

**Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region**

**Executive Officer's Summary Report
February 2, 2023**

ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: Public Hearing to consider adoption of proposed Resolution No. R1-2023-0001, *Condemning Racism, Xenophobia, Bigotry, and Racial Injustice and Strengthening Commitment to Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Anti-Racism in the North Coast Region (Devon Jorgenson, Brendan Thompson)*

BOARD ACTION: The Board will consider adoption of proposed Resolution No. R1-2023-0001 (Proposed Resolution).

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

The North Coast Regional Water Board identified in its Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Work Plan that its staff would develop a region-specific racial equity resolution for Regional Water Board adoption to address North Coast-specific racial inequities. Leveraging the State Water Board Resolution, Regional Water Board staff (Staff) began developing the Proposed Resolution and parallel initiatives to advance racial equity in early 2022.

DISCUSSION: Advancing racial equity is a priority for the Regional Water Board and its staff. Through the development of the Resolution, a subsequent action plan, and other parallel initiatives, the Regional Water Board is working toward a future where it equitably implements the Water Board's mission 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, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations. The Regional Water Board envisions a California where:

- Race is not a predictor of water and sanitation access a person receives;
- Race is not a predictor of professional outcomes for Staff; and
- A racial equity lens is consistently applied to the Regional Water Board decision-making processes.

The goals of the Proposed Resolution are to:

- Acknowledge and condemn systemic racism and the role racism plays in creating inequities in access to and quality of beneficial uses in the North Coast Region;
- Commit to advancing racial equity and workforce equity within the Regional Water Board and the communities we serve; and
- Direct Staff to advance racial and workforce equity and develop and implement an Action Plan for the North Coast Region.

A copy of the draft Resolution was posted on the Regional Water Board's Racial Equity website¹ for a 45-day public comment period on September 26, 2022. The Regional Water Board received eight comment letters on the Draft Resolution. These comments and Staff's responses are provided in the attached Response to Written Comments document.

Staff received additional verbal and written feedback on the draft Resolution, Racial Equity Initiative, and future Action Plan from 27 members of the public and tribes during a hybrid workshop before the Regional Water Board and three listening sessions in October 2022. Staff's notes from the workshop and listening sessions are provided in the attached Public Comments document and Staff's responses to written comments are provided in the *Response to Written Comments* document. Themes from written, Board workshop, and listening session comments include the following:

- Proposed Resolution Edits;
- Action Plan Considerations;
- Public Engagement Strategy;
- Culture, History, and Pride;
- Beneficial Use Access and Protection;
- Tribal Collaboration;
- Water Quality Issues;
- Water Rights Issues; and
- Enforcement.

Staff considered written and verbal comments from the public review period and revised the Proposed Resolution accordingly. Several noteworthy revisions include: 1) new or revised language to improve readability, clarity, or description of equity terms; 2) new or revised language in the *Acknowledging Native American Colonization and Genocide and Tribal Sovereignty* section to better recognize tribal sovereignty, continued tribal stewardship of land and water, and Native American peoples' spiritual connection to water; and 3) extending the completion deadline for the Action Plan from twelve to eighteen months after Proposed Resolution adoption.

¹ The Regional Water Board's Racial Equity webpage may be accessed using the following link:

https://waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/racial_equity/.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution No. R1-2023-0001, as proposed.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. Proposed Resolution No. R1-2023-0001
2. Fact Sheet for Proposed Resolution No. R1-2023-0001
3. Oral Public Comments from Community Engagement Events
4. Response to Written Comments on Draft Resolution No. R1-2023-0001
5. Summary of Written and Oral Comments on Draft Resolution No. R1-2023-0001
6. Public Notice of Board Workshop, Listening Sessions, and Adoption Hearing

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