

Policy: CNGA Supports Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

Excerpts from CNGA Bylaws

Article II, Section 2.01. Encourage Diversity of Membership

It shall be the policy of the Association to encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion and to organize and function in such a manner so that diverse opinions and desires of the Association membership are fully considered.

Section 2.02. Encourage Consensus Decision-Making

It shall be the policy of the Association to encourage consensus to the fullest extent possible as the means for decision making in the Association and its subgroupings. Board members will develop and support decisions that best represent the membership as a whole.

Board of Directors Full DEIJ Policy Statement

[Revised November 14, 2022]

On behalf of the California Native Grasslands Association (CNGA), the Board of Directors declares our commitment to building a shared understanding for every member of our Association and surrounding community about the relevance and importance of our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) work.

Our DEIJ Vision, Grounded in our Mission and Values

Protecting and restoring California Native Grasslands requires diversity in both perspective and practice. As a result of a traumatic colonial past, groups of people have not been properly recognized for their contributions and achievements in advancing conservation, especially indigenous tribal groups that were violently displaced from their ancestral lands. Indigenous tribal bands were critical in developing many conservation practices we research and use for management in contemporary times, originally derived from traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). CNGA understands that to promote and restore the natural and cultural restoration of California native grasslands we must have an intentional commitment to inclusive practices and narratives within the conservation movement.

CNGA endeavors to understand how our differences and diversity shape our experiences in the world. We openly welcome the participation of all individuals, regardless of race, age, gender identity, cultural background, religion, country or ethnic origin, language, disability, sexual orientation, economic class, academic discipline, institution, or any other distinction unrelated to the enjoyment of California grasslands. We further recognize and value the contributions of all people, including those from underrepresented groups, while also amplifying voices that may be marginalized.

We stand with our community partners and all those who seek to create a more just and equitable world where all living beings are valued, respected, and treated with dignity.

In both our programmatic priorities and our internal organizational development, the CNGA strives to honor inclusive recruitment of staff and board members that foster a diverse and inclusive culture. In these actions, we hope to build healthy relationships and healthy communities while fostering reciprocity through meaningful interactions with mutual respect and kindness with everyone in the community and beyond.

OUR PATH FORWARD

Acting upon these principles is of critical importance and must be a priority for the CNGA and for all the members within our Association and community. We recognize that this path requires an ongoing commitment in learning and reflexivity, and one that will not be completed overnight. As an organization, we are neither perfect nor infallible. We ask each member to be compassionate with one another, and to recognize that we are all on a collective journey of understanding and action. We pledge to maintain open channels of communication within the CNGA community on this important issue. To that end, we are committed to values of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice that are healthy, accessible to everyone, and encourages a place where people, nature and native grasslands thrive!

Ongoing Efforts to Improve DEI (and further solidify the “J”) at the CNGA

- Developing a mentorship/apprenticeship program
- Selecting 1 or 2 of all total Student GRASS Awards based on financial need
- Provide paid internship opportunities (for example the GIS position)
- Increased grassland ecology and advocacy outreach in underserved communities
- Developing and enhancing TEK outreach resources for wider audiences
- Partnerships with and amplification of Indigenous Tribal Experts involved in long-term de-colonization and land resource management opportunities (e.g., local land trusts, local re-matriation programs)
- Increasing “Grassland Voices” from a broader perspective to strengthen the grassland advocacy community including, but not limited to, providing grants for art outreach and by promoting some of these opportunities across a wider community.