

Equity Forum on Research Gaps in Support of California's Pathways to 30x30

Thursday February 17, 2022

Break Out Session Notes

The 30x30 Equity Forum on Research Gaps was conducted with the participation of fifty organization representatives across California to broaden and deepen the research recommendations to address equity, environmental justice, and indigenous stewardship, as identified by the California Biodiversity Network's (CBN) Roundtables (see participant listing section).

Three focus areas and an "open forum" were identified to conduct facilitated small group discussions that address disparities in access to outdoor green spaces by communities of color and continued environmental injustices. Participants were invited to join one of the four breakout sessions to contribute to a focused exploration on research gaps on life expectancy; loss of land and control; green gentrification and displacement; or a general discussion on other topical areas as defined by the participants.

Open Forum – *general discussion on other topical areas as defined by the participants*

Break Out Group Host: Mani Oliva, Point Blue Conservation Science

Summary Research Recommendations (drawn from the notes below):

1. Research is needed into how to diversify the science fields as well as the people conducting the science.
2. Study better ways to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) with western science.
3. Study how to both generalize TEK and also incorporate distinct views from the different Californian indigenous cultures.
4. Identify successful models from around the world of integrating TEK with western science to achieve conservation outcomes.
5. Study how "different ways of knowing" can affect restoration goals and outcomes
6. Research the negative results of restoration outcomes for lessons learned.
7. Study how to better integrate demographic information into community science efforts.
8. Make sure that community science data and results are reported back and available to the communities that provided input.
9. Research the different health outcomes from variations on access to nature.
10. Develop methodology to monitor and measure desired equity outcomes.
11. Develop new models where human elements are incorporated into natural systems.

Group Discussion Notes with Guiding Questions:

- What research is needed to advance equity in 30x30?
 - Research on the opportunities/challenges towards diversifying the science fields. How does science change, the questions and the research priorities and outcomes?
 - Would there be a useful way to synthesize the work that includes TEK and western, figure out how to analyze and synthesize this data in a way that would be helpful? CA has very different indigenous communities, making it challenging to create general lessons learned. How to keep them distinct and integrate the information at the same time.
 - How people are being engaged in restoration. How including diverse people (e.g., include different ways of knowing) affect how we do restoration and how it affects the outcomes (e.g., ecological impact, use of more native species). Lag of research. Bias for positive outcomes, not enough literature on negative outcomes to provide lessons learned. A dB to document the types of stakeholders and participants, and practices used, outcomes, lessons learned.
- Is there a need for new data collection, if so what type of data?
 - Can we ask for demographic information from community science efforts?
 - Research on solutions that consider and incorporate TEK, how it affects the practices and outcomes of restoration? How to incorporate both western science and TEK, both are different strands that work together as knowledge creation, sharing. TEK and western science need each other. Great examples might exist globally.
 - More open-source code that provides information on community science data. Sharing this code more. Could help engage with more diverse communities, to help increase learning by providing. Not data sovereignty necessarily. People are gathering data, but are not getting back actionable information (e.g., dashboards).
 - In ecology there is a lot of data that provides a way to get to ecological equilibrium. To reach social equity. Can we incorporate social equity as an outcome within equations? What kind of balance do we need in the diversity of stakeholders involved? The equations need to include social equity, math is universal. Do not know of any work that attempts to do this. The human component does not include the human component.
- What type of data would be important to consider for resource allocation and new legislation (policy/law)?
 - Access to green space and access to high quality nature, what are the health outcomes from different access provided.
 - A lot of monitoring will be required to make sure that equity will be met. Would be good to identify how we would monitor equity outcomes.
- Do we have the right models and identified best practices in this area?
 - Not seeing human elements as separate within natural systems, ecosystems. More data on who is involved in conservation work, putting them into the formula as part of the ecosystem.

- Move away from the paradigm that says it is not real until it's researched. How to incorporate the knowledge of people that they hold, in the different ways that communities hold this knowledge.

Life Expectancy – *mental and physical health impacts from limited or no access to parks and open space that results in diminished life expectancy*

Break Out Group Host: Dr. Ana M Alvarez, CBN Steering Committee & East Bay Regional Park District

Summary Research Recommendations (drawn from the notes below):

1. Synthesize existing research to advance knowledge on the disproportionate decreases in life expectancy in communities of color with limited or no access to nature.
2. Build new mapping data layers related to public health and equitable access.
3. Map distributional inequities in variations to access to nature.
4. Research systemic barriers to operationalizing equity in the conservation and environmental industries that includes community-based organizations.
5. Research state budget appropriation, allocation and investment into issues around equity that bring to light performance metrics on outcomes.
6. Model successful standards that leverage multiple benefits beyond typical education and language translations for equitable access to nature.
7. Conduct research into cultural misconceptions about BIPOC and their relationship to nature and the outdoors.
8. Examine new models to career pathways in the environmental industry by marginalized communities of color that resolve for existing barriers and social injustice; for example, the wildfire crews drawn from California's incarcerated populations but are not eligible for the job once released.

Guiding Questions:

1. What science-based tools do NGOs and environmental agencies need to operationalize equity (policy, resource allocation, etc.) to swiftly reduce disparities and long-term impacts?
2. What research is needed to advance equity in leveraging wellness benefits derived from access to quality open space, and public parklands?
3. How can we reduce structural/distributional inequity in access?
4. Do we have the right models and identified best practices in this area?
5. Is there a need for new data collection, if so what type of data?
6. What type of data would be important to consider for resource allocation and new legislation (policy/law)?

Group Discussion Notes:

- Science has already proven that the lack of access to the outdoors decreases life expectancy. This is impacting communities of color disproportionately.
- Advances need to be swiftly made, allowing the conservation field to catch up. Compared to other fields (public health), conservation and environmental industry fields are a bit behind.
- Need for a model that establishes standards for equitable access. Something that goes beyond just education/outreach issues (eg, language barriers). Next

level: providing opportunity to educate on what we are trying to achieve from a science perspective, create future generations of stewards with cultural competencies and cultural humility.

- Need a new model that brings forward standards and criteria that ensures accountability for meaningful engagement of marginalized communities that leverages multiple benefits (participation, education, stewardship, higher education opportunities and pathways to employment within the environmental industry).
- Why doesn't this model exist already, as in other fields? Lack of investment, and lack of interest.
 - Need investment at two fronts: research/science and investment in communities.
 - Conservation/environmental industry behind. We're behind many other fields.
 - Needs a catchup effort--requires investment
 - Need to build capacity in traditionally marginalized communities
 - Develop a research agenda and fund it in a realistic manner...and resources to promote research
- How can we operationalize equity within environmental orgs? Why is there a lack of investment and lack of prioritization given the demographic profile of California today and in the future.
- Conservation of the natural world and positioning nature-based solutions to create resiliency from a changing climate, urgently demands a new approach and cultural humility that debunks cultural misconceptions.
- Need to invest in studies that debunk cultural misconceptions that create barriers to stewardship, conservation and outdoor recreation. Every ethnic group has a cultural connection to the natural world that lives in a spectrum of values and beliefs rooted in socioeconomic ranges. Must debunk prevailing views that create barriers and "others" communities of color.
- Performance metrics on State resource allocations are needed to understand outcomes on public investments to increase access to State Parks and other public lands.
- Another fiscal piece: State grant appropriations designed to remove barriers in marginalized communities of color require performance metrics, information on equity outcomes (including failures).
- Daylight what's working and what's not working.
- On impacts to public health from diminished access to open space - baseline data exists at local levels. What we don't have: aggregated data and a national database showing not just lack of access to green space alongside other data layers (health outcomes etc.).
 - Example: if all LA county census tracts increased access to open space, vegetation cover, etc....it would undoubtedly result in huge benefits to life expectancy.
 - We have the data but needs to be expanded at scale.
 - Lack of recognition that this is a priority.
- Lack of investment--problem across the state. Urban areas that need restoration (development, redlining, channeling of creeks etc.). Lack of political will to devote financial resources to this. Attempts for set-asides: very

hard to achieve. Within conservation groups: disagreement. Fear that “if we devote 50% to urban areas, backcountry areas will be neglected.”

- Isolated research is happening, but how to make sure it's all accessible?
 - Do we need some kind of shared database?
 - Need to make sure we connect research to health outcomes.
- Need study on barriers in marginalized communities to wildfire fighting career pathways that diminishes the capacity of local communities: (example the wildfire crews drawn from the incarcerated communities but are not eligible for the job once released).

Resource Links Shared:

- https://preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/uploads/PI_Park_Equity_Research-Summary_092420_FINAL%20%281%29.pdf
- https://preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/uploads/PI_Park_Equity_Policy_Brief.pdf

Loss of Land and Control – *restitution from historical practices of displacement, redlining and forced removal*

Break Out Group Host: Effie Turnbull Sanders, USC and California Coast Commission

Summary Research Recommendations (drawn from the notes below):

1. Research the historical progression of large-scale conservation in California to document land loss and displacement.
2. Engage indigenous people to map their traditional territories and lands
3. Research the current easement language used by land trusts for expansion to allow more indigenous cultural practices.
4. Study the necessary capacity building (legal, financial, technical management expertise, human resources, long term sustainability) for indigenous communities to take back lands.
5. Study more effective models for conservation groups and land trusts that go beyond the standard DEI approach.
6. Research barriers to Indigenous stewardship that are baked into conservation tools and institutional frameworks
7. Research Native land trusts (there are at least 8 in CA) to learn about the opportunities and challenges they have encountered, and how they are working through those.

Guiding Questions & Thoughts:

1. Call for participants to identify specific areas or gaps for the 30 x 30 Pathways Report; research is needed for what has really happened in California.
2. What may be some opportunities for restitution?
3. Redlining and forest removal- CA has challenged past with genocide
4. What are ways for more equitable cooperation?

Group Discussion Notes:

- Don Hawkins(Cal State Chico or Delta): Potential for inequities- idea of landback- return to tribal groups- whose land are you giving back? Within the indigenous community it needs to be further explored- indigenous tribal

areas need to figure that out for themselves before outside agencies can assist.

- Map based ethnographies need to be created by indigenous peoples first. The state can support by providing funding, but these efforts should not be led by universities or the state, instead they can partner with indigenous communities in a supportive role.
- Recognizing it takes time for authentic indigenous led stewardship, meaning it may not be feasible to move as quickly. It is more important to get it right.
- Stewardship opportunities- where are boundaries drawn for who has access (different tribes have migrated, intermarried and the access issues and place are complex and indigenous peoples need to figure this out for themselves first.
- Suggestions for improvement? State could fund but not direct. Make use of opportunities that are indigenous led. Don has helped to establish the Indigenous Stewardship Foundation (this may be something to follow up on).
- Some of the barriers are identified in this document:
<https://karuktribeclimatechangeprojects.com/good-fire/>
- One challenge is policy wants to advance quickly- surface engagement due to time constraints. How do we dismantle the status quo given the State push to meet deadlines? Can we pre-qualify certain groups for projects where the requirement for funding is that they be “shovel ready”?
- Land Trust (organizations) needs research; ideas are controlled by dominant culture and conservation is perpetuating colonialism and white supremacy. Hard to move decision-makers toward understanding the consequences of colonialism. What research exists for how large-scale conservation happened in CA. Research needs to be done on who have been the leaders within conservation and on land trusts, etc. Who are on the boards etc. (See similar research in Verde Report on POC leaders within environmental organizations).
- What are barriers to activities- fire stewardship- some easements only allow for some indigenous practices, but not all. Work with the attorney general on easement language amendments would be favored- enhance transfer of land or strategies. Underlying docs need to be updated.
- Conservation does not serve marginalized peoples. How to count them/recognize all. Is there existing research?
<https://www.conservationpartners.com/restoring-tribal-access-to-land-a-menu-of-options-to-reestablish-cultural-access-rights/>
- “Land-back movement’ issue is presented as an ideal- ends up just about giving native peoples land back without the resources to manage the land. Indigenous groups view certain lands as a burden rather than a benefit.
- Indigenous peoples need the capacity to manage land more efficiently (given resources) to succeed (legal, financial, technical management expertise, human resources, long term sustainability). Land cannot be just given back the resources for the purchase of the land is not enough, we must also have the resources to potentially put together a nonprofit to manage the land.
- Land trust is not set up to manage lands; infrastructure is not there for transfer of lands. In terms of work he leads, he advocates for Native groups to not accept lands that include easements. Many land trust models and land back efforts include requirements to have conservation easements, instead he recommends what he calls “cultural easements.”
- There are only 5 Federally recognized tribes in California, so organizing with

various tribal interests and capacity building and structure is needed. (He gave an example of the challenges of accepting land in San Mateo).

- Indigenous peoples are a sovereign people; instead of a conservation agreement could they have a cultural easement.
- Land trusts have policies that are limiting- they cannot give land back if they wanted to due to certain legal requirements for transfer and other barriers. Board members of land trusts are slow to get on board and adopt new ways of land transfer or understanding.
- Too often working with agencies and Land Trusts and conservation orgs, the model for equity is the DEI model- not sufficient to address the needs of indigenous peoples.
- DEI does not recognize sovereignty and nation to nation status.
- DEI cannot be a catch all for all the things that the dominant culture feels are “different” from them. DEI fails to recognize the sovereignty of indigenous peoples. This also came up in 30X30 Advisory Committee meetings.
- Host of problems to address/major obstacles due to capitalism. “Land-back Movement” points are part of what we are also seeing in building other aspects of capacity.
- Dominant culture does not want to deal with complexities and DEI is thrown in as a catch all to address issues.

Zoom Webinar Chat Notes:

- Hello, a couple of comments to add to the Loss of Land discussion— I think it is important to note that we are talking about both opportunities for developing new conservation frameworks, as well as addressing colonial conservation in past and contemporary institutional practices. I thought that she made an excellent point in terms of the need for research on barriers to Indigenous stewardship that are baked into conservation tools and institutional frameworks. I see the need for identifying barriers and then developing tools and processes that respond to those. There is also opportunity to work with Native land trusts (there are at least 8 in CA) to learn about the opportunities and challenges they have encountered, and how they are working through those. We need specific funding for Indigenous led conservation, including support for developing the capacity that was mentioned.
- Also, in terms of building trust between Indigenous entities and conservation organizations, we may have a good model in the form of the ‘learning journey’ that some conservation organizations are undertaking with Tribes and Native organizations. This is happening in Oregon and in Maine (First Light).

Green Gentrification and Displacement – *displacement from park development and ecological restoration of open spaces*

Break Out Group Host: Jon Jarvis, CBN Steering Committee & University of Berkeley Institute for Parks, People and Biodiversity

Summary Research Recommendations (drawn from the notes below):

1. Study a model as a requirement for the allocation of public subsidies for park development, preservation and restoration of open space that prevents the displacement of communities of color in proximity to the site and embeds social equity outcomes.

2. When planning investments to improve access to parks and other open space, invest research into who is using the existing access and who uses the access after improvement.
3. Research how to prevent displacement and gentrification resulting from investment in waterway improvements.
4. Research successful models of community engagement, with a specific focus on communities of color, in conservation, access and park design and develop a set of best practices.
5. Research the most effective models of “technical assistance” often provided to communities that lack capacity to engage or lead conservation and access planning efforts.
6. Test the hypothesis that park, open space signage in multiple languages increases use by non-English speaking populations.
7. Study effective and successful community engagement techniques for their ability to be used to train and educate local, state, federal and NGO organizations to be more effective.
8. Research the reasons why awareness and concern for the environment by communities of color are not translating into greater diversity in environmental, conservation and natural resources workforce, including academia.
9. Research effectiveness of various youth conservation programs in their long-term impact on career paths and workforce diversity.
10. Research the “minimum critical funding” for new parks to be effectively maintained and managed to meet their conservation and access objectives.
11. Research cultural and indigenous use of plants that can be used to develop stewardship connections to parks and open space.

Group Discussion Notes with Guiding Questions:

- What research is needed to advance equity in this (topical) area?
 - A good research topic would be if efforts to get local communities and youth involved in conservation and workforce, but then we don't always follow-up to see if it worked. Research can help guide how effective programs are.
 - Lots of research that says environment is a high concern of people of color, but we aren't seeing change in workforce
 - At Department of Water Resources, research has shown that as waterways are improved, it does lead to gentrification, so interested in what can be implemented to avoid gentrification.
 - Really interested in Prop. 68 access funds, but no research yet on who is actually utilizing places pre and post funding.
 - Does signage improve stewardship and involvement in local parks? Want to know if people could be more engaged. Could look at language changes in this too
 - Minimum critical finance; how much money do you really need for a park to successfully accomplish its primary mission. Need to work with economics community more on this
 - New models of community design or engagement practices?

- Is there a need for new data collection, if so what type of data?
 - Need to know who the partners are in local communities that are trusted to partner with (for example, in Santa Barbara they often work with the YMCA) and have the resources (example: being able to speak Spanish)
 - Need to allow the community to derive priorities and set up ways for the community to share their ideas; can help find shared priorities and better engage
- What type of data would be important to consider for resource allocation and new legislation?
 - Local capacity to be able to even apply to grants for communities that need it the most
 - Identify what technical assistance is so that there can be state operation dollars
- Do we have the right models and identified best practices in this area?
 - Partner with organizations that are already in the community, for example currently working with a small church community in Santa Barbara and helping people better access nature through birding
 - Department of Water Resources has measures in place for technical support and incentives for underserved communities applying to grants; do things like supply language services, outreach of information, support for project management and design (things that are often contracted out)
 - Have found success in outreach to local communities when restoration projects occur; show how they can connect and interact with nature; indigenous knowledge of plants and how they can be utilized has been really useful
 - Change from top-down approach has been helpful to better listen to the community and find shared priorities; some places are more receptive than others, so will need improvement to scale up across the state for places where there is a lack of trust
- Other thoughts that came up:
 - Need to connect people in the local communities to help with management of local places. Trying to help people who might want to pursue careers in conservation
 - Need for community outreach. Funding is not distributed equally.
 - Money for continuous management and outreach, both natural resources and interpretive will improve lands
 - Need to focus on earning the communities' trust
 - Need to start an outreach process now and get people engaged early

Participant Listing

The following organizations and agencies contributed to the development of the research recommendations and participated in the “30x30” Equity Forum on Research Gaps:

- Audubon California
- California 30x30 Advisory Committee

- California Academy of Sciences
- California Biodiversity Network
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Water Resources
- California Institute for Biodiversity
- California Invasive Plant Council
- California Native Plant Society
- California Natural Resources Agency
- California State University, Chico
- California Trust for Public Lands
- City of Los Angeles
- Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy
- East Bay Regional Park District
- Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
- Hispanic Access Foundation
- Outdoor Outreach
- People of the Global Majority in the Outdoors, Nature and Environment
- Prevention Institute
- Point Blue Conservation Science
- Santa Barbara Land Trust
- The Association of Ramaytush Ohlone
- The Nature Conservancy
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Davis
- University of California, Office of the President
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- University of Southern California