



# PMEP Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework

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## Introduction

The Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (PMEP) was established to conserve and restore estuarine and nearshore fish habitat along the West Coast. As a voluntary collaboration, PMEP works to synthesize the best available information, enhance our understanding of West Coast fish habitats, and provide targeted restoration and conservation funding to support on-the-ground projects. PMEP works in partnership with the National Fish Habitat Partnerships (NFHP) and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC).

In doing this work, PMEP engages a range of voices in local, state, tribal, and federal governments as well as non-governmental and private organizations. And yet, more is needed to bring the full suite of perspectives, knowledge, innovation, and lived experiences of individuals and communities on the West Coast into PMEP's operations, culture, and work. In 2021, PMEP adopted a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative to support the use of a DEI *lens* to examine its existing policies, procedures, and cultural norms, and how these might be adjusted to embrace the fullness of the communities it serves, including underrepresented communities. The PMEP DEI Framework outlines the approach and objectives to achieve the following goals:

1. Improve upon PMEP programs and practices by considering DEI objectives when developing and implementing policies, work plans, and strategies.
2. Apply a DEI *lens* when considering committee representation, community engagement, drafting funding opportunities, communicating with PMEP partners, incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and evaluating project impacts.
3. Regularly reevaluate DEI actions and opportunities as part of PMEP's annual planning processes.
4. Consider and make updates to the Framework as new information becomes available.

## Developing DEI Within PMEP

PMEP is guided by a Strategic Plan that is revised and adopted by the Steering Committee every five years. The Plan includes overarching goals and objectives as well as high-level actions needed to achieve the goals. PMEP's Strategic Plan is advanced through the development and implementation of an Annual Workplan. The Annual Workplan identifies which Strategic Plan goals and objectives will be advanced during a calendar year and describes specific, timebound actions to be taken over the course of the year. The Workplan is developed and approved by the Steering Committee and Science & Data Committee.

Under the PMEP DEI Framework, each committee will evaluate and adopt language, goals, and actions that promote DEI advancement. This can be achieved through a series of objectives outlined below, and should be revisited each time a new project or working group activity is identified. The DEI Framework Objectives described below will help support the use of a DEI *lens* as PMEP develops and implements its policies, programs, and actions at annual and multi-year scales.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Objectives

For each objective below, PMEP will work to ensure that the goals outlined for DEI are addressed and evaluated on a regular basis.

### 1. Committee Representation

PMEP consists of the Steering Committee, Governance Committee, Science and Data Committee, Communications Committee, Nearshore Working Group, Barriers to Tidal Connectivity Working Group, and other groups formed as needed to complete projects and goals. These groups are run by volunteers from federal, state, and indigenous entities; non-profit organizations; and industry representatives. Membership to these committees most often occurs through active recruitment.

Recruitment to committees should include representation from a diverse community of researchers, practitioners, and policy managers. This can be achieved by:

- Reviewing committee membership regularly to assess opportunities to diversify representation and encourage equity.

- Engaging with indigenous entities to help ensure equitable representation from co-managers.
- Ensure representation from coastal communities across PMEP's Geographic Scope are present in committees and workgroups (urban, rural, underserved communities, and indigenous entities across each state).
- Providing an environment for open engagement and inclusion within PMEP committees and workgroups.

## 2. PMEP Partner Engagement

PMEP engages with a wide range of outside individuals and groups to achieve their goals and science products. It is critically important that all internal and external PMEP engagements are conducted in a manner that promotes and facilitates DEI, and includes a broad range of perspectives, knowledge, and ideas. PMEP's Communication Committee will play a lead role in advancing DEI objectives and goals within our internal and external engagements. Key DEI focused engagement strategies include:

- Engaging with internal and external individuals, communities, groups, and partners with cultural humility and respect to promote mutual trust and respect.
- Continuously seeking out opportunities to bring in diverse and underrepresented community perspectives, knowledge, and ideas into PMEP work.
- Continuously seeking opportunities to include indigenous voices, leadership, and perspectives, including traditional ecological knowledge, indigenous stewardship and science, and educational programs.
- Build DEI objectives, goals, and actions into PMEP's Communications Plan and update external communications to align with the DEI Framework.
- Serve as a leader in DEI, within the network of NFHP and promote use of DEI measures and initiatives to all NFHPs.

## 3. PMEP Science and Data Products

To deepen our scientific understanding and make strategic recommendations for conservation and restoration of fish habitat in estuaries and the nearshore on the

West Coast, PMEP conducts assessments and compiles and standardizes data based on the partnership's strategic priorities. All of these datasets are used to characterize PMEP's priority habitats and threats to habitats, and to incorporate information that link to PMEP's spatial data products.

Efforts are needed to ensure the science and data products include multiple perspectives. Examples include citations from diverse publications and resources, and inclusion of DEI considerations throughout the process, from the formulation of the science question or hypothesis through implementation and publication.

#### 4. Funding Programs

All PMEP funding programs are administered through a DEI *lens* so that we maximize funding eligibility opportunities for all communities, including underrepresented communities, and avoid potential biases associated with the process of proposal review and ranking. Moreover, PMEP will reach out specifically to underrepresented communities to ensure they have knowledge of the opportunity and information to complete applications.

Funding prospectuses and action items from the Annual Work Plan will be assessed during the planning processes to assess opportunities for projects and programs to include DEI objectives.

#### 5. Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Consideration in PMEP engagement should be given to indigenous partners. Key DEI focused engagement strategies for these entities include:

- Taking measures to help ensure these groups are engaged early in PMEP initiatives, work plan, project development, and are included throughout implementation.
- Taking into consideration how PMEP actions and related programs or projects may affect indigenous resources, management authority, ancestral lands, self-determination, and sovereignty.
- Acknowledging and supporting indigenous voices, perspectives, and knowledge; and implementation of indigenous practices, stewardship, and science within their traditional lands.

Projects and funding proposals should include opportunities to incorporate Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (LEK, or TEK) as available. This can be achieved by outreach to community and indigenous groups represented in the project area, conducting interviews with ecological practitioners, and hosting

workshops or forums to incorporate local input, data, science, stories, and ideas. This information and approach should be outlined in Requests for Proposals (RFPs), considered in proposal evaluations, and included in final reports. The information documented in reports will reflect publicly on PMEPs commitment to DEI.

### **Evaluating Project and Community Impacts**

Evaluation of PMEP's implemented DEI actions will be conducted regularly and effectiveness will be assessed during development of the RFP, Annual Work Plan actions, and Strategic Plan revision process. Criteria and metrics to help PMEP determine effectiveness of implemented DEI initiatives can be developed during those processes, and the DEI Framework should be evaluated at least every two years.

Review of project reports will also be evaluated to consider how PMEP products can meet DEI objectives. Examples of metrics include overcoming language barriers to reach a wide audience, considering how project recommendations might impact communities, and establishing engagement with the broader NFHP network.

PMEP's evaluation process may include consulting with an external evaluator to review how PMEP is performing with DEI, the effectiveness of the DEI goals, and to identify future learning opportunities to improve PMEP's DEI objectives. The funding and need for an external evaluator will be identified during the Annual Work Plan development.

### **Alignment statement**

This framework has been developed by a working group of PMEP members, and approved by the Steering Committee. This framework is intended to be a living document that PMEP can use for guidance and adapt as opportunities arise.

### **Glossary**

Community engagement: The process of working collaboratively with groups of people who are affiliated by geographic proximity, special interests, or similar situations with respect to issues affecting their well-being.

**Diversity:** A range of differences in characteristics of people, such as socioeconomic status, race, culture, age, gender, physical and mental ability, social identities, and lived experiences. Differences between people that lead to different experiences in systemic advantages or encounters with systemic barriers to opportunities.

**Equity:** Fairness of achieving outcomes for all groups and no one factor, such as race, can be used to predict outcomes. Equity is defined in the context of social and racial equity.

**Inclusion:** Creation of a welcoming environment 1) where people's differences are represented and respected; 2) that embraces multicultural and indigenous histories and presence; and 3) cultivates community empowerment, care of natural resources, personal connections, and a sense of ownership.

**Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK):** Knowledge, practices, and beliefs regarding ecological relationships that are gained through extensive personal observation of and interaction with local ecosystems, and shared among local resource users.

**Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK):** A cumulative body of knowledge about the relationships living things (including people) have with each other and with their environment, that is handed down across generations through cultural transmission.

**Underserved communities:** These communities have been historically and are still often systematically excluded from political and policy-making processes as well as government investments. Because of these systems, these communities have insufficient funds, resources, or other assets to address environmental issues.