Table of Contents

2 | Introduction
3 | Message from RLF Board Chair
4 | A Career Ends and Seeds New Beginnings
5 | Human Resources Recap
6 | Demographics
8 | Reflections on our DEI Progress
9 | What Staff Are Saying
10 | Building Partnerships and Opportunities for a Just Future
11 | Round Valley Indian Tribe: Restoring River Flows and Cultural Connections
11 | Tolowa Dee-Ni’ Tribe: Building Capacity for Ocean Management
12 | Indigenous Stewardship Network: Revitalizing Traditional Fire Management Practices
12 | CAUSE: Grassroots Organizing to Support Coastal Access
13 | Grantee Perception Report: Harnessing Feedback to do Better
13 | Vamos a La Playa: Coastal Access for All
14 | Bayview Residents Organize for Public Health and Climate Justice
14 | Indigenous Leadership Initiative
15 | Catalyzing Narrative Shift through Cohort Learning
15 | Land Is Where It Starts, Ends, and Is Reborn
16 | 2022: A Transformational Year for Equitable Policies
17 | Program Spotlight: Sustainable Fisheries Fund
17 | Fiscally Sponsored Projects Overview
18 | National Ocean Protection Council
18 | Student Borrower Protection Center
19 | Conclusion

Cover photo is courtesy of Tim Dennel
Introduction

We are excited to share this DEI progress report with you. We are motivated and energized by our DEI commitments but know that these commitments must translate into action to have meaning and impact. In our inaugural DEI report last year, we listed several measures we would be using to track progress in upcoming years.

The following pages contain updates on these measures: Felecia shares lessons from our improved recruiting practices, ways we are tracking staff retention and pay equity, and highlights from the latest Employee Engagement survey results; I summarize what we heard from our grantees in the Grantee Perception Report, and what actions we are taking in response; and colleagues describe our policy wins and Indigenous partnerships. We were delayed in rolling out a new grantmaking system, which we had hoped would provide data to help us more effectively track who we are supporting and how. The report also includes program updates, highlights from fiscally sponsored projects, and voices and perspectives of board, staff, and grantee partners.

Thank you,

Helena Choi, VP and DEI committee chair

Our Commitment:

RLF is dedicated to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through the following commitments:

- 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.

- Building lasting, 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 just and equitable world.

- 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.

- 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.
Message from RLF’S Board Chair

Resources Legacy Fund started out as a conservation organization. We’re much more than that now, but people always have been at the heart of our efforts. From our start, we conserved land for people to enjoy. The pursuit of equity and justice in our work is an extension of that early credo. If the outcomes are not just and equitable, the work loses its meaning. To ensure that RLF’s work has meaning and delivers on our DEI commitments, the board is focused on four key dynamics:

1) **Diversifying our board:** Whether it’s urban river restoration or Indigenous conservation and co-stewardship, it’s vital to have board members who identify with the communities we work in and the issues they prioritize. In the past two years, we’ve brought on three board members—Kevin Washburn, Chet Hewitt, and Luseni Pieh—who bring deep experience and valuable perspective to our work. Kevin’s insights and guidance on Tribal and Indigenous matters, for example, are invaluable as we expand our work with Tribes.

2) **Listening to our grantees:** In September 2022, we made a site visit to Pogo Park in Richmond, California where we toured the neighborhood and spoke with grantees, community members, and park staff about needs, goals, and lessons learned on the project. We also invite grantees to each of our board meetings to talk about their work, their successes, and their challenges. Time spent with grantees is extremely energizing. These talented leaders inspire us and guide us in our efforts to be more effective grant makers and partners in securing additional funding and support for their work.

3) **Engaging with staff:** As a board, we value the work of staff at every level of the organization, and look for opportunities to hear from them. Our mission to advance a just and equitable future for people and nature is imperative. But to be effective, leadership—and it starts with us—must ensure that every staff person feels respected and included.

4) **Donor engagement:** Elevating DEI goals among our philanthropic colleagues is a commitment we made, and one that has challenged us as board members. Looking ahead, we are focused on developing clearer strategies to guide us in this work.

We are steadfast in our commitment to a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion at RLF and in our work—both through our processes and in our outcomes. We are making progress. And we have much work to do.

Sincerely,

*Barton “Buzz” Thompson, RLF Board Chair*
A Career Ends and Seeds New Beginnings
by Jeannie Sedgwick, RLF Board Member

To honor the astounding contributions of RLF's retiring founder, Michael Mantell, the RLF board wanted to do something special. Michael, along with RLF staff and partners, played a key role in conserving millions of acres of land and raising billions in public funding for land and ocean conservation and climate and community resilience.

The board decided to create a fellowship program to support emerging leaders from under-represented communities to work on environmental justice, social equity, and climate resilience. The board and a generous group of individuals and foundations raised enough to endow the Michael Mantell Fellowship and Symposium in Environmental Justice and Conservation Innovation, a new program at UC Santa Barbara’s Bren School of Environmental Science and Management.

The Mantell Fellowship pairs promising undergraduates with graduate student mentors to develop their professional and leadership skills. In the inaugural fellowship class of 2022, 11 fellows participated. The first annual Mantell Symposium was held in November 2022 and featured several highly engaging panels where interns shared the results of their summer projects, as well as keynote speeches from renowned fish and wildlife biologist Dr. Mamie Parker and civil rights leader Ben Jealous.

Why I Joined the RLF Board
by Luseni (Lou) Pieh, RLF Board Member

RLF’s holistic approach to drive equitable and positive environmental outcomes is why I decided to join the board. I especially love RLF’s explicit acknowledgement of the connectedness between environmental and social issues, as I’ve long believed environmental issues are social issues and vice versa. I hope that my varied experiences in the private sector, start-ups, government, nonprofits, and as a volunteer position me to share experiences and advice to help RLF further develop and implement holistic and intersectional tactics and strategies to support systems changes.
Energized by our commitment to creating a workplace more reflective of the diversity of the communities in which we work, and where all staff feel valued and have a sense of belonging—2022 was another busy year for the Human Resources team. We implemented several new programs, policies, and benefits to increase transparency and pay equity, recruit and retain diverse staff, improve work/life balance, promote psychological safety, and advance continuous learning.

We also maintained positive results in our annual employee engagement survey, consistent with past years despite broader national trends that show declines in employee satisfaction in the past two years. Positive employee engagement and satisfaction were fairly consistent across identities, ranging between 73% and 80% for individuals identifying as BIPOC (73%), LGBTQ+ (75%), having a chronic condition (77%), female (75%), and caregiver (adults—75%; or children—80%), compared with 74% positive responses across all respondents. There was, however, a dip in satisfaction among staff in hourly positions (68% positive), which we’re digging deeper to understand and working on a plan to better support and engage these critical members of our team.

We are proud of our progress in 2022, but also have run into some speed bumps. Collecting demographic data continues to be a challenge, however, we’re making changes to improve our ability to track representation, retention, and other important metrics across identities. Maintaining confidentiality is important so we won’t be able to share all metrics broadly, but we will continue to track internally to assess where we are making progress and where we’re failing to see the outcomes we’re striving toward. Staff recruitment and retention is an organization-wide commitment and responsibility—cultivating a diverse and inclusive team is a job we all share, as HR, leadership, hiring managers, and colleagues.

Here are some of the changes HR made in 2022 to foster a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace:

- Hired and welcomed 41 talented new colleagues (including 29 fiscally sponsored project team members). Of new hires who provided their demographic data: 74% identified as female, 1% as non-binary, 36% as BIPOC, and 17% as LGBTQ+. Of the 12 new hires for RLF’s actively managed program staff, percentages were similar: 75% identified as female, 33% as BIPOC, and 29% LGBTQ+. We continue to refine our recruiting practices to seek talented candidates from diverse backgrounds.
- Began a series of conversations with staff about salary bands and our compensation and promotions philosophy to provide greater transparency.
- Conducted pay equity analysis, with commitment to regular reviews and corrections, as needed.
- Augmented mental health benefits with Modern Health, a virtual therapy/coaching platform.
- Expanded fertility, adoption, and surrogacy benefits to all staff, including LGBTQ+ couples, single intending parents, and others who are not typically covered through traditional health insurance.
- Implemented an alternate-Fridays-off schedule.
- Implemented All Voices as a new anonymous avenue for employees to report concerns, ask questions, and share suggestions.
- Started Quarterly Connect Days to bring our remote-first, actively managed program staff together four times a year to connect, collaborate, and learn.
- Launched a new training platform for new hires and ongoing DEI instruction and to provide access to other important trainings, discussion guides, and resources.
- Provided an intensive, two-day inclusive management training for supervisors.
**RLF Demographics**

### Race and Ethnicity

- **RLF Overall**
  - 62% Asian/Asian American
  - 16% Black/African American/African
  - 8% Hispanic/Latino/Latina
  - 7% Native American/Indigenous
  - 3% White
  - 9% Multi-racial or multi-ethnic (2+ races/ethnicities)
  - 2% Decline to State

- **Leadership Team**
  - 77% Asian/Asian American
  - 15% Black/African American/African
  - 8% Hispanic/Latino/Latina
  - 7% Native American/Indigenous
  - 7% White
  - 7% Multi-racial or multi-ethnic (2+ races/ethnicities)

- **Board**
  - 50% Asian/Asian American
  - 21% Black/African American/African
  - 14% Hispanic/Latino/Latina
  - 14% Native American/Indigenous
  - 13% White
  - 7% Multi-racial or multi-ethnic (2+ races/ethnicities)

* No one reported their race/ethnicity as Indigenous Peoples from outside the US, Middle Eastern/Arab American/North African, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

### Gender Identity

- **RLF Overall**
  - 67% Female
  - 20% Male
  - 14% Prefer not to answer

- **Leadership Team**
  - 77% Female
  - 23% Male
  - 10% Prefer not to answer

- **Board**
  - 57% Female
  - 43% Male

* No one reported their gender as gender-queer, nonbinary, agender, gender-fluid
Demographic data was collected through our annual employee engagement strategy. It consolidates data for all staff, including staff of RLF fiscally sponsored projects. We had a total participation rate of 76%, with 93% participation from the leadership team. Staff members could select multiple racial and ethnic identities, resulting in a total percentage of more than 100%. Staff could also select more than one language spoken in their household. Additional data points not covered in these charts include: 9% of staff identify as having a long-lasting or chronic condition; 30% identify as a parent or caregiver for one or more children; and 6% identify as a caregiver for one or more adults.
Reflections on our DEI Progress
from RLF’s DEI Committee

A critical component of assessing our DEI progress is to create space and time for ongoing conversations about our successes, challenges, and priorities for growth. We, the members of the DEI committee, facilitated small group conversations about organizational changes, culture, psychological safety, and inclusion at an all-staff retreat in October 2022. Overall, the conversations were honest and free flowing. However, we observed that known concerns shared in private were not voiced during group discussions and staff with longer tenures (and often more senior) tended to view RLF’s progress on DEI more favorably, often crowding out other views. This underscores the need for additional work to create greater psychological safety.

These conversations were meant to be safe spaces for staff to share perspectives in confidence. Some themes that emerged from the discussions include:

- Staff would like to see greater diversity at RLF, especially in leadership roles and on the board.
- RLF is a warm and caring workplace, yet our value of excellence sometimes gets confused with perfectionism. Some staff feel there is little room for mistakes, resulting in burdensome processes and increased workloads that can hinder creativity, another core organizational value.
- There was desire for more connection with each other and the work we do, for example by including site visits and experiential learning opportunities during future quarterly “Connect Days.”

As a committee, we discussed these takeaways and others, advancing a range of recommendations, including: creating a paid fellowship program to help diversify RLF; making room for “joyful brainstorming” at meetings; encouraging continuous feedback; right-sizing review processes; integrating DEI more into RLF’s overall strategy; and sharing information from leadership meetings more actively with all staff. We’ve begun making progress on many of these and are excited for future conversations and efforts to continue building a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Going Deep with Cohort Learning
Andrea Sanchez Davidson,
Program Manager

Staff from RLF’s Ocean, Coast, and Fisheries (OCF) Team just completed a two-year engagement with a cohort of grantees through the Marine Markets & Equity Cohort (M2EC) process, supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Facilitated by Chris Armijo and Whitney Tome, M2EC convened ocean conservation organizations to participate in monthly DEI learning sessions, share organizational challenges and tools, engage in biannual summits, meet with the facilitators to define organizational priorities, and engage in individualized coaching and consultation. The cohort provided a valuable space to share best practices and learn from other organizations in the field. We’ve brought these important new insights and growth to RLF’s internal DEI committee and associated efforts. Through these learnings, we feel better prepared to foster and nurture an authentic culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.
At a recent staff meeting, we asked people to submit comments about our progress on DEI, making note of what we are doing well and what we need to work on. Here is a sample of what we heard (quotes shared anonymously by staff):

- “Room for improvement in acknowledging the core work of our coordinators and operational staff to support RLF’s programmatic work and making sure those staff are fully included as part of RLF’s success stories.”
- “RLF leadership has demonstrated a real commitment to transparency and inclusion as we implement our DEI plan. They regularly present us with feedback from staff, and share how they’re planning to address our questions and act on our suggestions. It’s very gratifying to feel like we are being heard and that leadership supports change over time.”
- “Do better: Recruit NEW partners and grantees and provide them broad range of support to ensure their projects and programs are successful.”
- “We need to continue to diversify leadership and board.”
- “Go ahead and deliver on some of the tools and internal communications that have potential to improve how people work at every level of the org.”
- “I really appreciate RLF’s commitment to ongoing learning. We are now on our second series of Indigenous staff trainings, and each one makes me realize how critical they are to our ability to be effective allies, partners, and funders in Indian Country.”
- “Step up in influencing funders on their part in DEI.”
- “Consider encouraging/providing small budgets for self-organized Employee Resource Groups.”
- “More on metrics! What are the metrics and how are we stacking up?”
- “More transparency around promotions and more hiring of BIPOC employees with an emphasis on providing the mentorship, training, and resources that they need to succeed.”
We strive each and every day to embed our DEI values in every aspect of our work. It is who we are, what we do, how we do it, and most importantly who we work with. Our greatest strengths – and indeed our best opportunities for positive and lasting impacts – lie within the fabric of our partnerships. It is not just how we nurture those partnerships that matters, but their very nature: based on mutual respect, bearing responsibility to empower those most impacted by the problems we work on, and an understanding that equitable outcomes come from inclusive processes.

These principles apply to all of our programs and the projects we fiscally sponsor. From Indigenous-led conservation, to climate justice at the community level, to the work of fiscally sponsored projects like Beyond Petrochemicals, we are making progress towards building and supporting alliances that lead to a more just and resilient world for people and nature – our North Star.

We cannot be static in our partnership building. While we all face limitations based on resources and capacity, we need to remain open to new partnerships with groups on whose shoulders rest the burdens and challenges of the environmental and social crises we are collectively trying to combat. We also must remain open to new issues, new learnings, and new opportunities for impact where we have not always worked. To ignore this is to fail to learn from past mistakes, where we – and others in the environmental and conservation movement – may not have truly and fully embraced DEI and the needs of marginalized communities and thereby unwittingly contributed to a perpetuation of certain inequities.

The following pages reflect both our commitment to action and some of our accomplishments – and those of our partners – but is not meant to be a pat on the back. We have too much ground yet to cover. As we get smarter and better in all that we do, we will make the changes necessary to address environmental injustices and inequities that remain a nemesis for the just outcomes we seek.
Grantee Spotlights:

Round Valley Indian Tribe: Restoring River Flows and Cultural Connections

The Round Valley Indian Tribes (RVIT) is a confederation of seven tribes: the Yuki, Wailacki, Concow, Little Lake, Pomo, Nomlacki, and Pit River. The culture and history of RVIT have been tied to the Eel River since the beginning of time. The Eel River is the Tribes' lifeblood—providing water for fish, farming, and the land to which the Tribes are inextricably connected through their traditions and ceremonies. Since 2020, RLF has supported RVIT's efforts to restore the Eel River and its fishery, and ensure future adequate water flows in the Eel River during each life stage of salmonids on which the Tribes depend. This work includes RVIT's defense of its senior water rights and participation in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's surrender process for Pacific Gas and Electric Company's Potter Valley Project, a hydro-electricity project that includes two dams on the Eel River (Scott Dam and Cape Horn Dam), a water diversion facility, and a powerhouse. RVIT is actively participating in efforts to remove Scott Dam and modify Cape Horn Dam, which would increase river flows, improve upstream and downstream fish passage to secure the Tribes' traditional food source, and sustain their cultural practices.

Tolowa Dee-Ni' Tribe: Building Capacity for Ocean Management

The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation (TDN) has relied on the ocean for its lifeway since time immemorial. The ability to continue marine subsistence, ceremonial, and customary practices is inherent to the Tolowa Dee-ni' and brings a responsibility to assure the health and vitality of its rich ocean and coastal environment and resources for future generations. TDN has been building capacity for ocean planning, governance, and management since proudly launching its Marine Program in 2012. RLF has supported the TDN Marine Program since its inception, providing grants for work to: introduce Tribal Ecological Knowledge into California ocean planning, develop a Marine Harvest Code, build capacity related to co-management, run an MPA Watch program, help lead the Del Norte County MPA Collaborative, establish the Tribal Marine Stewards Network, and engage in learning exchanges with First Nations in British Columbia and Native Hawaiian organizations. All these projects create a solid and ever-expanding foundation for TDN's marine management and research efforts.
Indigenous Stewardship Network: Revitalizing Traditional Fire Stewardship Practices

Indigenous Peoples have stewarded land and waterscapes since time immemorial and there is growing, broad recognition that Indigenous stewardship knowledge and practices are necessary for addressing the environmental and climatic challenges we face. The Indigenous Stewardship Network (ISN) began as an initiative to develop networks, strategies, models, potential investment opportunities, and other tools that center and support Tribal values, traditions, and sovereignty in land stewardship. Now a Tribally chartered nonprofit, ISN is preparing to bring more organization and dedicated support to Indigenous stewardship practitioners. RLF has been working with ISN since 2019 through a collaboration with the Watershed Research and Training Center and the Karuk Tribe on a project to cultivate Tribal leadership on forest and fire management issues, including policy engagement. More recently, RLF engaged the ISN co-leads and a Hopi-led consulting firm to support ISN in building out a purpose and vision statement, business plan, and resource development plan. In 2022, ISN was awarded a grant to support Tribal-led wildfire recovery projects, for which RLF served as fiscal sponsor. After years of growth and investment, ISN is well positioned to support the Indigenous stewardship practitioner community in their efforts to revitalize cultural traditions and landscapes.

CAUSE: Grassroots Organizing to Support Coastal Access

In the farmworker community of Santa Maria, the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) has been organizing residents to address scarce access to green space, public lands, and the coast just 10 miles away. The County of Santa Barbara proposed to extend a multi-use trail along the Santa Maria River levee to the coast with a pesticide buffer zone to protect the health of people recreating along the trail. The powerful local agriculture industry, which opposes the pesticide buffer zone, deployed criminalizing rhetoric claiming baselessly that residents of the predominantly low-income immigrant Santa Maria Valley would engage in theft and vandalism on farms along the trail. Initially, both county supervisors representing the Santa Maria Valley stated they would oppose the project. RLF supported a grassroots-organizing effort led by CAUSE’s youth leaders in Santa Maria, who mobilized broad-based support through petitions, surveys, op-eds, letters, online comments, and organized public testimony, ultimately engaging over 800 residents in taking action. On the day of the hearing, the board of supervisors voted unanimously in favor of the new public trail, thanks to the outpouring of public support.

Photo courtesy of: CAUSE
In Their Own Words:

Vamos a La Playa:
Coastal Access for All
by Irma R. Munoz, CEO Mujeres de la Tierra

In the summer of 2022, Mujeres de la Tierra launched Vamos a la Playa (Let’s Go to the Beach), a coastal access equity and advocacy campaign addressing barriers that low-income, immigrant, and/or communities of color face in accessing beaches, especially Malibu beaches. Campaign events were developed for participants to gain an understanding about their rights and responsibilities when enjoying both the coastal outdoors and other public open spaces. They also include educational programming in marine ecology, stewardship, and watershed health.

Through Vamos a la Playa, over 200 inner-city residents and their multi-generational families have had the opportunity to enjoy Malibu beaches. Key to the success of this unique and impactful work are collaborations and partnerships, including funding support from RLF. RLF supported the launch of the program and is providing funds for our 2023 season. Our guiding principles regarding coastal access for ALL are deeply aligned with RLF. Mujeres, with the support of RLF, will continue giving communities this experience and educating people of their right to access our beaches and coastal spaces. The outings have been a whirlwind of fun, laughter, and joyful moments with the families, especially with the children.

Again, we are deeply grateful to our grantees for their time and honesty.
Indigenous Leadership Initiative
by Valérie Courtois, Executive Director, Indigenous Leadership Initiative

The Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI) is the only Indigenous-led national conservation organization in what is now known as Canada. We work to strengthen Indigenous Nationhood, because we believe strong Indigenous Nations generate transformative benefits for lands and waters, for people and communities, and for the country and the world. We have partnered with dozens of First Nations, providing expertise on establishing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA), Indigenous Guardians programs, and more. We help support the rapid growth of IPCAs—there are now over 60 IPCAs proposed across the country—by providing seed funding and securing the first-ever federal investment in IPCAs. And together with our partners, we help ensure Indigenous-led conservation is at the heart of Canada’s strategy to meet international commitments to protect 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030.

This work advances Indigenous decision-making authority on lands and waters, and ILI appreciates RLF’s support in the process. Funders like RLF are helping decolonize conservation by investing directly in Indigenous-led initiatives. Indigenous Peoples have lived on this continent for millennia. We have relationships with these lands and waters and a deep understanding of how to sustain them. Respecting our leadership is good for people and the planet.

Bayview Residents Organize for Public Health and Climate Justice
by Bradley Angel, Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice

RLF’s support for the work of Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice and the Bayview Hunters Point Mothers and Fathers Committee has been invaluable, strategic, and effective. The grant has enabled us to have community organizers and policy advocates, who are residents of Bayview Hunters Point, lead campaign activities to protect San Francisco Bay and public health from contaminated stormwater runoff, illegal dumping, and toxic and radioactive sites threatened by sea level and groundwater rise. We have been mobilizing residents and allies to speak out and solicit agency support for environmental and climate justice. Our monthly meetings of the Bayview Hunters Point Environmental Justice Task Force brings together residents, advocates, government agencies, and sometimes businesses to address community priorities. Our efforts have been tremendously successful: the California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Toxic Substances Control, and Regional Water Quality Control Board are now on record agreeing to consider the latest science on these climate change threats when deciding how best to remediate shoreline contamination. The San Francisco Bay Shoreline Contamination Cleanup Coalition continues to grow. We appreciate RLF’s support for our frontline, multi-racial, community-led organization and campaigns for health and justice.
The American history most of us were taught in school leaves egregious gaps when it comes to Native Peoples, the horrific ways in which they were dispossessed of their lands, herded onto designated parcels, and then terminated of their Tribal affiliations. Filling in some of those knowledge gaps is what Savannah Romero and Maria Givens of Tahoma Peak Solutions hoped to achieve through three moving trainings that underscored the primacy of land to Indigenous Peoples and how its repatriation is integral to the reclamation of Native life and all that has been stolen and erased. Hosted by the Western Communications Hub, the series of three trainings brought together more than 250 Hub grantees and many RLF staff, all seeking a deeper understanding of the history of Indigenous Peoples, their relationship to “public” lands, and ways in which conservation organizations can and should change the way they work in Indian Country. The trainings were targeted to communications professionals and provided practical tips to bring visibility and power to Native Peoples in their efforts to reclaim their lands, cultures, and livelihoods.
Guided by our planning efforts in 2021, RLF and our grantees engaged on many significant policy and funding proposals to advance equity before the end of the 2022 legislative session. Here are just a few highlights:

**Equitable Outdoor Access Policy & Funding:** Passage of AB 30 (Kalra), the Equitable Outdoor Access Act, was a transcendent success, in both substance and symbolism. The law—crafted with significant input from Parks Now (a statewide coalition of community organizations focused on outdoor access launched and supported by RLF) and research funded by RLF—makes it state policy to ensure all Californians have access to and can benefit from the state’s cultural and natural resources. AB 30 directs state agencies and departments to consider this state policy whenever conducting work.

Also through Parks Now, RLF helped secure an additional commitment of $300 million to enhance equitable park and outdoor access. Of this amount, $100 million is available for 2022-2023, including $75 million for the Statewide Parks Program, which funds the development and maintenance of parks in communities that currently lack them; and $25 million for the Outdoor Equity Grants Program, which supports outdoor recreation and education programs that provide youth living in communities facing parks access barriers with opportunities to experience and enjoy nature.

**Emphasis on Equity in Climate Budget Investments:** The final 2022 State Budget included a historic total commitment of $54 billion over five years for climate and community resilience efforts, which includes $1.1 billion over three years for nature-based solutions that will help California achieve its goal of protecting 30 percent of its lands and waters by 2030 (30x30). Of this amount, RLF and partners helped secure a commitment of $100 million to support Tribal-led climate and conservation initiatives. In addition, RLF supported strategic communications and advocacy to help advance the Governor’s climate policy package, which included a long-envisioned health and safety “setback” requirement that will protect communities from impacts of oil and gas operations.

**Climate Resilience Districts:** The Legislature passed a bill to allow the voluntary formation of climate resilience districts by cities, counties, and special districts (or some combination of those entities), which will enable easier public financing of projects to address sea level rise, extreme heat, wildfire risk, flood risk, and other potential climate hazards. The bill derived from a 2021 RLF-supported report that identified pathways for financing equitable climate adaptation.

**Affordable, Climate-Adaptive Housing:** The legislature passed a bill that will streamline the approval process for affordable housing projects in commercial zones and mixed-income housing and will make it easier to secure local approval for up to 2.4 million units of economically viable, climate adaptive housing on properties currently zoned for commercial uses. The bill was informed by a coalition of affordable housing, environmental, social equity, and local government interests first brought together by RLF in 2017.
Program Spotlight: Sustainable Fisheries Fund

For more than 20 years, RLF’s Sustainable Fisheries Fund (SFF) has supported sustainability certification frameworks for seafood production. Programs such as the Marine Stewardship Council and the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch reward fisheries for improvements in their environmental performance with increased demand and higher prices from responsible distributors and consumers. Through worldwide grantmaking to support individual fishery improvement projects, SFF and its partners have helped raise environmental standards for fisheries management even in countries without robust natural resources governance, broadening the use of measures such as regular tracking of fish populations and systematic efforts to reduce bycatch (the killing of non-targeted wildlife). In recent years however, journalists and advocates have uncovered widespread human rights abuses among seafood workers, even in fisheries working toward such certifications, making clear that equity has been missing from seafood sustainability. In 2022, SFF launched a three-year program to issue more than $1 million in grants to sustainability-oriented fishery improvement projects worldwide for the implementation of strategic measures to protect human rights, including systematic training of seafood workers on their legal rights and available grievance mechanisms, and completion and public release of third-party social responsibility assessments of working conditions aboard vessels and in dockside facilities.

Photo: vessel inspection, courtesy of CeDePesca

by Lisbeth Jakobsen, Director of Fiscal Sponsorships

In addition to the grantmaking programs we actively manage, RLF also partners with donors and social and environmental changemakers to fiscally sponsor several high-impact initiatives. As a fiscal sponsor, we provide 501(c)(3) status, fiduciary oversight, and back-office operations to project teams so they can focus their time and talent on their mission-driven work. The projects we sponsor span the globe, including efforts to protect land and water in Argentina, Mexico, and Canada and an international initiative to protect 30 percent of the planet’s biodiversity by 2030 (Campaign for Nature). Closer to home, we sponsor a national collaboration of city mayors working toward bold climate action (Climate Mayors), and a coalition of five Tribes (Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition) working to protect the landscape they call Hoon’Naqvut, Shash Jáa, Kwiyagatu Nukavachi, Ansh An Lashokdiwe—also known as Bears Ears. Between RLF and our affiliated but independent organizations—Shared Ascent Fund and Fund for a Better Future—we sponsor 33 projects.
National Ocean Protection Council

The National Ocean Protection Coalition (NOPC), a project fiscally sponsored by RLF, brings more than 50 organizations together to support effective and equitable marine protected areas in the United States. The coalition includes Tribal and Indigenous leaders, racial justice advocates, scientists, faith leaders, conservationists, outdoor enthusiasts, fishers, and more. NOPC is committed to reflecting and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of its work by taking small, meaningful steps that lead to incremental, deep-rooted change. For example, in the fall of 2022, NOPC launched a grant program to fund partners for projects advancing shared coalition goals around ocean protection and equitable access to nature. The program prioritized initiatives led by or serving Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Pacific Islander, Asian, and other historically underrepresented groups. We awarded a total of $75,000 to eight partners for projects such as enhancing language access to public hearings, conducting a cultural exchange across Pacific First Nations Peoples, and a summer camp educating youth on Chumash maritime culture. NOPC’s theory of change is rooted in inclusion, recognizing that only with a broad and diverse coalition of partners can we achieve a healthy ocean that supports thriving nature, people, and communities.

Student Borrower Protection Center

The Student Borrower Protection Center (SBPC), fiscally sponsored by RLF-affiliate Shared Ascent Fund, is a nonprofit organization focused on alleviating the burden of student debt for millions of Americans. The SBPC engages in advocacy, policymaking, and litigation strategy to rein in industry abuses, protect borrowers’ rights, and advance economic opportunity for the next generation of students. SBPC’s Project on Racial & Economic Justice exposes the effects of student debt on communities of color and shows how predatory practices in the market are exacerbating existing disparities. Through this initiative, SBPC works to address discrimination in the student loan market and demonstrate how protecting borrowers is critical to advancing racial equity and economic justice. In 2022, SBPC expanded its research on the disparate effects of student loan debt by releasing a report about incarcerated student loan borrowers and launching a first-of-its-kind research series exploring race and student debt in the geographic South.
CONCLUSION

At Resources Legacy Fund, we recognize that the work required to foster a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within our organization, through our partnerships, and in the communities we live and work in is ongoing. We continue to educate ourselves; listen to our staff, grantees, and partners; try new tactics, for example on recruitment and employee engagement; learn from our mistakes; hold ourselves accountable; and try to do better. We hope that by sharing this progress report, we are contributing something true and positive to this big, collaborative effort that we all are engaged in – creating a more just future for people and nature.