



SONOMA LAND TRUST STANDS WITH THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

Sonoma Land Trust is committed to creating a culture and workplace that cultivates belonging by celebrating diversity and valuing the voices and contributions of all employees, board members, interns, volunteers, partners, and program participants. We are proud and enthusiastic members, allies, and supporters of the LGBTQIA+ community, and we stand firmly against all forms of bias and exclusion.

WHY NOW?

In recent years, legislators have passed numerous laws against the LGBTQIA+ community, including bans on access to gender-affirming care for trans youth, laws regulating bathroom access, book bans, and restrictions on teaching and discussing gender and sexuality. At the same time, hate crimes against the queer community are increasing.

This harmful narrative that queerness is “unnatural” feeds widespread homophobia and transphobia. Institutions that systematically exclude the voices of queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming scientists play into this false narrative and fail to acknowledge their immense contributions to conservation.

As a land trust, our conservation goals and values are interwoven with environmental justice to ensure that our climate work centers communities most vulnerable to climate change – overwhelmingly communities of color. Queer people of color deal with heightened discrimination in accessing medical care and green spaces, compounding the impacts of rising temperatures and air and water pollution. It’s critical to our work as a land trust that we support queer representation in conservation and the outdoors, especially for the BIPOC queer community.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan, first published in 2019 and then refreshed and strengthened in 2024, was crafted with participation from all staff and board members and outlines our goals and strategies for creating an inclusive and supportive internal culture. Our DEI Resource Group comprises over half our full-time staff, and together, they guide and monitor the actions outlined in our plan. We have integrated equity-focused trainings and professional development opportunities to increase cultural sensitivity and humility, and we are developing and implementing strategies to attract and retain employees, board members, interns, and volunteers from communities that have historically been underrepresented in our work. In an effort to ensure accountability, we will be sharing our demographic information for the first time this year with Green 2.0, an initiative that combats inequality in the environmental movement.

As a result of these efforts, we’ve seen the internal culture at our organization shift dramatically over the past several years. For example, Sonoma Land Trust first participated in our local Pride celebrations in 2022, with only a few employees serving on the Pride planning committee. This year, those three employees were joined by over a dozen others who staffed a booth, designed Pride-themed SLT merchandise, built a float, and led a group of nearly 50 employees, board members, friends, family, and partners in the Sonoma County Pride Parade in Santa Rosa.



Following the June 2024 Pride celebrations, our Pride committee evolved from a temporary event planning group to an ongoing Queer Affinity Group. We are also excited to share that we organized our first Queer Hike in June to create a safe space for the queer community in the outdoors, and we plan to continue these in the future.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

We are dedicated to perpetual learning and improvement and commit to strengthening our allyship and advocacy for the queer community.

We are continuing this forward momentum by offering more LGBTQIA+-focused staff trainings, cultivating relationships with local queer organizations, identifying the nature-related needs of the queer community, and building outings centered on those needs. We will continue to provide supportive and welcoming spaces where queer youth can express themselves authentically.

To ensure that everyone feels they belong at Sonoma Land Trust, we are working toward a culture that is not only respectful and inclusive but celebrates expansive gender and sexual identities.