional goals, and regional priorities, and are united together as the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.
 12. Commits to implementing employee recruitment and retention actions to improve workforce diversity, consistent with the State Water Board's "Immediate Action Plan for Advancing Workforce Diversity," and to work toward a future where race is not a predictor of professional outcomes for our employees at the Lahontan Water Board. The State Water Board's "Immediate Action Plan for Advancing Workforce Diversity" focuses on the following key goals: 1) Requiring hiring panelists to have training on implicit bias or racial equity, 2) Including a diversity statement in job advertisements, 3) Establishing model diversity interview questions, and 4) Focusing recruitment efforts with goals to include improving the Water Board's brand, providing a positive candidate experience, and establishing and sustaining partnerships with educational institutions and community organizations.
 13. Encourages the governor to consider Water Board member appointments that are representative of the communities served and that have demonstrated commitment to racial equity, environmental justice, and deep experience working directly with California Native American tribes, or BIPOC, underrepresented and disadvantaged communities.
 14. Commits to supporting racial equity training for Lahontan Water Board staff to create and maintain a workforce culture that is inclusive and actively anti-racist, mitigates bias, and has competency around issues of race and equity. Internal engagement training activities will prioritize community outreach and engagement and include education on tribal history and culture.
 15. Directs the Executive Officer to develop and implement a Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan (Action Plan) that articulates a vision for racial equity, inclusion, diversity, and environmental justice and outlines specific actions the Lahontan Water Board will take to support racial equity and environmental justice and avoid exacerbating, perpetuating, or creating an environmental justice issue directed towards a BIPOC community or unduly excluding a BIPOC community from participation in the Board's decision-making process.

I, Michael Plaziak, Executive Officer, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of the resolution adopted by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region, on August 21, 2024.

MICHAEL R. PLAZIAK, P.G.
EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**STAFF REPORT ON THE
DRAFT RACIAL EQUITY RESOLUTION
FOR THE LAHONTAN REGION**



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Gavin Newsom, Governor

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Yana Garcia, Secretary

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
E. Joaquin Esquivel, Chair

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD,
LAHONTAN REGION**

AMY HORNE, PHD, CHAIR
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KEITH DYAS, MEMBER
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1 Summary

Lahontan Water Board staff have prepared the Draft Resolution No. R6-2024-0010 Condemning Racism, Xenophobia, Bigotry, and Racial Injustice and Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism in the Lahontan Region (Draft RE Resolution) for the Lahontan Water Board to consider for adoption. In summary, the purpose of the Draft RE Resolution is to accept responsibility for confronting structural institutional racism and advancing racial equity within the Lahontan Water Board’s purview, and to align with the State Water Resources Control Board’s (State Water Board) ongoing efforts. The vision is that race should not predict a person’s access to or quality of water resources.

Staff are also in the early phases of developing a Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan (Action Plan). The purpose of the Draft RE Resolution and Action Plan is to formalize the Lahontan Region’s commitment and efforts to advance racial equity. The Action Plan will contain proposed actions, supporting ideas and measurements of success including metrics, milestones, data, and other indicators that can be used to indicate successful completion of actions or to track progress toward actions over time. Efforts toward development of the Action Plan are anticipated to increase after adoption of the Draft RE Resolution.

2 Discussion

2.1 Background

In California, race is a predictor of access to, and the quality of, the governmental services a person receives, including access to safe, clean water for drinking and affordable services to support sanitation as well as wastewater collection, treatment, and reuse. In fact, race is the strongest predictor of water and sanitation access. The [California Environmental Protection Agency’s 2021 Pollution and Prejudice StoryMap](#)¹ and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard and Assessment (OEHHA) [CalEnviroScreen](#)² data analyses demonstrate that historically redlined neighborhoods are “generally associated with worse environmental conditions and greater population vulnerability to the effects of pollution today.” In addition, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities are overrepresented in the neighborhoods that are the most environmentally degraded.

In 2018, the California Environmental Protection Agency developed a Plan of Action for Racial Equity (PARE). The three main PARE Goals include the following: 1) increase workforce equity in recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion, 2) enhance workforce capacity in formal and informal training, and 3) expand language access to services and resources.

In fall 2020, the State Water Board convened a Water Boards Racial Equity Team to advance racial equity for the communities that the Water Boards serve, and internally within the organization. The State Water Boards’ Racial Equity Team was comprised

¹ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f167b251809c43778a2f9f040f43d2f5>

² <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-40>

of staff representing various divisions, offices, and regions from all levels of the organization. The team was tasked with three major priorities: 1) establish a foundation of internal and external engagement that values listening and collaboration to drive action; 2) draft a resolution on racial equity to be considered for adoption by the State Water Board and leveraged by the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards) to adopt their own resolutions; and 3) develop racial equity strategies and action plans to drive efforts for the coming years.

On November 16, 2021, the State Water Board adopted Resolution No. 2021-0050, Condemning Racism, Xenophobia, Bigotry, and Racial Injustice and Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism (State Water Board Resolution). The State Water Board Resolution acknowledged the role racism has played in creating inequities in affordability and access to clean and safe water; committed to advancing racial equity within the State Water Board and the communities it serves; directed its staff to develop a racial equity action plan; and encouraged the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards to adopt similar resolutions.

On January 18, 2023, State Water Board staff presented an informational item to the State Water Board on their Racial Equity Action Plan. The State Water Board's Racial Equity Action Plan does not expand or modify the Water Boards' existing authorities, but rather it is a compilation of actions intended to advance the State Water Board's efforts to create a future where we equitably preserve, enhance, and restore California's water resources and drinking water for all Californians, regardless of race, and where race is not a predictor of professional outcomes for Water Boards employees. The Racial Equity Action Plan sets goals for the State Water Board to address racial inequities and identifies metrics to measure progress. The State Water Board's webpage on [Racial Equity Information and Resources](#) includes links to the State Water Board's Racial Equity Resolution and Racial Equity Action Plan, as well as racial equity-related definitions, frequently asked questions, and references.³

Lahontan Water Board Racial Equity Working Group

In fall 2022, the Lahontan Water Board Executive Officer convened a staff led Racial Equity Working Group (REWG) to identify and prioritize opportunities to integrate racial equity into Lahontan Water Board programs and practices. The REWG is staff-led, and members have all volunteered to participate in the group. REWG members have completed tasks through a discretionary resource effort above and beyond their normal assignments and responsibilities.

The REWG's focus is to increase employee awareness, conduct internal and external engagement to identify and prioritize opportunities to advance racial equity, and to develop a Draft RE Resolution (Attachment 1) and a Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan (Action Plan). The purpose of the Draft RE Resolution and future

³ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/racial_equity/information-and-resources.html

Action Plan is to formalize the Lahontan Region’s commitment and efforts to advance racial equity and environmental justice for our Region.

From March 2023 through February 2024, the REWG sought internal engagement through All-Staff meeting presentations, anonymous surveys, and program-specific discussions. An update on REWG efforts was provided as an Executive Officer’s Report at the August 2023 Lahontan Water Board Meeting. In October 2023, an initial draft of the Draft RE Resolution was shared internally with all Region 6 staff and the REWG worked to address concerns and make changes to the draft through a transparent process. The goal of this effort was to provide a variety of opportunities for all employees to give meaningful input regarding racial equity at the Lahontan Water Board.

2.2 Human Right to Water

The Draft RE Resolution affirms our commitment to uphold California Water Code section 106.3, California’s human right to water law, which establishes a state policy that every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes and directs state agencies to consider this policy when adopting regulations pertinent to those uses of water. California Water Code section 106.3, subdivision (a) states that it is the policy of the State of California “that every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitation purposes.” The Draft RE Resolution recognizes that individuals from BIPOC communities are disproportionately affected by lack of safe, clean, and affordable drinking water, and reaffirms our commitment to prioritize and uphold California’s human right to water for every human being in California.

2.3 Environmental Justice

Racial equity and environmental justice are closely connected, and the Water Boards’ mission is strengthened by a commitment to racial equity and environmental justice. Environmental Justice principles call for the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income in the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of all environmental laws, regulations, and policies that affect every community’s natural resources and the places people live, work, play, and learn. Racial equity occurs when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and outcomes for all groups are improved. The Lahontan Water Board’s Draft RE Resolution is in alignment with the Lahontan Water Board’s historical actions focused on environmental justice and engaging with underrepresented communities.

At the Lahontan Water Board’s June 18, 2014 meeting in Bishop, California, an [overview of environmental justice](#) was provided by State and Lahontan Water Board staff that included presentations by two Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP) groups on their efforts to evaluate the need of and provide assistance to small, disadvantaged communities. Discussions at the June 2014 Board Meeting led to development of a January 2015 [Environmental Justice Implementation](#)

[Staff Report](#) that provided additional details on how the Lahontan Water Board is implementing environmental justice and identified the needs for more complete implementation to ensure *the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies documents*. The January 2015 [Environmental Justice Implementation Staff Report](#) included eleven recommendations for implementation by the Lahontan Water Board:

Recommendation	Status Update
1. Identify an EJ liaison.	Complete. Anna Garcia and Melissa Thaw serve as our Equity and Justice Coordinator and Alternate, respectively, for Region 6.
2. Add an EJ contact and EJ links to website.	Complete. Environmental Justice Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (ca.gov)
3. Train staff on EJ.	In progress. Several Lahontan staff members have completed courses, including Advancing Racial Equity at the Water Boards and Implicit Bias, offered through the Water Boards Training Services.
4. Identify Lahontan staffing needs to coordinate with disadvantaged communities (DACs) and tribes.	In progress. Lahontan staff implement AB52 consultation and AB2108 to coordinate with DACs. Danny McClure serves as our Tribal Coordinator for Region 6.
5. Identify Lahontan staffing needs to facilitate implementation of Proposition 1 for (1) additional permitting for ecosystem and watershed restoration projects, (2) IRWM support, (3) additional permitting for recycling projects, and (4) technical assistance and project oversight for groundwater cleanup projects.	While disbursement of Prop 1 funding is complete, stakeholders in the Lahontan Region received funding for stormwater, water recycling, and groundwater projects, as well as small community grant funding for drinking water projects.
6. Consider adding a subsistence fishing and cultural use beneficial uses to the Basin Plan.	In progress. At the April 18, 2024, Lahontan Water Board Meeting included a Public Hearing on Draft Substitute Environmental Documentation and Draft Basin Plan Amendment to Designate Tribal Beneficial Uses in the Mono Basin .
7. Continue to hold Board meetings in the areas most affected by Board decisions.	In progress. To reach the greatest number of stakeholders, the Lahontan Water Board holds Board meetings at several locations across the Lahontan Region throughout the year. Meeting locations generally include

Recommendation	Status Update
	Victorville, Barstow, Apple Valley, Bishop, Lee Vining, Truckee, and South Lake Tahoe.
8. Continue to support IRWM groups in their efforts to assist DACs.	In progress. The Lahontan Water Board partners with the Mojave IRWM Group, Tahoe Sierra IRWM Group, Transition Habitat, and the Truckee River Watershed Council. As schedules allow, Lahontan staff attend meetings of the Mojave Water Agency Technical Advisory Committee, Antelope Valley IRWM Group, South Tahoe Public Utilities District Stakeholder Advisory Group, Owens Valley Groundwater Authority, Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority, and others.
9. Support and approve Supplemental Environmental Projects that benefit DACs.	In progress. Since 2015, more than \$1.6M in funding has been provided for Supplemental Environmental Projects that benefit DACs and severely disadvantaged communities (SDACs) in the Lahontan Region.
10. Continue to host community technical and educational sessions and conduct outreach efforts.	Lahontan staff routinely engage with community members at monthly Hinkley Community Breakfast events, a community with a long history of environmental justice issues. In April 2023, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) completed a multiyear study that estimates naturally occurring chromium-6 concentrations in the groundwater for the environmental justice community of Hinkley, California. Dr. John Izbicki, lead USGS Scientist for the study, provided a question and answers presentation on the findings of the study at the Lahontan Water Board Meeting on August 30, 2023. Dr. Izbicki also presented the study during a Hinkley Community Breakfast Workshop at the Hinkley Community and Senior Center on August 12, 2023. Lahontan staff participated in the Workshop and offered outreach in English and Spanish to encourage Hinkley community members to provide input on the revision of a Cleanup and Abatement Order that will establish chromium-6 background concentrations and targets for the completion of the PG&E remediation project in Hinkley. Lahontan staff

Recommendation	Status Update
	also participate in career fairs hosted by local colleges and universities, including the Cal Poly Pomona Korean American Scientists and Engineers Associations (KSEA) in September 2023 and the California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Spring 2024 Career Fair. In addition, Lahontan staff participate in the annual Water Conservation Festival hosted at Spring Valley Lake by San Bernardino County Public Works and more recently, Lahontan staff joined in the Wonders of Water and Environmental Education (WOWEE) event hosted by the Lake Tahoe Unified School District.
11. Continue to provide written materials in Spanish and provide translations at public meetings where needed.	In progress. The Lahontan Water Board consistently provides meeting agendas in Spanish and provides Spanish interpretation services during meetings, as appropriate.

The Lahontan Water Board strives to implement regulatory activities and water quality projects in a manner that ensures the fair treatment of all people, including BIPOC, underrepresented and disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, the Lahontan Water Board is committed to providing all stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the public process and provide meaningful input to decisions that affect their communities.

2.4 Climate Change

The Lahontan Region, like the rest of the State of California, faces the threat and the effects of climate change for the foreseeable and distant future. The Lahontan Water Board recognizes that the effects of climate change and associated extreme hydrologic conditions have a disproportionate negative impact on BIPOC and disadvantaged communities. Current and future climate impacts include increasing frequency of extreme weather events, including extended droughts and prolonged fire seasons with larger and more intense fires. Changes in hydrology include more precipitation falling as rain versus snow, more extreme storm events, declining snowpack, and changes in the timing and volume of peak runoff. Vulnerabilities of water resources include, but are not limited to, subsidence from overdrafting of groundwater aquifers, erosion, flooding, related risks to water and wastewater infrastructure and operations, and reduced groundwater availability coupled with the potential for concentrated groundwater pollutants. To proactively prepare and respond to climate change, the Lahontan Water Board is implementing the Lahontan Water Board’s Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy Resolution No. R6T-2019-0277 (Climate Change Strategy) which supports utilizing regulatory tools (such as policy, permitting, monitoring, and

enforcement) and working with external organizations or communities to improve groundwater supply and quality, protect headwaters, floodplains, and riparian areas, and ensure the reliability of drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in the face of extreme weather events. The Climate Change Strategy is consistent with the [Governor's Executive Order B-30-15](#)⁴ and the State Water Board's [Comprehensive Response to Climate Change Resolution No. 2017-0012](#)⁵. The Draft RE Resolution includes Finding #16 to describe climate change impacts and Resolved #9 that commits to implementation of the Climate Change Strategy to address, in part, the disproportionate effects of extreme hydrologic conditions.

2.5 Next Steps - Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan

The next step is to develop a Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan (Action Plan) that sets goals for the Lahontan Water Board to address racial inequities and environmental justice within the Board's regulatory purview with respect to water quality in the Lahontan Region. The Action Plan will contain proposed actions, supporting ideas and measurements of success including metrics, milestones, data, and other indicators that can be used to indicate successful completion of actions or to track progress toward actions over time. We aim to develop the Action Plan in collaboration with tribes, stakeholders, and the communities most impacted by racial inequities and environmental justice issues. Staff intend to consider the State Water Board's Racial Equity Action Plan as a starting point and develop a process to seek out and incorporate community input development of our region-specific Action Plan. In addition, staff will also consider input provided in public comments on the Draft RE Resolution related to the Action Plan. Staff will prioritize and schedule the development of the Action Plan, depending on available resources, and report on progress one year after the Lahontan Water Board adopts the Draft RE Resolution, and will report on implementation progress annually thereafter.

Staff will also continue efforts to implement and achieve the eleven recommendations identified in the January 2015 [Environmental Justice Implementation Staff Report](#). While we have implemented actions to achieve several of the recommendations, there is still more work to do to further Environmental Justice in our Region. We will document and incorporate this work in the Action Plan.

3 Conclusion

Lahontan Water Board staff are committed to furthering racial equity and environmental justice as part of our ongoing activities to implement our water quality mission in coordination with our statewide Water Board counterparts, environmental justice partners, tribes, and the community members and regulated entities we serve. The adoption of the Lahontan Water Board Draft RE Resolution is an important step towards

⁴ <https://www.library.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/GovernmentPublications/executive-order-proclamation/39-B-30-15.pdf>

⁵ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/resolutions/2017/rs2017_0012.pdf

demonstrating this commitment, to be followed by an implementable and measurable Action Plan. Moving forward, the Lahontan Water Board will implement a stepwise iterative and transparent approach to ensure racial equity and environmental justice considerations and perspectives are effectively integrated into our organizational mission, goals, values, and culture.

4 Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Lahontan Water Board adopt Racial Equity Resolution No. R6-2024-0010, as proposed.