

FRIENDS OF THE LA RIVER WELCOMES NEW CEO CANDICE DICKENS-RUSSELL TO GROWING TEAM



Los Angeles, CA (July 13, 2022) - [Friends of the Los Angeles River \(FoLAR\)](#) has announced Candice Dickens-Russell as the organization's new president and CEO starting July 15, 2022, following Marissa Christiansen's six-year tenure. Dickens-Russell is a former FoLAR board member and a renowned leader in environmental education across the State of California. This transition is the culmination of nearly two years of refreshing the organization's mission and vision, strategic planning, diversity, equity and inclusion training and planning, and expanding the team.

Christiansen joined FoLAR in June of 2016. In her time with the organization she has focused on building a team-first culture, attracting the best candidates in the field, strengthening FoLAR's advocacy strategy, and centering the organization on equity and climate resilience. Following her transition out of her role of president and CEO, Christiansen will apply her passions and knowledge gained as a river advocate in her continued role on the FoLAR Board of Directors and in her new position as Lead of the Water Table for the Water Foundation, which she starts on August 1, 2022.

"My six-year journey as the head of Friends of the LA River has been one of the greatest honors of my life. I came here to establish a team that could thrive beyond any single leader. FoLAR has exactly that. I am immensely proud of the collaborative team and partnerships we've collectively built over these past years. The river, the organization, the team, our new mission



and strategic plan are destined for big impact under the steadfast leadership of Candice Dickens-Russell. She is the exact right leader at the exact right time,” said Christiansen.

Dickens-Russell—a native of the lower LA River—joins the FoLAR team following three years of serving on FoLAR’s Board of Directors, and 17 years partnering with the organization. Most recently, she led the development of FoLAR’s diversity, equity, and inclusion plan. This critical work helped shape the organization’s new [5-year strategic plan](#) as well its [new mission and vision](#), which centers LA’s diverse sets of communities, students, and future leaders as advocates for a healthy and climate resilient LA River.

“A healthy LA River is one of our best assets for climate mitigation, creating a haven for river adjacent communities and wildlife in the face of diminishing habitat and a rapidly warming Los Angeles. After many years as a FoLAR supporter, I’m thrilled to have the opportunity to lead our work to create a thriving LA River with a focus on nature, climate, and equity,” said Dickens-Russell.

With 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector, Dickens-Russell has worked with school districts, government agencies, utilities, and municipalities on sustainability and environmental education. She has served as the regional director for environmental education for the State of California Department of Education and on the Blueprint for Environmental Literacy Taskforce.

Dickens-Russell is also a leader in equity and environmental justice, guiding organizations in their equity strategic planning. She currently serves on the California Environmental Literacy Initiative as the Equity Innovation Hub Chair.

Friends of the Los Angeles River is a 501c3 nonprofit whose mission is to build capacity for communities, students, and future leaders to advocate for nature, climate, and equity on the Los Angeles River. FOLAR has been a leading powerful force guiding policy and connecting communities to the River since 1986.

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