March 1, 2024

Our Vision for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) envisions a future in which native plant diversity flourishes, where all people have access to native plants in both the built environment and the wild, and where people of every background play a vital role in the conservation of our native plant heritage. We work to protect native plants and their habitats not only because we love nature, but because we are a part of nature. Wherever we live, whoever we are, the health of landscapes is intimately intertwined with the health of communities.

Everyone should be able to access and benefit from the natural world.

As California’s Native Plant Society, we have a responsibility to address both structural and cultural barriers to experiencing nature and participating in the native plant community. We do so by integrating the values of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) into every facet of our organization and our work. These values inform who we are and how we operate as volunteers, staff, and partners.

Systemic racism is a prevalent and persistent problem.

To address racism and other forms of discrimination today, and to avoid perpetuating the harms of the past, we must recognize the complex history of the modern conservation movement and overcome the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism.

From its origins, the conservation movement idealized the myth of pristine landscapes, untouched by humans. This perspective helped justify and perpetuate the forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from their homelands. Government-sanctioned genocide and mass cultural erasure nearly destroyed Indigenous families, their traditional knowledge, and the practices that have stewarded California’s remarkable biodiversity for time immemorial. To this day, Indigenous Peoples, communities of color, low-income urban and rural communities, and other marginalized groups are too often excluded from and disproportionately harmed by key land use decisions.

We must do better, together.

Today, CNPS is part of a diverse network of people and organizations who are re-imagining and re-shaping the environmental community in ways that elevate the interconnectedness of people
and nature. With humility, we strive to be an effective collaborator, communicator, and changemaker in the service of this collective work.

Native plant issues are multidimensional and multidisciplinary, and today’s native plant movement represents a wide range of views and interests. We are an organization that advocates for the best available science, but we also recognize that Western science isn’t the only lens through which people view and connect with plants. Just as biodiversity is essential to native plant communities, a diversity of perspectives and knowledge is necessary to achieve our mission.

We commit to action.
CNPS is actively focused on the following five areas to integrate DEIJ into our organization.

1. **Internal culture:** We commit to building a culture rooted in trust, transparency, collaboration, and accountability -- informed by a broad array of perspectives.

2. **Education and public affairs:** We commit to programs and communications that are inclusive, accessible, and equitable. We will provide welcoming experiences to all people, with broadly available offerings that are communicated clearly, relevant to our growing community, and center the needs, values, and voices of marginalized communities.

3. **Partnerships:** We commit to building reciprocal relationships with communities of color, people with disabilities, low-income, rural, LGBTQ+, Indigenous, and other often-overlooked communities to ensure that our work is informed by and in service to these communities.

4. **Public Policy and Land Use:** We commit to expanding our policy agenda and land management guidance in collaboration with marginalized communities to ensure that we are using our organizational power to illuminate and advocate for key issues that are central to native plants and the well-being of all communities.

5. **Science:** We commit to contributing to a scientific community that is welcoming, humble, and accessible. We value and incorporate knowledge beyond the disciplines of Western science, including traditional ecological knowledge that Indigenous communities hold and choose to share.

By integrating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice values into our work, we build an organization and culture that honors both our collective passion for native plants – and the well-being and dignity of our diverse communities.

We are a work in progress and welcome suggestions, questions, and ideas. Please send your feedback to the CNPS DEIJ Committee at DEIJ@cnps.org.