

## September 7, 2022 OWEB Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Environmental Justice Committee Meeting

### Introduction

Since January 2022, board and staff have participated in a series of DEI related trainings facilitated by ECONorthwest. Topics have included DEI definitions, watershed inequities, and a conversation with non-traditional partners. At the July board meeting, Jade Aguilar and Shivangi Jain from ECONorthwest facilitated a discussion with the full board to begin to develop a draft equity statement. Board members reviewed equity statements from other organizations and discussed what equity means to them as a board. The first draft of the equity statement is attached and will be discussed by the DEI and Environmental Justice board committee at the September 7 meeting. Prior to discussion with the full board at the October 25-26, board meeting, the committee may want to consider formatting the statement in a similar approach to the Board's Climate Resolution.

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DATE: 8/29/22  
TO: OWEB Board DEI Subcommittee  
FROM: Jade Aguilar, Shivangi Jain, and Jolie Brownell  
SUBJECT: OWEB Board Equity Statement **Draft**

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### Importance of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

OWEB's mission is to protect and restore Oregon's healthy watersheds and natural habitats. We understand that robust ecosystem biodiversity is a critical component of ecological stability and resilience. We recognize that the same is true for social systems as it is for ecological systems—diversity of experience, thought, and approach strengthen our organization and thus our watershed conservation work. We commit to critically examining our white dominant norms and institutionalized monoculture and enhance the diversity of ideas, strategies, and goals necessary for the successful implementation and pursuit of environmental justice. Holding ourselves accountable to our past, OWEB recognizes that equity must be front and center in all our board decisions, policy making, and budgeting processes, as these are integral to the protection and long-term sustainment of our ecosystems, wildlife populations and communities.

### Historical Acknowledgement:

Historically, white European-centric institutions have dominated the conservation movement in the United States, through the exclusion, divestment, and dispossession of BIPOC communities.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) acknowledges that historically we too have failed to question this western status quo and hold of equal stature/value the practices and strategies of non-western conservation practices. To remedy this, we commit to engaging and integrating the perspectives and priorities of traditionally underrepresented and impacted communities in our conservation work.

We recognize that by working to diversify our representation, include non-traditional knowledge forms, and expand on our current set of European-centric metrics of success, we will achieve a more equitable distribution of our funding opportunities, allocation of resources, and greater environmental impact across Oregon's urban, rural, tribal areas.

### Moving Forward, OWEB Is Committed to:

- Proactively instituting a (racial) equity lens that provides a more in-depth application of equity within OWEB's day-to-day practices, policies, and decisions.

- Continued learning on how to recognize biases, counteract institutional racism, expand beyond white-dominant culture, and build an inclusive grantmaking process.

- Actively pursuing greater knowledge of non-traditional and non-western scientific ideals, metrics, and strategies.

- Reaching out to and working with non-traditional partners, especially those who prioritize and benefit traditionally underrepresented and impacted communities.

Allocating greater resources to fairly compensate the expertise and emotional labor of traditionally underrepresented and impacted communities.

Adaptively changing policies and decisions that are proven to provoke unjust or inequitable impacts, especially toward BIPOC and traditionally impacted communities.

Reviewing and updating OWEB's grant application process to ensure it is accessible to our ever-expanding pool of applicants.

Retrospectively pausing; instituting additional time and resources to audit and reflect on the greater equitable impacts of our current and future policies and decisions.

Humbly engaging this work with the recognition that we are human, will make mistakes, and that this a continuous process of learning and unlearning.

DRAFT