

LAHONTAN REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD

DRAFT RACIAL EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN

DATE 2026

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Introduction

The State Water Board and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (collectively, the Water Boards) have a shared mission to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water. This mission is strengthened by a commitment to racial equity and environmental justice. Racial equity is achieved when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved. Environmental justice (EJ) means 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 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.

This Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Action Plan (Action Plan) does not expand or modify the Water Boards' existing authorities, but rather it is a compilation of actions intended to advance the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's (Lahontan Water Board) 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 Lahontan Water Board employees.

This Action Plan sets goals for the Lahontan Water Board to address racial inequities and identifies metrics to measure progress.

The Lahontan Region

The Lahontan Water Board aims to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses. The jurisdiction of the Lahontan Water Board, also referred to as Region 6, is 570 miles long and spans 39,210 square miles, extending from the Oregon border to the northern Mojave Desert and includes all of California east of the Sierra Nevada crest. Region 6 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. Region 6 is also home to a diverse array of people from a wide variety of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Indigenous peoples have lived in, cared for, and stewarded relationships with the lands and waters of this region since time immemorial. California Native American Tribal communities continue to live here today. Waters of Region 6 remain vital to the cultures, lifeways, and sovereignty of the Tribes in this area. The following map reflects the boundaries of the Lahontan Region.

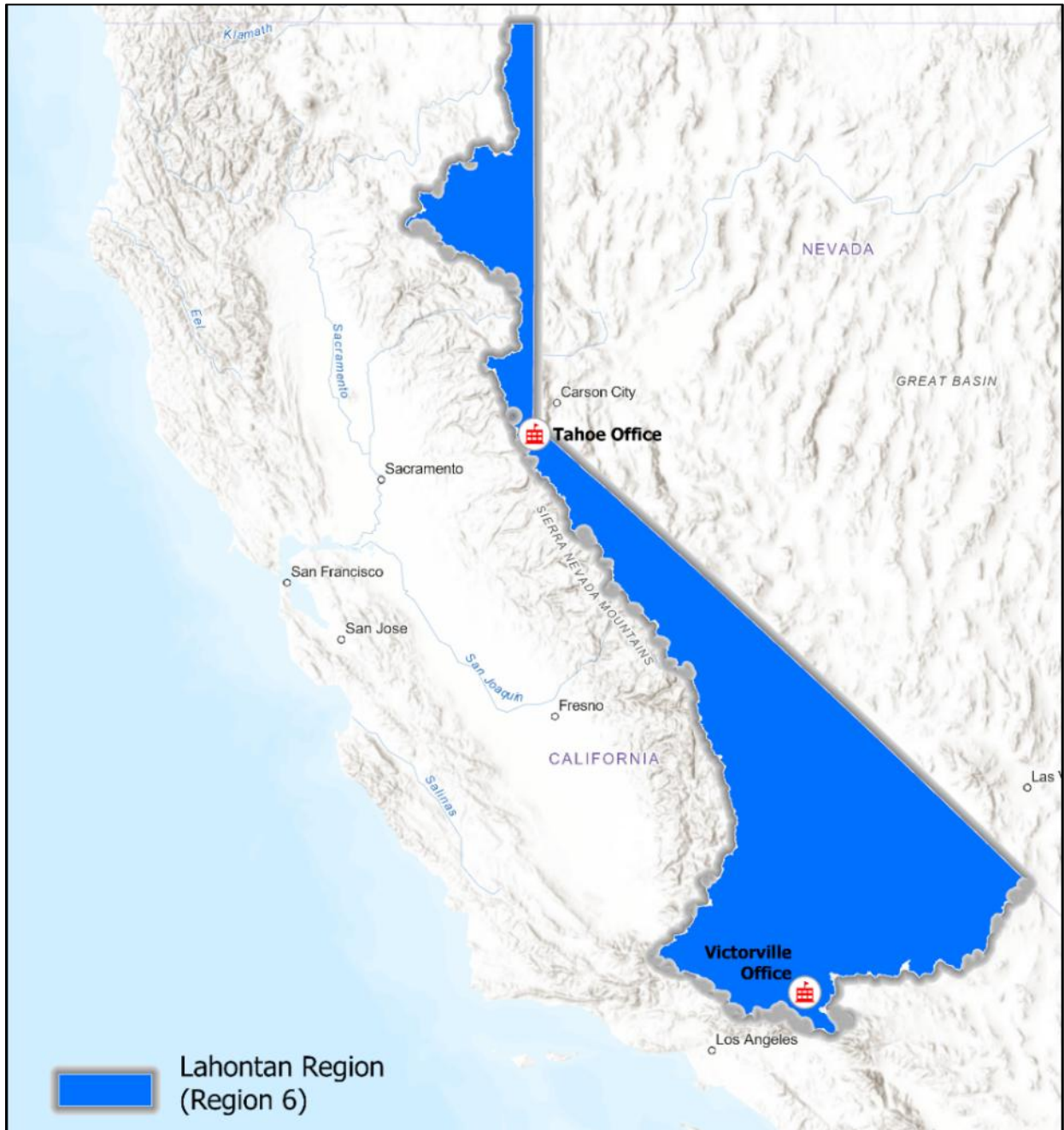


Figure 1. Map of the Lahontan Water Board (Region 6) boundary, which extends from the Oregon border down to the Mojave Desert. The Lahontan Water Board is composed of staff from two offices, one in South Lake Tahoe and one in Victorville.

How We Got Here

The Lahontan Water Board is committed to racial equity and EJ. This means striving to create a California where race no longer predicts a person's access to, or quality of water resources, where Water Boards' employees at all organizational levels reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of California, and where a racial equity lens is consistently applied to Water Boards' decision-making processes. The State Water Resources Control Board adopted its Racial Equity Resolution on November 16, 2021 which encourages Regional Water Boards to adopt their own resolutions and an action plan.

The Lahontan Water Board stated its commitment to racial equity within Racial Equity Resolution [R6-2024-0036](#). The August 2024 Lahontan Water Board [meeting agenda item](#) includes a detailed background and discussion on the resolution. This document contains the Lahontan Water Board's planned actions to fulfill the commitment.

The Lahontan Water Board's Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Working Group (REWG) looked inward to start the Action Plan. Initial actions came from the resolution document and internal staff discussion. The team considered each action's needed resources and relationship to the Lahontan Water Board's goals. Additionally, the REWG referenced similar action plans from throughout the State as models. This Action Plan incorporates internal and external feedback and input.

What Guides Us

The regional goals guide the Lahontan Water Board. These regional goals provide focus, clarity and direction. From major policy direction, prioritization of permit development or renewal, to day-to-day workplan prioritization decisions, our regional goals help us stay focused, consistent, and true to our mission, vision, and values. The following regional goals were presented at the June 2021 Lahontan Water Board Meeting with Board member and staff collaborative input.

1. Protect human health and aquatic life.
2. Protect/Improve aquatic resources and water quality.
3. Promote a safe work environment.
4. Provide exceptional customer service, while being realistic about resources and commitments.

The following regional goal was added during the August 2024 Lahontan Water Board meeting:

5. Incorporate racial equity into water quality decisions and regulatory actions.

How We Move Forward

Creating the Action Plan requires collaboration. The REWG asked Tribes and the public for input on initial draft and draft action items. The REWG needed this input to ensure planned actions matched tribal and public needs. This input process included:

1. Formal correspondence outreach to the Lahontan Water Board's [mailing list](#)
2. Email correspondence outreach to the Lahontan Water Board's [email subscription list](#)
3. Virtual outreach on the Lahontan Water Board's webpage for Racial Equity and Environmental Justice ([Racial Equity and Environmental Justice | Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board](#))
4. Individual discussions
5. Public outreach events
6. Public comment periods for the initial draft and draft versions of the Action Plan
7. Lahontan Water Board meeting presentations

The Action Plan requires ongoing internal and external outreach. As a dynamic document, staff will adjust and update the Action Plan based on both internal and external engagement as needed. Staff will add actions to address emerging issues. The REWG plans on providing annual accomplishments and updated actions to the Board in Executive Officer's Reports.

The REWG looks forward to working with Lahontan Water Board staff and the communities we serve to develop, refine, and implement the Action Plan.



Figure 2. Mono Lake in Mono County, CA

What We Plan to Do

The REWG, with the help of internal and external feedback, has identified the following sets of actions and associated metrics for the Lahontan Water Board to address racial inequities. The Board will not take action to approve or deny the plan, however, the actions outlined in this plan are subject to the Board's standard decision-making and public engagement processes. This Action Plan does not modify any existing policy, plan, permit, or regulation duly adopted by the Lahontan Water Board.

Some actions in this plan have a projected date of completion, some will require multi-year processes, and some are ongoing actions. Actions and performance metrics are divided into separate commitment areas, which provide a framework for how to approach the work of advancing racial equity.

Commitments to Water Quality Protection

These commitments relate to item numbers 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11 from the [resolution](#). Following are some staff actions for this opportunity area.

No.	Action	Performance Indicators
1.	Work with local communities to identify and compile water quality data gaps in Tribal and EJ communities	Creation of “data needs” list
2.	Participate in the Racial Equity Data Subcommittee	Number of Racial Equity Data Subcommittee meetings attended
3.	Evaluate policies, permits, and programs through a racial equity, EJ, and tribal engagement lens	Number of policies, permits, and programs that have integrated racial equity considerations during their development
4.	Support restoration of water quality and watersheds of importance to Tribes and EJ communities.	Number of meetings held with tribes and disadvantaged communities related to planning for restoration or water quality protection projects

No.	Action	Performance Indicators
5.	Support monitoring of waterbodies and aquifers of concern to Tribal and EJ communities	a) Incorporate Action Plan considerations in monitoring planning b) Number of investigations performed in relevant waterbodies. c) Amount of funding provided for private well monitoring and/or number of wells monitored
6.	Pursue a project or projects to assist in the cleanup/abatement of waste impacts on waters of the State in an EJ or Tribal community	Identify one or more projects in the region and pursue funding from the Environmental Justice Community Cleanup and Abatement Account Allocation
X.	[Opportunity for the public to add additional actions here]	

Commitments to Community Engagement

These commitments relate to item numbers 4, 5, and 8 from the [resolution](#). Following are some staff actions for this opportunity area.

No.	Action	Performance Indicators
1.	Increase general engagement of staff and Board Members with EJ and Tribal communities through, but not limited to, attending community events, conducting project-specific vision and strategizing sessions with communities, and meeting with community members	Number of interactions (e.g. community events, one-on-one discussions, etc.)
2.	Coordinate with the State Water Board Office of Public Engagement, Equity, and Tribal Affairs (OPEETA) to obtain language services, support on outreach, and facilitation, as needed	Number of programs/staff/projects which involved OPEETA coordination

3.	Provide effective language access services to engage with EJ and Tribal communities	Number of documents and webpages provided in more than one language, and number of events where language services were provided
4.	Develop community liaison positions that will serve as a resource for EJ communities	a) Define the role of community liaisons b) Develop list of priority communities c) Number of staff liaison positions assigned to EJ communities
5.	Provide engagement and consultation opportunities to Tribes based on both their current locations and culturally affiliated lands	Number of tribal outreach efforts resulting in meaningful engagement.
6.	Participation in events and opportunities that facilitate outreach and education	Number of events attended
7.	Provide assistance identifying funding needs and assistance attaining funding for infrastructure improvements and water quality protection efforts	Number of funding proposals which we assisted groups with and amount of funding attained.
X.	[Opportunity for the public to add additional actions here]	

Commitments to Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Training and Awareness

These commitments relate to item number 14 from the [resolution](#). Following are some staff actions for this opportunity area.

No.	Action	Performance Indicators
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1.	Create and maintain an internal list of racial equity and EJ resources (training opportunities, resolutions, community contact lists, tools, etc.) for staff and Board members	Creation of list accessible to all
2.	Regularly update the Lahontan Environmental Justice Report and post a link on the Lahontan Water Board webpage at least every 5 years	Completion of update every 5 years and number of updates completed
3.	Provide ongoing staff and Board member training opportunities on EJ, racial equity, and Tribal engagement to staff and Board members	Number of staff attendance in training
4.	Develop region-specific tools and utilize new and existing databases such as CalEnviroScreen to meet the needs of the Lahontan Water Board's racial equity work	Number of instances one of these tools or databases is used to incorporate racial equity considerations in permits or policies
5.	Incorporate racial equity, EJ, and tribal engagement training during onboarding for staff	Implement training requirements for new staff by August 2027
6.	Include racial equity and EJ as a standing agenda item to the Lahontan Water Board internal all staff meetings	Number of all staff meetings that include agenda items to discuss racial equity and EJ topics
7.	Include racial equity and EJ as a standing item to Annual Accomplishments and Priorities Report to the Board	Number of Priorities Reports that include agenda items to discuss racial equity and EJ topics
8.	Include racial equity and EJ as an annual Executive Officer's Report	Number of Board Meetings that include agenda items to discuss racial equity and EJ topics
X.	[Opportunity for the public to add additional actions here]	

Commitments to Workforce Diversity

These commitments relate to item numbers 12 and 13 from the [resolution](#). Following are some staff actions for this opportunity area.

No.	Action	Performance Indicators
1.	Increase the visibility of vacant Water Board positions on the Lahontan Water Board website	Update website by August 2027 and provide a quick link to CalCareers
2.	Increase recruitment efforts at high schools, community colleges, colleges, universities, workforce development networks, and community-based groups that serve EJ and Tribal communities	Number of job-related events attended (e.g. career fairs, tabling events)
3.	Reduce geographic divides in hiring	Number of job postings where candidate could sit in either the Tahoe or Victorville office or co-locate staff with workload
4.	Foster a culture of inclusion and belonging	Number of planned optional group social activities
5.	Incorporate racial equity and EJ into duty statements. A duty statement describes the tasks, functions, and responsibilities of an employee position. It explains the overall purpose of the position, the tasks being performed, why those tasks are performed, and how they are performed.	Number of duty statements that include EJ language
6.	Require those sitting on an interview panel and all managers to have completed the Advancing Racial Equity course on Cornerstone, or an equivalent course which reviews “merit based hiring” rhetoric.	Number of supervisors and managers that have attended at least one racial equity, tribal engagement, and EJ trainings
7.	Provide interview feedback to candidates to support professional development and encourage future applications.	Number of candidates that have received feedback
X.	[Opportunity for the public to add additional actions here]	

Future Action Plan Updates

The REWG will continually revisit this Action Plan to assess progress towards achieving the actions outlined above and plans to compile the results of the work performed on an annual basis. These results will be shared in either an annual Executive Officer’s Report or an informational item to the Board that will also include successes, lessons learned, and when necessary, updated actions and performance indicators.