We believe that people and nature are inextricably linked and that the health of both depends on full and meaningful participation of all communities in decisions that define and shape a resilient future.
WHO WE ARE

Resources Legacy Fund (RLF) builds alliances that advance bold solutions to secure a just and resilient world for people and nature. We believe strategic philanthropy, thoughtful partnerships, and equitable program and project design are essential to accelerating change on the urgent environmental and social challenges we face.

WHY DEI MATTERS TO US

RLF has long prioritized social equity as an outcome in its environmental work. We strive to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) so that all people have equal opportunities to live full and healthy lives in thriving environments and participate in building a better future.

OUR JOURNEY TOWARD A MORE JUST & RESILIENT FUTURE

We are excited to share RLF’s inaugural annual progress report on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This report reflects on our DEI commitments and progress through updates from RLF colleagues, spotlights on the great work of our grantees, and examples of policy outcomes we are collectively achieving.

RLF has a long track record creating inclusive partnerships and building capacity among underserved communities. In 2021, we updated our purpose statement to more clearly communicate our commitment to justice:

RLF builds alliances that advance bold solutions to secure a just and resilient world for people and nature.

Last year, RLF also completed an ambitious plan to put our DEI commitments into action. Led by the DEI committee, all staff and our board engaged in the plan’s development. Two things became clear to us: 1) the DEI plan will be a living document, and 2) it will be more than words on a page. To hold ourselves accountable to the plan’s goals, we developed a set of measures that will help us track our progress; you will find these at the end of this report. Being able to monitor progress is critical – we need to see where we are experiencing successes and facing challenges so we can celebrate, reflect, learn, and improve as an organization.

This will be the first of many annual progress reports in which we will share the miles traveled, detours taken, and the many memorable stops along our DEI journey. We anticipate the process of gathering and sharing this information will create opportunities for deeper—and perhaps at times difficult—conversations internally among staff, with the board, and with our external partners.

I am inspired and motivated by Maya Angelou’s quote, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” It’s my sincere hope that the numbers and stories we collect about the progress we are making on DEI, from staff and grantee surveys to heartfelt conversations, will indeed allow us to know better, and equipped with that knowledge, do better.

—Helena Choi, Vice President and DEI Committee Chair
TIMELINE OF OUR DEI JOURNEY

2019
March – Create a staff DEI committee with diverse representation from across the organization
April – Board updates Governance Committee charter to include oversight of DEI and assigns DEI liaison with RLF staff
December – Kick off 18-month engagement with DEI specialists, the Avarna Group

2020
February – Visioning session with RLF’s DEI committee, leadership team, and members of the board to develop DEI statement of commitments
Spring – Staff and board participate in a series of trainings on implicit bias, confronting privilege, difficult conversations, and the history of the conservation movement
December – Post RLF DEI statement to website

2021
January – Staff and board kick off a 12-month series of five trainings on cultural humility and American Indian history and policy, led by members of the Yurok and Mountain Maidu Tribes
February – Implement new recruitment practices
April – Launch new purpose statement and share our values on the website to better communicate our commitment to equity and justice
June – Share DEI plan on website
June – Share board DEI statement on website
November – RLF’s affiliated organizations Fund for a Better Future and Shared Ascent Fund post DEI statements to respective websites
December – Share our approach to supporting Indigenous-led conservation

MESSAGE FROM THE RLF BOARD

At RLF, diversity, equity, and inclusion isn’t a special project. It’s part of the fabric of what we do. We have been working with culturally, racially, socioeconomically, and geographically diverse partners since our founding more than 20 years ago. We value learning from our grantees and partners. Through the diversity of our partnerships, we find insights and creativity, which we harness to advance enduring solutions for people and the planet.

This is an exciting time of transition for RLF. Our visionary founder, Michael Mantell, recently stepped down as president. Michael’s formative leadership established DEI as a top priority for RLF, launching the seminal work to deliver on that commitment. In January, we enthusiastically welcomed our new president, Avi Garbow, who will build on Michael’s work in fresh and effective ways. Avi was selected after a thorough national search that prioritized commitment to and experience leading DEI efforts.

Our board leadership is also evolving. We recently welcomed two new board members—Chet Hewitt and Kevin Washburn—who bring valued experience and knowledge to RLF. The board is committed to actively recruiting additional perspectives to the board as a way to embrace new leadership, new dynamics, and new voices in our work. In coordination with staff, partners, grantees, and funders, the board is also committed to engaging on all fronts—from guiding programmatic strategies to exploring new partnerships—in our pursuit of a more just and resilient world. And we look forward to continuing to build our own DEI knowledge and capacity through ongoing trainings, in sync with staff, and making progress on RLF’s DEI plan.

On behalf of the entire board, I also want to express our profound appreciation for staff’s authentic commitment to and extensive time invested in advancing DEI. I have had the privilege of representing the RLF board as DEI liaison over the past couple of years and am moved by the staff’s determination to effect change in meaningful and authentic ways. Despite grim news coming from every part of the globe, this zeal for justice gives me hope that we can heal as individuals, people, and a united planet.

Sincerely,
Patsy Ishiyama

This is a timeline of our recent activities, and does not include past work reflecting our longstanding commitment to DEI.
OUR COMMITMENT: We commit to building a workplace more reflective of the diversity of the communities in which we work, where all staff feel valued and have a sense of belonging, and where we embrace the challenge and opportunity of growth on DEI issues at all levels of the organization.

GOALS:
1. Improved recruitment, hiring, and training practices result in more diverse staff.
2. Competitive and equitable salary ranges and benefits help retain staff with high levels of job satisfaction.
3. Clear staffing structure and professional development opportunities allow staff to see pathways to leadership and growth at RLF and in the field.
4. RLF has an inclusive workplace culture, and staff feel equipped and comfortable having difficult conversations (including fiscally sponsored projects, to extent possible).
5. RLF leadership and board hold themselves accountable to implement the DEI Plan.

REFLECTIONS ON 2021 FROM HUMAN RESOURCES

When I reflect on the past year, I’d describe it as a year of questioning. What can we do differently to attract qualified candidates from all backgrounds and how can we support equity and inclusion in hiring? How do we measure the inclusivity of our organization and teams? How can we provide opportunities for growth and see more diversity at all levels of the organization?

None of these questions has one simple answer; there are many answers and approaches. Here are a few highlights of new strategies we implemented in 2021 to create a more diverse, inclusive team:

» Updated our job announcements to list starting salary range and highlight our DEI commitments and organizational values.
» Posted job openings on a variety of new job boards to attract a diverse applicant pool. Tracked aggregate demographics of the candidate pool for each position.
» Developed recruiting rubrics for screening applicants and assessing interviews to help mitigate bias.
» Conducted a compensation market analysis and internal equity review to ensure our salaries and benefits are externally competitive and internally equitable.
» Developed a Slack channel to support sharing of training and learning opportunities.
» Conducted several surveys soliciting staff input on new policies and ways to improve overall organization culture.

As we take time to reflect on what we’ve learned and changes we’ve made, and think ahead to the projects we have planned for the coming year, I am mindful of keeping the big picture in focus. While discrete and measurable outputs are important, we need to ensure they are building toward the true equity and justice outcomes we want to see in our workplace and in the world. I think we are moving in the right direction—asking challenging questions, welcoming new ideas, and being willing to make mistakes and learn from them.

—Felecia Coles, Director of Human Resources
2021 DEMOGRAPHICS

IDENTIFY AS BIPOC: ALL STAFF
- 68% yes
- 31% no
- 1% decline to state

IDENTIFY AS BIPOC: LEADERSHIP
- 70% yes
- 10% no
- 10% decline to state

IDENTIFY AS BIPOC: BOARD
- 69% yes
- 20% no
- 11% decline to state

RACE/ETHNICITY: ALL STAFF
- 69%
- 27%
- 1%
- 1%

RACE/ETHNICITY: LEADERSHIP
- 70%
- 10%
- 10%
- 10%

RACE/ETHNICITY: BOARD
- 58%
- 7%
- 21%
- 7%

GENDER IDENTIFICATION: ALL STAFF
- 71%
- 27%
- 1%
- 1%

GENDER IDENTIFICATION: LEADERSHIP
- 80%
- 20%
- 20%
- 10%

GENDER IDENTIFICATION: BOARD
- 76%
- 6%
- 5%
- 5%

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: ALL STAFF
- 71%
- 13%
- 13%
- 3%

AGE: ALL STAFF
- 41%
- 28%
- 13%
- 7%

LANGUAGES SPOKEN: ALL STAFF
- 71%
- 20%
- 13%
- 6%

Notes:
- Demographics for all staff include staff of RLF fiscally sponsored projects.
- Staff members could select multiple racial and ethnic identities, resulting in a total percentage of more than 100%.

ADDITIONAL DATA
- 2% of staff identify as transgender.
- 5% of staff identify as having a long-lasting or chronic condition (i.e., a physical, visual, auditory, cognitive, emotional, or other condition) that requires ongoing accommodations.
- 27% of staff identify as a parent or caregiver for one or more children.
- 5% of staff identify as a caregiver for one or more adults.
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2021

In September of 2021, RLF conducted its fourth annual employee engagement survey, this time with an added module related to DEI with questions on commitment to and understanding of DEI; belonging and inclusion; and opportunities and fairness. With these surveys, we aim to gain a better understanding of employee morale, satisfaction, and overall engagement—and then discuss with staff and leadership to determine ways we can improve work culture for all.

Across 47 questions, we scored an average of 4.0 out of 5, which puts us in the 75th percentile among peer organizations. Our staff reported the highest scores for:

» “My organization is a welcoming place to work”
» “My organization shows a strong commitment to ethical business decisions and conduct”
» “My Supervisor is available when I have questions or need help”

The survey identified some areas for improvement—namely hiring more employees to handle workload and providing opportunities for career advancement. In the six months since staff took the survey, we have hired four people to fill newly created positions that support critical areas of growth in the organization and we are planning additional recruitments. We are also making an effort to encourage professional development goal-setting and share training opportunities so staff can better take advantage of their annual professional development budget, positioning themselves for promotions and other career growth paths. An area that took a dip in 2021—not surprisingly after two years of fully remote work—was on “I have close personal connections at work.” As we re-open the office on a voluntary basis in April and plan for the “future of work,” we are figuring out ways to foster connection within teams and across the organization.

RLF also had an overall score of 4.0 out of 5 across the 18 questions in the DEI module. The results pointed to several areas for improvement, such as the need for greater transparency and communication related to promotion processes and decision making. RLF worked with consultants to conduct a market analysis and pay equity review in 2021 and updated its compensation and promotion philosophy. We will continue to increase communications about compensation and promotions in the coming months. We will also continue our work building an inclusive workplace culture where all staff feel comfortable voicing contrary opinions and sharing their unique perspectives. This summer, we will be offering training to help managers recognize opportunities to advance equity and inclusion within teams.
OUR PARTNERSHIPS ARE FOUNDATION OF OUR WORK

We know that people and the planet are inextricably linked, and the spectrum of our work focuses on that connection. Strong partnerships and strategic alliances are the foundation of our work. No matter our objective—large or small, global or local—our achievements in protecting lands, rivers, mountains, oceans, biodiversity, and communities near and far can be measured by the commensurate success of our partnerships. Diversity, equity, and inclusivity are integral to that work because ultimately the durability of our success lies more in who we work with than in what we work for.

We must be intentional in our partnerships, and actively seek out and engage with people and communities who are the most impacted by the issues and areas in which we work. The leading edge of that engagement should be our willingness to listen first and speak second, ensuring that diverse perspectives—especially those that have historically been excluded from environmental and conservation decision making—help us create and implement solutions for a more just and resilient world. This is not a transient commitment, but a long-term strategy designed to help us more effectively develop and implement impactful solutions to vexing environmental and societal problems.

At Resources Legacy Fund, we have a tremendous network of funders, grantees, community groups, and private and public sector partners who work with us to protect nature, while advancing equity and justice. These relationships are indispensable, and absolutely vital to our work and our vision. As we learn from the past and look to the future, we know we have work to do to expand and strengthen these networks and partnerships. Our DEI work is not static nor to be measured by reflection alone, but is evolving and guided by increased learning, inclusivity, justice, and above all, action—within our organization and with our valued partners, past and future.

—Avi Garbow, RLF President

OUR COMMITMENT: We commit to building trust-based partnerships with our grantees and community partners that advance DEI, amplifying the voices and perspectives of the most negatively impacted communities, and sharing our DEI goals and values with funders, grantees, contractors, and academic partners to ensure our collective work leads to a more equitable and just world.

GOALS:

1. Improved engagement with grassroots and community partners result in more equitable and mutually beneficial partnerships.
2. Sharing DEI goals and values with funder, grantee, and community partners help identify mutual priorities and enhance collective impact.
3. Clear, consistent, inclusive communications help strengthen relationships and enhance RLF’s reach and impact.

THROUGH OUR PARTNERSHIPS

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—Avi Garbow, RLF President
SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION

At the end of 2021, RLF shared our approach and commitment to supporting Indigenous-led conservation.

*Indigenous-led conservation and Tribal sovereignty are essential to solving our world’s greatest environmental challenges and reversing the devastating effects of colonialism on the natural world and on the Indigenous Peoples who have stewartd lands and waters since time immemorial. Indigenous Peoples currently make up less than five percent of the world’s population and live on 22 percent of the earth’s surface, supporting 80 percent of the planet’s remaining biodiversity.*

RLF is committed to supporting Indigenous Peoples in stewarding and restoring lands and waters, including coastal and marine resources, through domestic and international programmatic initiatives such as our Boreal Conservation Initiative, Open Rivers Fund, Sustaining California’s Oceans program, and through fiscally sponsored projects such as the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and Campaign for Nature. [READ MORE >>]

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: SOUTHEAST LOS ANGELES

In 2016 and 2018, Los Angeles County voters passed multiple public funding measures that will invest billions over the next decade to improve the region’s parks, water quality, and transportation systems. RLF is working to ensure the funds benefit the neediest communities. RLF’s Equitable Infrastructure for Los Angeles program is supporting community-led organizations in building civic and planning capacity to access funding for parks and other public infrastructure that addresses community priorities. The Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) team, one of six cohorts we’re working with, consists of the following partners: park equity nonprofit, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust; environmental justice organization, Communities for a Better Environment; and the cities of Maywood and Cudahy. Extensive outreach began in 2020. After six community-based, participatory planning and design workshops, the SELA team developed construction budgets, applied for public grants, and was awarded over $2 million for community-identified projects. In addition to securing capital and planning funding for multiple projects, the process equipped hundreds of community members with skills to identify park sites and advocate for desired park amenities and other issues affecting park use in the cities of Maywood and Cudahy.
PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT:
NORTHERN CHUMASH TRIBAL COUNCIL

Reflecting its spiritual and cultural significance, Chumash people have been fighting to protect the central coast of California from fossil fuel development and other threats for decades. Over the past several years, the Northern Chumash Tribal Council has worked tirelessly to advance a grassroots campaign to establish the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, the first Indigenous-led sanctuary designation effort in the United States. In early 2021, Resources Legacy Fund reached out to the Northern Chumash Tribal Council to support their effort, connecting them with new philanthropic partners and providing technical support to the campaign. In November 2021, the federal government announced its intent to proceed with sanctuary designation. The campaign’s stellar outreach effort resulted in nearly 30,000 letters of support during the public comment period. RLF continues to support the Tribal Council’s efforts to secure the sanctuary designation and, we hope, their eventual co-management of the sanctuary and other stewardship priorities over the long term.

“Equity means investing in communities that are more under-resourced, less equipped and further behind. It sometimes takes more resources to be able to do that work.”

– Grantee, anonymous evaluation of California Conservation Innovations program
NEW: GRANTMAKING GUIDELINES

Grantmaking is a core element of RLF’s work. Through our grantmaking program, we build effective alliances, help redefine power, elevate marginalized voices, and support communities most impacted by change to drive solutions that benefit them. Last year, we spent time refining our organization-wide goals, principles, and approach to grantmaking to make them more consistent with our DEI plan. The principles underlying our grantmaking approach are:

» We lead with our organizational values: collaboration, equity, integrity, creativity, and excellence.

» As an intermediary organization, we strive to add value to grantees beyond funding. We invite conversation with grantees to explore how we can best support them and their work.

» We believe in transparency and are committed to sharing our grantmaking strategies with grantees and partners, and information about our grantmaking approaches with peer organizations and funders.

» We understand the power dynamics inherent in the arenas we operate in, particularly in grantee-grantor relationships, and do our best to be a collaborative, supportive partner by sharing knowledge and access, engaging in the work alongside grantees as appropriate, and inviting feedback to help improve our practices.

» We value local knowledge and believe those closest to the challenges on the ground often have the best and most reliable insights into solutions. We strive to elevate voices and perspectives from communities, and to support their visions, priorities, and needs.

Please read more about our grantmaking approach on our website.

OUR COMMITMENT: We commit to engaging in grantmaking that explicitly promotes DEI by using dollars to actively re-allocate power to those who have been marginalized and build long-term capacity within those communities.

GOALS:

1. Program strategies include a DEI lens and focus on outcomes that bridge conservation and equity (e.g., diversify grantee portfolios, advance equitable outcomes, build inclusive coalitions).

2. Flexible, accessible, and less burdensome grantmaking practices contribute to a more diverse grant portfolio.

3. Beyond-the-dollar support to grantees helps strengthen their capacity.

THROUGH OUR GRANTMAKING
At RLF we endeavor to put our grantee partners on an even footing, always looking for ways to add value—beyond-the-dollar support. Our approach to grantmaking honors our commitment to advancing equity, shifting power, and building mutually accountable relationships with our partners. We emphasize humility in how we show up and prioritize collaboration in all aspects of our work. We believe that a flexible approach to grantmaking, relationships built on trust, and nimble investments in ripe opportunities yield the most catalytic and enduring impacts.

As lead of the California Conservation Innovations program, I’m responsible for delivering on the program’s goals: advancing equitable public policies and funding and broadening the constituency for natural resources and environmental equity. Through this program we’ve learned a lot about how to listen to our partners, learn from them, support their leadership, and drive outcomes that work best in their communities. In the past year, we’ve been updating the program’s strategic approach to double down on expanding the field, with a focus on building capacity among Black and Indigenous communities and people of color.
We’ve been offering technical assistance support and exploring strategies for more inclusive and less burdensome grantmaking. These efforts are not new; we know they work. We are grateful to our funders for their flexibility and encouragement of long-term strategies, and we are always inspired by the passion, commitment, and innovation of our grantees and partners.

—Alfredo Gonzalez, Program Director

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: AZUL

Azul is a grassroots organization working on the frontlines of environmental justice. Founded in 2011 by Marce Gutiérrez-Graudinš to elevate Latinx perspectives and participation in ocean conservation, Azul has become a leader on issues including social justice, climate change, coastal access, marine protected areas, and addressing plastic pollution. Azul helps lead California Ocean Day, a day of education and advocacy at the state capitol, bringing an increasingly large and effective group of youth advocates known as “Latinos Marinos” to engage legislators on issues related to ocean protection and coastal access. RLF has been a proud supporter of Azul since its launch, learning from the staff’s great passion and deep organizing skills, helping the organization build a broader, more diverse and inclusive community of ocean advocates. In April of last year, Azul released a comprehensive report on plastics, NEGLECTED: Environmental Justice Impacts of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution, which calls for the recognition of communities affected by plastic waste and their inclusion in decision making.
GRANTMAKING

Many of RLF’s programs and fiscally sponsored projects center strategies that build capacity among diverse organizations and leaders and advance equity and justice beyond conservation. The following two programs are examples that demonstrate particularly effective strategies.

WESTERN COMMUNICATIONS HUB: The Western Communications Hub was created in 2018, with funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, to strategically support nonprofit conservation organizations across the West in advancing high-priority communications efforts. A six-member advisory board, made up of communications professionals representing a diverse array of voices and communities, makes granting decisions. The board gives priority to under-resourced organizations that raise the voices of Indigenous and underrepresented communities and employ creative digital strategies to empower diverse voices for conservation. In 2020, we made six $30,000 grants to Hispanic Access Foundation; Utah Diné Bikéyah; Grand Canyon Trust; Western Native Voice; the Natural History Museum in partnership with the Lummi Nation; and Amigos Bravos, the New Mexico Acequia Association, and Climate Advocates Voces Unidas. In 2021, in response to a rapidly shifting world, we partnered with Do Big Things, a Black- and women-owned digital advocacy firm, to provide in-depth digital communications audits and direct support to a cohort of six frontline conservation organizations.

BOREAL STRATEGIC ADVISORS PROGRAM: The North American Boreal Forest, located primarily in Canada, is the largest and most intact old-growth forest in the world. RLF’s Boreal Strategic Advisors has been working with leaders from First Nations in Canada and a coalition of foundations and non-profit organizations through the International Boreal Conservation Campaign (IBCC) to support Indigenous initiatives to conserve traditional territories. Early on, IBCC realized that no just or enduring conservation could be achieved in Canada’s boreal without supporting Indigenous rights and First Nations’ leadership to safeguard and steward traditional homelands through Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), Indigenous Guardians, and Indigenous Land Use Plans. Increasingly, IBCC’s Indigenous leaders have set campaign priorities, strategies, and goals with a full transition of campaign management to the Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI), set for 2023. We hope to continue supporting ILI’s goals and leadership through whatever means ILI determines appropriate. RLF will continue advocating for the recognition and acceptance of Indigenous Peoples’ inherent rights, traditional territorial tenure, and stewardship expertise—in the boreal and through many other RLF programs—as a fundamental and necessary element to protecting the world’s remaining biological diversity.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: TULALIP TRIBES

The Tulalip Tribes are direct descendants of the Snohomish, Snoqualmie, Skykomish, and other allied tribes and bands signatory to the Treaty of Point Elliott. Of their growing tribal population of 5,100 members, 2,700 reside on the 22,000-acre Tulalip Indian Reservation located 40 miles north of Seattle where the Snohomish River meets the Puget Sound. The Tulalip Tribes’ Natural Resources Department is leading an extensive salmon restoration effort in Washington’s Snohomish River watershed as one of two priority river basins within their Treaty-reserved fishing, hunting, and gathering area. In 2021, RLF’s Open Rivers Fund supported Tulalip’s work with a private landowner to remove a small dam blocking fish passage on a Snoqualmie River tributary. Just months after the dam was removed, salmon redds were found upstream of the former dam site. In Spring 2022, over 70 coho, rainbow trout, and Chinook fry/parr were observed in the newly opened reach and 300-foot constructed channel, demonstrating the immediate impact of the project.
FOR EQUITABLE POLICIES

OUR COMMITMENT: We commit to supporting and engaging in advocacy for public policies that spur new investment and opportunity and remove barriers faced by marginalized communities, enabling their members to live full and healthy lives.

GOALS:

1. RLF helps redistribute power and make progress toward specific outcomes by setting priorities for policy engagement in collaboration with partners.
2. Guidelines for Tribal engagement help identify policy goals, build relationships, and secure additional support from funders.
3. Program strategies that include support to community organizing and advocacy contribute to increased community voice and power in policy-making processes.
4. Advocacy for public funding mechanisms and equity focus in these mechanisms results in greater funding available to marginalized communities.

2021 POLICY OUTCOMES

RLF supports partners with funding, capacity building, and technical assistance to achieve policy and funding outcomes that create meaningful opportunities and remove barriers for historically marginalized communities. A few achievements our work has recently supported include:

Creation of California’s Regional Climate Collaboratives Program – The Greenlining Institute developed the concept for a new Regional Climate Collaboratives Program, championed legislation to create it, and secured $20 million for its implementation (learn more on next page).

Emphasis on Equity and Access in 30x30 – RLF worked with the California Natural Resources Agency under a collaborative agreement to advance a diverse and robust stakeholder engagement process informing California’s 30x30 implementation roadmap document, which prioritizes equity and access and establishes strong roles for environmental justice groups and Tribal entities in the planning and implementation of 30x30.

Historic Investments for Parks and Outdoor Access in California’s 2021-22 State Budget – With RLF policy coordination and communications support, the Parks Now Coalition elevated the importance of parks and outdoor recreation with the California legislature and governor, helping to secure over $400 million in the 2021-22 California budget for the creation and development of parks in communities that lack them; maintenance and improvements at California state parks; and support for programs that provide people who face barriers to outdoor access with opportunities to visit and enjoy the state’s parks, beaches, and other outdoor spaces.

Significant Climate Investments for California Communities – RLF partners and grantees also helped secure over $1 billion in state funding for investments in community climate resilience. These investments will provide low-income households with clean energy upgrades; build community resilience centers that provide shelter during extreme heat, smoke, and other events; plant trees and develop greenspaces in urban areas; and support leaders in the state’s most vulnerable communities to plan and implement solutions to climate challenges.

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Nomination – RLF has provided fundraising support and strategic advice to the Northern Chumash Tribal Council in its successful campaign to secure nomination of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration received over 30,000 comments in support of the proposed sanctuary during a recent public comment period.

Elevation of Indigenous Voices in Hawai‘i’s 30x30 Marine Conservation Strategy – RLF partners in Hawai‘i are engaging Indigenous and local community members in the design and development of the state’s 30x30 marine conservation effort and ensuring a strong focus on cultural and ecological values in the planning process (learn more on next page).
The decisions made in Sacramento impact the lives of millions of Californians. Fortunately, state policymakers are becoming more representative of the diversity of our communities and their many unique perspectives. However, much work is needed to ensure that the policies California enacts are equitable and meaningfully informed by the people they will affect.

Since its founding, RLF has worked at the nexus of government, philanthropy, nonprofits, and business to promote policies and secure public funding that benefit people and the planet. RLF recently developed a new framework for engaging on policy matters in ways that better employ our capabilities to advance our DEI and other programmatic priorities in close collaboration with and support of our grantees and partners. We aim for this framework to inform our engagement in California and beyond, and will continue to refine our strategies to more effectively promote equitable outcomes for climate change, outdoor access, and other environmental policies. RLF is committed to leveraging our role in ways that elevate the voices and priorities of partners on the frontlines of environmental and climate injustice.

—Jaymee Go, Policy Officer

Regional Climate Collaboratives Program

Over several years, RLF’s California Conservation Innovations program has supported the Greenlining Institute’s efforts to spearhead creation of the Regional Climate Collaboratives Program, a new capacity-building and technical assistance program that will help the state’s under-resourced communities develop collaborative, community-led, and equitable climate adaptation and mitigation projects. Thanks to Greenlining’s efforts, the state legislature authorized the state Strategic Growth Council (SGC) to create the new program in 2018. Greenlining subsequently presented SGC with research and advice on strategies for implementation, helped SGC conceptualize a pilot program for frontline community leaders, and successfully advocated for $20 million to fund the program in the 2021 state budget. SGC aims to fully launch the program later in 2022 with three-year grants of up to $1 million to support formation of new regional climate collaboratives across the state. We hope to partner on development and implementation of many more policies that can similarly help address the dual challenges of inequity and the climate crisis.

Kuaʻāina Ulu ‘Auamo

In 2016, Hawai‘i Governor David Y. Ige announced a commitment to effectively manage 30 percent of Hawai‘i’s nearshore waters as marine managed areas (MMAs) by 2030. Known as Holomua: Marine 30x30, the effort is led by the state’s Division of Aquatic Resources with support from several philanthropic entities and engagement of community-based organizations. As a signatory to the Marine 30x30 memorandum of understanding, RLF offers technical assistance and helps raise public and private funds for the design and execution of the initiative. Vital to the success of Holomua: Marine 30x30 is community engagement. RLF partners closely with Kuaʻāina Ulu ‘Auamo (KUA), an organization advancing community-based natural resources management in Hawai‘i. As the work to design new MMAs progresses, KUA has been a critical partner grounding the need to shape policy in ways that protect and strengthen traditional community-based subsistence fishing and gathering practices. In 2021, KUA, RLF, The Nature Conservancy, and Conservation International rolled out a series of Kaiāulu (community) legislative “study halls” to cultivate knowledge and skills among Indigenous and local community members and make civic engagement more accessible and impactful. The group held three sessions in 2021 to, in the words of Hannah Kihalani Springer, “learn, get advice, and grow on,” and ultimately strengthen, civic engagement and promote greater equity and inclusion in policymaking.
LOOKING AHEAD: MEASURES WE’LL BE TRACKING

Below are the proposed measures we will use to track progress on implementing our DEI plan. These measures are still a work in progress, and subject to further refinement.

In the Workplace

Internally, we will continue to track demographics of staff and board across race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, sexual orientation, and age. In the future, we will also track:

» Recruitment and staff retention rates across identities.
» Job satisfaction and experience of staff over time and across identities, including survey feedback on inclusion, belonging, fairness, and opportunities.

Through our Partnerships and Grantmaking

We will continue to update our program strategies to include DEI-related goals and strategies, in close collaboration with our grantees and partners, to ensure effectiveness in meeting shared DEI goals. We will be rolling out a new grant management system in late 2022 that will allow us to better track data, including:

» Number of grants and total grant dollars to Tribes and Indigenous groups, organizations led by people of color, first-time grantees, and grantees with annual budgets less than $500,000.
» Number of grants and total grant dollars devoted to capacity building.

We will also implement new tools to gather feedback from our grantees and partners on the effectiveness of our DEI work and communication. Specifically, we are eager to capture information such as:

» Grantee feedback on RLF’s partnership and support.
» Grantee feedback/level of satisfaction with our grantmaking process, from proposal through reporting.

For Equitable Policies

We will continue to advance equitable policies and funding in fields such as environmental protection, climate change, and access to nature, and over time, will track measures including:

» Amount of public funding dedicated to advancing equitable policies, programs, and investments resulting from RLF’s direct engagement and our support for grantees.
» Policy wins and related interim progress indicators on issues RLF is directly engaged in or supporting, including grantees’ policy and funding priorities.
» Outcomes supporting Indigenous-led conservation, including additional policies and public funding secured by Tribal partners.

#ICYMI

In case you missed it, here are a few statements and reflections from our RLF News & Insights blog that highlight our commitment to DEI and its intersection with the environmental work we engage on.

» Reflections on DEI progress in the Workplace • by Felecia Coles • May 12, 2022
» An Inescapable Network of Mutuality • by Avi Garbow • January 19, 2022
» A Personal and Organizational Mandate for a Just and Equitable Future • by Helena Choi • June 24, 2021
» RLF Statement of Solidarity with AAPI Communities • April 2, 2021
» Tomorrow’s Solutions Will be Found Where Issues Intersect • by Michael Mantell • December 14, 2020
» Recovery with Resilience: Public Investments for a Sustainable, Equitable Future • by Laura Tam and Shiva Polefka • August 21, 2020
» RLF Statement about Death of George Floyd and Other Racist Acts • by Michael Mantell • June 1, 2020