

State Water Resources Control Board's 2027-2029 Racial Equity Action Plan Draft Proposed Action & Metrics

The Office of Public Engagement, Equity, and Tribal Affairs (OPEETA) appreciates the collaboration with the public in continuing the State Water Board's racial equity mission. The purpose of this Racial Equity Action Plan is to build on the progress made under the 2023–2025 plan by identifying meaningful actions that will continue to advance racial equity and will deepen the impact within the Water Boards and the communities we serve.

The State Water Board is soliciting feedback on the proposed actions and metrics for the 2027-2029 Racial Equity Action Plan, found within this document.

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Division of Water Quality (DWQ)

Action	Metric
Conduct Equity Alignment for Underground Storage Tanks (UST) Cleanup Sites.	Number of UST sites cleaned in vulnerable communities in response to the plan.
Identify opportunities to improve the Water Board's use of community-collected data in the Integrated Report (IR).	Number of community-collected data sets used per Integrated Report cycle.
Identify waterbodies in Tribal, Black, and other communities of color, and disadvantaged communities that are listed as impaired or are on the watch list (i.e., IR Category 3) with state water quality data to consider prioritizing the waterbodies for future monitoring.	Number of waterbodies identified for future monitoring; percentage of waterbodies prioritized for action.
Identify opportunities to make water quality safety information and data more accessible to the public.	Number of data accessibility improvement opportunities identified; number of recommended next steps documented.
Strengthen coordination and early, meaningful engagement with California Native American Tribes on nonpoint source program grant-funded projects.	Number of Final Program-wide expectations for coordination with Tribes developed.
Use the feedback received from the Agricultural Expert Panel to evaluate the existing and proposed regulatory framework in the irrigated lands and dairy programs and identify opportunities to adapt and align program improvements to better support small and socially disadvantaged farms, uplift Indigenous California land stewardship practices, strengthen equitable outcomes, and realign the program to address racial injustices.	Number of recommendations compiled and implemented from the agricultural expert panel.
Identify opportunities to improve equitable access to recycled water through analysis of Volumetric Annual Report data. Coordinate with the State Water Board's Division of Financial Assistance and the State Department of Water Resources to identify California communities that have the most	List of facilities and municipalities with the potential to reuse domestic wastewater as recycled water by 2028 Map of the state with areas with the most recycled water potential/where recycled water is underutilized by 2028

potential for the development of recycled water as a water supply.	
Implement the STORMS Engagement Plan by embedding a structured, repeatable engagement process into all STORMS project development phases. This includes identifying priority audiences (with emphasis on Tribal, Black, and other communities of color and disadvantaged communities), conducting targeted engagement activities, using the Engagement Record Template, and ensuring community perspectives directly inform project selection, refinement, and policy decisions. Completion of actions proposed for next STORMS project cycle ending in 2031	Number of STORMS projects that complete Engagement Records per Section 3.4 of the Plan. Number of engagement activities conducted with priority audiences in Appendix A (especially Tribal, Black, and other communities of color) Annual summary describing where community feedback prompted program or policy adjustments supporting racial equity.
Assess whether surface waters are disproportionately impacted by dredge or fill projects or restored in Tribal, Black, and other communities of color and disadvantaged communities, and disadvantaged communities. Leverage new tools to analyze where dredge or fill impacts and restoration projects are occurring along with tools such as CalEnviroscreen.	Proportion of change in impacted wetland acres and stream channel linear feet in Tribal, Black, and other communities of color and, disadvantaged communities and disadvantaged communities relative to other communities. Percentage of restoration projects in Tribal, Black, and other communities of color and disadvantaged communities relative to other communities. Percentage of mitigation opportunities in Tribal, Black, and other communities of color and disadvantaged communities relative to other communities.

Build off the results of the Wastewater Needs Assessment Baseline Survey Results to advance access to safe, functional, affordable, and dignified collection and disposal of wastewater from human uses; including adequate sanitation systems, practices, and wastewater treatment to protect public health and the environment.	Deliverable: Final tracking system of communities identified in baseline survey Deliverable: Final Community Engagement Plan Increased number of identified communities with solutions and funding identified.
Conduct meaningful public engagement considering language access and provide materials in multiple languages for Aquifer Exemptions to Satisfy SB-1304 (2024 Limon) Develop factsheet/flyer in multiple languages to post and publish for maximum effectiveness.	Number of increased community members engaged. Number of public comments at Water Boards' public community meetings in order to quantify results.

Division of Financial Assistance (DFA)

Action	Metric
Assess race and ethnicity data and other relevant demographic data, associated with the communities that benefit from funding administered by DFA.	Existing annual funding reports, plans, or websites will be the primary mechanism to report these data, where appropriate.
Develop a plan to translate wastewater and drinking water certified operator exams. Develop training and mentorship programs to expand workforce opportunities in drinking water and wastewater.	Number of exams translated. Number of training and mentorship programs developed.
Provide disadvantaged communities and Tribes with tools and resources necessary to access funding to meet their water infrastructure and cleanup needs. Update DFA websites to be more user-friendly and easier to navigate.	Number of dashboards for funding programs developed.

Division of Water Rights (DWR)

Action	Metric
Work towards making Division-owned modeling tools publicly available.	Number of division-owned publicly available modeling tools or visualizations
Engage Tribal, Black, and other communities of color communities and tribes when developing, implementing, and enforcing instream flow requirements, consistent with all applicable laws and requirements, including those related to water rights, basin planning, public trust resources, and endangered species. Develop and update a webpage that identifies streams with ongoing instream flow development activities.	Number of engagement plans or tribal consultation processes developed for actions related to instream flows. Integration of instream flows information into California Water Accounting, Tracking, and Reporting System (CalWATRS).
Prioritize drinking water security for vulnerable water systems during curtailments.	Number of health and safety exemptions.

Division of Administrative Services (DAS)

Action	Metric
Expand sourcing strategies by building partnerships with Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), student organizations, professional associations, and community organizations to broaden recruitment outreach. These efforts will increase awareness of Water Boards' career opportunities, expand access to diverse talent pools, and support the recruitment of a qualified, inclusive, and representative workforce. Minority Serving Institutions include Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions, Black Serving Institutions, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions.	The recruitment unit will attend more than 30 career fairs each year at MSI-designated educational institutions. A list of minority student organizations at various state universities that regularly share job vacancies.
Develop standard duty statement language for all Water Board staff including, but not limited to professional development, Water Boards equity initiatives, succession planning, and community outreach.	Percentage of duty statements changed across the agency.
Develop and implement the Career Ambassador Program to provide Water Board organizations with the resources to build relationships with schools and groups that could result in more interest in Water Board jobs. This could include joint field trips, guest lectures, joint volunteer efforts	Number of enrolled Career Ambassadors within technical, legal and administration positions

Division of Drinking Water (DDW)

Action	Metric
Expand evaluation of disadvantaged community status in development of regulations. Incorporate racial equity analysis when developing maximum contaminant level priorities (using available data and as data and methods allow).	Number of MCL rulemaking prioritized using the comprehensive tool, which incorporates demographic data and disadvantaged community status.
Advance and achieve consolidations of Disadvantaged Community (DAC) public water systems.	Number of DAC public water system consolidations achieved in 3-year period. Number of DAC public water systems consolidations is currently in process.
Ensure regulatory compliance of DAC water systems. Support DAC Water systems with long-term compliance planning.	Track regulatory compliance within SDWIS (US EPA's Safe Drinking Water Information systems). Number/Percentage of DAC Water Systems with an approved corrective action plan.

Division of Information Technology (DIT)

Action	Metric
Evaluate, report, and develop technical solutions to address usability issues throughout the Water Boards' website for those who have limited internet connectivity and who access the website via mobile devices. (Support: COMMS)	Mobile / low bandwidth testing evaluations and results
Increase access to information by the development of educational materials for program areas to learn fundamental best practices when completing web requests and page redesigns. Materials will cover page layout, information hierarchy and content prioritization as well as digital accessibility/universal design principles for commonly used webpage elements. (Support: ORPP)	Number of internal educational materials and standardized web posting criteria developed.
Develop a content management system for staff to ensure that new content meets branding, plain language, and accessibility requirements.	Content Management System Developed
Develop a plan to address expanded web accessibility requirements to pages that need log-in for password protected information and data.	The number of processes protocol updated

Administrative Hearings Office (AHO)

Action	Metric
Update informational materials regarding Administrative Hearings Office (AHO) hearing and mediation processes, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and guides to hearing and to mediation; post updated materials on AHO webpage. Translate the revised informational materials into Spanish and post on AHO webpage.	Dates of submission of translated materials and FAQs posted to the AHO webpage
Continue to support pro bono attorney representation: • Send requests for participants to AHO's GovDelivery list. • Offer training or other support for attorneys willing to participate in pro bono representation. • Expand and modify the list of pro bono attorneys to include their areas of professional interest as related to AHO hearings and mediations.	Number of attorneys added to the pro-bono list.
Develop an engagement plan to work with regional law school clinics or law schools that may have capacity for pro-bono representation.	Number of Law Schools Engaged

Communications Office (COMMS)

Action	Metric
Translate press releases into Spanish, using Spanish plain language with a few hour turnaround.	The number of Spanish-translated Press Releases
Add new Spanish-speaking bilingual staff to COMMS Office to expand capacity of the Water Board's Spanish-speaking communications.	The number of Spanish-speaking COMMS staff hired
Expand the Water Board's social media reach (Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, X, Bluesky, Threads, Facebook) by increasing multilingual content and working with external communicators and influencers from Tribal, Black, and other communities of color interested in racial equity and environmental justice. Add Environmental Justice Social Media groups to heighten attention to raise engagement on pertinent posts.	Number of multilingual content communicators and Tribal, Black, and other communities of color influencers engaged. Number of posts content communicators and influencers post related to Water Boards and Racial Equity and Environmental Justice.
Develop videos to describe the Water Boards' processes that impact environmental justice communities, how decisions are made, and how people can be involved; post videos in multiple languages or with a variety of subtitle options to the Water Boards' website and share via social media.	Number of videos posted in multiple languages related to Water Board activities.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

Action	Metric
Increase awareness and purpose of the Disability Advisory Committee by having lunch-hour committee-led forums	Number of forums held

Office of Enforcement (OE)

Action	Metric
Continue to improve Water Board participation in community-based environmental violations monitoring meetings (IVAN meetings). Participate in IVAN meetings held by the original 5 pilot communities with environmental concerns to the extent that resources allow.	Number of community meetings attended
Develop a guidance document for improving and streamlining the enforcement complaint process to improve transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to community complaints.	Number of guidance documents developed.
Support for community capacity building, continue to support OPEETA in conducting outreach and providing CalEPA resources and tools to improve environmental advocacy in communities that are disproportionately impacted by environmental pollution (e.g., how to report environmental concerns, local/ state agency contacts, SEP proposal info, etc.). Collaboration with Tribal, Black, and other communities of color is critical to ensure that social change efforts are informed by the lived experience of the communities they seek to benefit.	Number of new environmental justice groups engaged
Provide Environmental Justice resources, materials, support to Regional Board staff that are applicable to water quality enforcement. Consider upcoming major Enforcement permit renewals in the next year and offer resources/ tools/ lessons learned, and support to Regional Water Board staff to improve public engagement and language accessibility in Tribal, Black, and other communities of color. Implement a standing Enforcement Roundtable discussion, featuring enforcement resource and/or tool and their application in various Waterboards program.	Number of environmental justice-related discussions held at Enforcement Roundtables. An internal repository for lessons learned from public engagement in Tribal, Black, and other communities of color throughout the state.

Office of Information Management & Analysis (OIMA)

Action	Metric
Sustain the Equity Data Handbook. Revisions, additions, and other updates will be completed as staff time, bandwidth, and capacity allow. ○ Work with Water Boards equity data subcommittee to add more Use Cases to the Handbook. ○ Continue to add useful content and resources to existing pages. ○ Continue to add guidance, templates, code and other resources related to conducting equity impact analyses for different contexts.	Number of updates made Number of additions made
Identify and expand existing opportunities for public participation in science and community data gathering programs to develop new data collection methods, support existing programs, and incorporate community datasets into data systems and products. Assess and consider barriers to incorporating community science data into water boards' policies and permits. Develop an implementation plan that strategizes how to integrate community science into existing Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) programs. Make the implementation plan outward facing and a public resource for community members to adopt.	Develop a community science monitoring strategic plan. Development of a community science monitoring resource hub that includes guidance, SOPs, & training resources Number of data products and tools published on community science data hub
Continuous, comprehensive publishing all essential Water Board datasets on California Open Data Portal using current open data standards.	Number of datasets added to California Open Data Portal Number of resources added to California Geoportal

Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA)

Action	Metric
Provide briefings for legislators who represent geographic areas with a high percentage of Tribal, Black, and other communities of color communities to help inform them of Water Boards' resources and community participation processes, and to better understand barriers to implementation and hear suggestions for how to overcome them. Explore options for convening with legislative staff for education on Water Boards' policies and programs.	Number of briefings held

Office of Chief Counsel (OCC)

Action	Metric
Develop an outreach plan to raise awareness about State Water Board and Regional Water Board vacancies and the process to apply to be considered for a board member appointment.	Number of Board Member appointments advertised with the engagement plan

Office of Public Engagement Equity & Tribal Affairs (OPEETA)

Action	Metric
Develop a Tribal funding guidance document to remove barriers and assist Tribes with state funding processes. (Support DFA)	Number of Tribal Projects funded. Reduction in incomplete/ delayed Tribal funding applications within DFA attributable to Water Boards requirements.
Support Regional Water Boards and the Division of Water Quality to advance Tribal Beneficial Uses designations.	Number and percentage of designation requests received, initiated, and completed.
Use the consultation tracker to track consultation processes and document outcomes in order to strengthen accountability for consultation and engagement of Tribes.	Number of consultations entered in the consultation tracker. Percentage of consultations in tracker with documented outcomes.
Develop a Native American history and Tribal affairs best practices training for Water Boards staff in partnership with the CalEPA Tribal Advisory Committee (update best practices training when appropriate) (Support: ORPP)	Number of training materials developed to train staff in Tribal affairs best practices
Finalize the Public Engagement and Environmental Justice Manual. Develop guidance for Water Board staff on how to use this tool and make informational presentation on the manual to Water Board's Roundtables.	Number of Presentations made to Roundtables and other Water Board meetings. Number of Water Board programs engaged for training on the manual.
Develop Language Services training that covers the Language Access Policy and best practices for Water Boards staff when interacting with the public. (update best practices training when appropriate)	Number of registrations Number of course completions
Develop and implement Plain Language review training for all Water Boards Staff. Post guidance document on OPEETA Resources SharePoint page for Water Boards staff.	Percentage increase of language services request received Number of requests for guidance from Water Board programs
Develop methodology to conduct assessment of disproportionate impacts to disadvantaged, Tribal, Black, and other communities of color into	Number of impact assessments of HABs

monitoring and mitigation of Harmful Algal Blooms. (OIMA support)	
Develop and implement a Water Boards retention strategy to demonstrating an organizational commitment to career growth and a healthy workplace culture, The retention strategy will serve as a component of the Retain, Attract, Recruit Equitably (RARE) Process.	Development of a Water Boards Retention Strategy

Office of Research Planning & Performance (ORPP)

Action	Metric
Incorporate analysis of the distributional impacts related to Tribes, communities of color, or disadvantaged communities, when possible and appropriate, into economic analyses of Water Boards' regulations and policies, including Economic Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Standardized Regulatory Impact Assessments (SRIAs).	Number of economic analyses incorporating analysis of such distributional impacts.
Increase the portion of Water Board peer review requests that mention or address equity or Tribal impacts, where appropriate.	Percent of Water Board peer reviews that do so.

Office of Sustainable Groundwater Management (OSGM)

Action	Metric
Conduct targeted outreach and listening sessions with affected Tribal, Black, and other communities of color in groundwater basins prior to State Water Board intervention under SGMA authorities.	Total number of engagement efforts (workshops, direct communications) conducted with Tribal, Black, and other communities of color communities. Summary report tracking community feedback gathered and incorporated prior to intervention decisions.
Deliver reporting assistance workshops and technical support to assist Tribal, Black, and other communities of color landholders and community members in complying with probationary reporting requirements.	Number of reporting assistance workshops held prior to each reporting deadline. Number of community participants with reporting assistance.
Host public workshops and consultation sessions in affected Tribal, Black, and other communities of color communities prior to presenting an Interim Plan under SGMA for adoption by the Board.	Number of workshops hosted prior to Interim Plan adoption. Number of community participants engaged.
Provide direct technical reporting assistance via phone and/or email, including dedicated support from bilingual staff fluent in Spanish, to help groundwater pumpers and community members navigate and fulfill Groundwater Extraction Annual Reporting System (GEARS) reporting requirements.	Number of GEARS reporting inquiries answered by phone and email during reporting cycle. Number of Spanish-speaking support interactions completed by bilingual team members.

Office of Delta Water Master (ODWM)

Action	Metric
Develop an Engagement Strategy for activities with Collation for Equity in Water allocation (COEQWAL), a group making water allocation information and modeled scenarios accessible to the public, Tribes, and community groups so that they have the tools to advocate.	COEQWAL Engagement Strategy developed