



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION PLAN





Dear Current and Future Friends,

To achieve our purpose of protecting the land of Sonoma County forever, we need an array of voices reflecting our community – a rich diversity of talent, backgrounds and beliefs – embodied in our board, staff, interns, volunteers, partners and program participants.

We acknowledge there is much work to do to reach the goal of ensuring our programs, land preserves and resources are shared equitably throughout the community. Further, we know there are many people we have yet to engage in our work and we must overcome the cultural, geographic and economic barriers that hinder our progress in doing so.

To best serve the people of our community, we commit to taking the actions outlined in this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Plan over the next 10 years. Our DEI Plan represents our pathway forward with measurable steps to track our progress in two spheres:

1. Externally facing actions that will enhance our programs and projects to benefit the diverse communities of Sonoma County, and
2. Internally facing actions to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion within our operations and network of board, staff, interns and volunteers.

Our commitment to taking these actions flows directly from Sonoma Land Trust's core values, which are:

- Land – The county's natural resources move us to keep it beautiful, wild and working.
- Integrity & Respect – We honor our commitments, conduct our business ethically and remain true to our purpose. We treat one another and our community members with dignity and respect.
- Collaboration & Partnerships – Conservation is social. We embrace collaboration and partnership to achieve our landscape-scale efforts.
- Inclusion & Public Benefit – Our land conservation efforts include and benefit our entire community and future generations.

Achieving the goals of our DEI Plan is essential to our mission; the commitment to successfully implement it is shared equally by the Board of Directors, Management and Staff of Sonoma Land Trust.

For the land and all of its people,



Allison Sanford
Chair, Board of Directors



Dave Koehler
Executive Director

OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Sonoma Land Trust has a 43-year track record of taking on big challenges. We have protected and restored thousands of acres along San Pablo Bay, partnered to open new recreational opportunities along the Sonoma Coast and helped advance a world-class urban greenway in Santa Rosa, California. In recent years, we have also embraced the challenge of bringing greater diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) to our work, our workplace and the communities we serve.

Sonoma Land Trust's commitment to DEI principles is part of a coordinated effort by land trusts across California and the nation to "deepen, not change, our missions to reflect the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the public we serve."¹

We are a member of the national Land Trust Alliance (LTA) and the California Coalition of Land Trusts (CCLT). In 2015, both organizations published reports and a call to action to respond to the challenge that "As land trusts, we do not [currently] reflect the demographic makeup of California. Our protected lands are not readily accessible to most Californians, nor do they provide the range of outdoor experiences many Californians seek."²

In 2016, a group of six California land trusts, including Sonoma Land Trust, agreed to be "early adopters" for CCLT's "Conservation Horizons" initiative and to develop organization-specific DEI plans. Through a comprehensive training and capacity-building program, staff and board members from Sonoma Land Trust participated in retreats, coaching sessions and three years of committee work to produce this 10-year plan. Now, we are ready to share our thoughts, ideas and commitment to DEI with our many supporters, friends and partners in Sonoma County, as well as our colleagues in the land trust community.

¹ Rob Aldrich, "[More Conservation for More People](#)", Saving Land Magazine, Land Trust Alliance (Spring 2016)

² California Council of Land Trusts, "[Conservation Horizons: Keeping Conservation and Land Trusts Vital for the Next Age](#)" Report (2015)





DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION PLAN GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1

Develop and implement an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, respect, trust, engagement, cultural sensitivity and cultural humility.

- Provide professional development opportunities for board, staff, interns and volunteers to learn to recognize unconscious biases, and to develop and increase cultural humility.
- Develop policies, procedures and cultural norms that foster organization-wide trust, open communication and accountability.
- Create a culture of recognition, respect and celebration for diversity, equity and inclusion.





GOAL 2

Attract, recruit, hire, develop and retain diverse, multi-culturally sensitive staff and board members who are representative of Sonoma County's diverse communities and can work effectively in cross-cultural environments.

- Apply outreach efforts and create opportunities to attract diverse employees, board members, interns and volunteers.
- Ensure that equitable practices exist for recruiting, hiring, developing and promoting staff, interns and volunteers.
- Periodically review organizational personnel policies and practices, including compensation, promotion and organizational culture to ensure equity.
- Conduct an annual review of board DEI composition and culture by the Board Affairs Committee.

GOAL 3

Communicate in a way that reflects our values and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Communicate our values of diversity, equity and inclusion in internal and external messages.
- Build relationships with diverse community members to identify shared values.
- Create inclusive messages that appeal to diverse audiences.
- Identify, utilize and leverage channels of communication that reach diverse audiences.



Build, strengthen and retain strategic partnerships with community groups, organizations, businesses, contractors and individuals that serve and represent Sonoma County’s diverse communities.

- Develop relationships with community partners who represent, serve and/or engage with Sonoma County’s diverse residents.
- Provide equitable access to Sonoma Land Trust lands as a primary engagement method to build relationships with partner organizations and underserved communities.
- Include DEI criteria in evaluation of contractors and business partners.
- Develop deeper and broader relationships and collaborations with organizations in Sonoma County to undertake cultural resource protection.
- Identify “community conservation” acquisition projects that meet an identified need for open space, parks or recreational facilities for areas lacking in these services.
- Encourage staff and board member participation in events and activities hosted by diverse community partners.



GOAL 5

Identify and implement community-oriented, cross-cultural programs and projects that provide multiple benefits for Sonoma County's diverse communities and further our mission.

- Identify and listen to the needs and interests of audiences, key stakeholders and communities historically excluded from the conservation field.
- Co-develop conservation projects with community input and involvement to advance conservation strategies and drive project priorities.
- Develop, modify or create programs and projects that serve diverse audiences.
- Provide equitable access to Sonoma Land Trust's resources, lands and expertise.





DEI CONCEPTS

COMMUNITY

A feeling of fellowship with others resulting from sharing common attitudes, interests and goals.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

A process that incorporates improvement in the lives of local people while conserving areas through the creation of protected lands.

CULTURAL HUMILITY

The ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the person.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Being aware that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value – positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong.

DIVERSITY

Ways in which we differ. Among these dimensions are age, gender, mental/physical abilities and characteristics, race, ethnic heritage, nationality, citizenship status, sexual orientation, gender expression, communication style, organizational role and level, first language, religion, income, work experience, military experience, geographic location, education, workstyle, family status and other dimensions.

EQUITY

The fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all people, while simultaneously striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

INCLUSION

Programs and organizational strategies that involve and empower, and in which we embrace the inherent worth, dignity and strengths that each person brings to the organization. It's about promoting and sustaining a sense of belonging while valuing the talents, beliefs, backgrounds and ways of living of everyone.

UNDER-REPRESENTED

Present in numbers that are disproportionately low. In DEI-related work, this often refers to the non-dominant group within a community.

VOLUNTEER

Individual who performs hours of service for civic, charitable or humanitarian reasons without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered. Board members are considered volunteers as well.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Efforts to increase diversity, develop equity and create inclusive environments are exciting, slow, stimulating and challenging – often all at the same time. Sonoma Land Trust’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) journey began in 2016 and took three years of hard work, consensus building, culture change and education to result in a comprehensive plan. Process is part of the product.

We would like to thank the following groups for their dedication, creativity and tireless efforts. The challenges of diversity, equity and inclusion are a moral imperative – one that is inevitably linked to the success of our mission to protect and steward land.

DEI Task Force Participants

Ali Records, Bob Neale, Dave Koehler, Heather Ah San, Ingrid Stearns, Joe Rizzo, John McCaull, Kendall Webster, Kyle Pinjuv, Marian Vernon, Neal Ramus, Nicole Na, Paul DeMarco, Shannon Nichols, Sheri Cardo and Wendy Eliot

Conservation Horizon Early Adopters Program Participants

Allison Sanford, Dave Koehler, Ingrid Stearns, Kendall Webster, Marian Vernon, Nicole Na

Leadership

Allison Sanford, Board Chair
Dave Koehler, Executive Director
Board Community Engagement Committee
Board DEI Ad Hoc Committee
Board of Directors, Sonoma Land Trust
Andrew Bowman and Wendy Jackson, Land Trust Alliance

Partners

Big Sur Land Trust
California Council of Land Trusts
Land Trust Alliance
Peninsula Open Space Trust
Stir Fry Seminars & Consulting
Visions, Inc.



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