



## SWAP Learning Series #5

### Embedding Equity in SWAP Engagement and Implementation

**Date:** April 19, 2023

**Time:** 2:00pm-3:30pm (ET)

**Meeting Link:** <https://fishwildlife-org.zoom.us/j/88683694074?pwd=a0cxeFk2bHlyTOJ1SmxxdVhPamphZz09>

**Meeting ID:** 886 8369 4074

**Passcode:** 629469

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**Overview:** To support states with the integration of equity into their State Wildlife Action Plan revisioning and implementation process, the National Wildlife Federation will host a panel discussion with leaders from a diversity of backgrounds and interests, including wildlife biology and data science, hunting and angling, and community engagement. This panel discussion will focus on best practices in community engagement and relationship building, and embedding systemic equity into biodiversity conservation.

#### MEETING AGENDA

Time (ET)	Topic	Speakers
2:00PM	Welcome and Intro	Mark Humpert, AFWA and Jason Goldberg, USFWS
2:05PM	Panelist Introductions and Opening Comments  Corina Newsome, National Wildlife Federation, Moderator  Panelists: Alex Troutman, Wildlife Biologist, Environmental Justice Advocate, and Author  Deja Perkins, Geospatial Analytics PhD student  Lydia Parker, CEO, Hunters of Color	Corina Newsome, NWF, moderator
2:15	Panelist Discussion	Corina Newsome, moderator

2:45 PM	Breakout Groups (see below)	Group leaders to be self-selected, panelists will be dispersed among groups
3:05 PM	Group report-outs	Each group will share points discussed during their breakout
3:15 PM	Q&A	Corina Newsome and Panelists
3:30PM	Wrap up and adjourn	Reporters send reports to <a href="mailto:jason_goldberg@fws.gov">jason_goldberg@fws.gov</a> .

## Discussion

- Mark – How do we do better at reaching out to more communities? Today will be the start of a longer conversation. We need help with better tools and information so we can reach out to all communities.
- How does equity inform pursuit of science and/or community engagement?
- Alex Troutman
  - Grew up in a family that enjoyed the outdoors. I was always connected to nature, which I recognized was a privilege as a Black man. Access is not always there, ranging from physical transportation to comments they might hear on the trails, as well as threats of physical harm and Police presence. There are different ways to access nature, and equal access is important. We all recreate in different ways.
- Deja
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> year Ph.D. at North Carolina State University, exploring participatory science. What exists in voluntary monitoring data, and which communities are left out of the picture – how we make sure we include them?
  - Originally from Chicago, about ten minutes from the local park, but it was a sports recreational park. Nowhere close by to go on a trail, and I wasn't aware of hikes and birdwatching as a kid. My family has its connections to nature through gardening, food.
  - Equity informs my work because I grew up seeing how landscapes change in different neighborhoods, seeing how people
- Lydia
  - CEO of Hunters of Color, Mohawk Tribe.
  - USFWS study in 2016 looked at demographics in hunting and fishing. Less than 4% of hunters reflect people of color, which doesn't make sense demographically speaking. Besides, we're all here because our relatives were hunters.
  - There's a connection to nature for subsistence, cultural links. Lack of representation in hunting and fishing is a problem.
  - When I think of equity is intersectionality (Kim Crenshaw, author) – understanding different levels of privilege and access.
- Role and benefits of front-line communities in biodiversity conservation?
  - Deja – Indigenous communities haven't been included in Westernized views of conservation. Their work doesn't always resemble the kind of work Western perspectives are more familiar with.

- E-Bird – data helps inform conservation, but a 2022 study shows that 94% of e-bird users are white. When you have participatory data like that where only one community is telling the story, biases can be introduced because you’re leaving out others. We need to create a space for Black, indigenous, and all minority communities to have a voice.
    - **Engagement is reflected in the data we collect.** Other voices matter too.
    - What does conservation look like in different communities? Statistical tests are excluding very important voices.
  - Alex – Minority communities have made important contributions to biodiversity and conservation that have previously been unrecognized. Local knowledge is often available – we need to work with the local communities rather than destroying what they have already built and the ties they have to the land. We can learn from them rather than reinvent the wheel. Frontline communities need to have their knowledge and ideals recognized.
  - Lydia
    - Thanks for advocating for indigenous people! Most indigenous peoples didn’t have a need for a term for conservation because we didn’t need it.
    - There’s no such thing as untouched landscapes. We’ve been here. We make up 5% of the population of Earth but protect 80% of its biodiversity. “Ask the Indians if there’s a problem, they have the owner’s manual.” Actions like fire control have long been known to indigenous communities.
    - By 2044, the U.S. will be majority BIPOC. We’re going to need everyone to see themselves as stakeholders. It’s on all of us to create more equitable spaces.
- Deja – Where do you see opportunities for State agencies to address equity in how they do their conservation work?
  - Participatory data is a tool we should be taking advantage of. There are many projects on work from birds to phenology. We should be contributing to existing data sets. We can utilize those dataset, see what else is out there.
  - If you have a GIS team, look at those datasets. Where are you collecting data, where are you not? Consider an audit. Check why you are prioritizing some areas. What kind of engagement can you do? Think about how to form a more complete picture.
  - Framing is important. Conservation exists because of the view that we’re here to take. It’s not our right to continue extracting resources. It’s about thinking about relevant framing. How do we frame conservation for groups that we want to engage?
  - People who usually contribute to participatory science tend to be more educated, higher salaries, and often white.
- Lydia – What models do you suggest for connecting communities with opportunities? What are useful methods and principles to engage large geographies?
  - Nobody can reach a community like the community members. Hunters of Color was created intentionally to be very inclusive.
  - There are over 500 Federally recognized Tribes, each with very different cultures. The same goes for other groups. There’s no one “Asian” community, for example. Maybe state agencies might not be able to successfully reach communities, but funding community-led organizations could be successful. Need to have diverse people leading the charge.
  - Still major issues. We want to partner with everyone to help make things happen!

- Reference from Corina: <https://diversegreen.org/>
- Alex – You’ve worked on a lot of different taxa and have experience working with different agencies. Where do you see opportunities to retain talent from diverse communities?
  - The current system is build on systematic oppression. There needs to be a new table.
  - Be sensitive to the culture of the agency. People need to feel accepted.
  - Recognize that biases exist and work through them.
  - Need to have situational awareness. You might be okay going to someone’s property that you know, but I might need verbal agreement to do the same thing. Situations are different for different people.
  - Need to understand what is working and what isn’t. For example, Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation programs may not always achieve goals. We need to be innovative and broaden our horizons.
- Corina – I agree completely. My advisor helped guide me before I started doing fieldwork.
- Deja – Adding to Alex’s points. Relevancy in society and internal culture, you might have people working in rural areas without People of Color. Sending someone into those areas for the first time – think about what just happened recently when a Black boy was shot because he rang the doorbell on the wrong street. That’s the reality we face today. You may encounter people who won’t give you the grace of making a mistake. I’ve been in internships where I was the only Black person, and other volunteers were making racist comments. I felt caught in debates, these are experiences that make people not want to stay. How do we engage better? It starts with internal work within people who work with the agency, but also your own individual experience – what experiences have shaped your views, and how might those views and your identity differ from others? **Inclusion does not mean assimilation.** You’re not forcing people to fit the culture of your workplaces – what makes it safe?
- Corina – This raises issues of longevity, working in environments that are healthy for us.

**Breakout Session:** Participants will be split into virtual groups of ~8-10 individuals each. Panelists will be distributed among breakout groups, but they are acting only as participants (not group leaders). Please self-select a breakout leader. Small groups will spend ~3 minutes silently reflecting on the discussion questions provided and then, using a round robin, answer the following:

Challenges and Opportunities:

1. What are the challenges you and your agency face in engaging the full diversity of residents in your state and Tribal Nations in the **SWAP revision process**? Where are there opportunities?
  2. What are the challenges you face in engaging the full diversity of residents in your state and Tribal Nations in **SWAP/conservation implementation**? Where do you see opportunities? \*Consider *where* you prioritize conservation actions geographically.
- One or several people from the breakout group should be prepared to provide highlights from the breakout session. Please include notes on challenges and opportunities, and any observations, in the chat or emailed to [jason\\_goldberg@fws.gov](mailto:jason_goldberg@fws.gov). The opportunities identified during these breakout groups should be revisited and acted upon.

**Breakout Group 2**

- 1 - Opportunities – Steering Committee, could engage with new communities we haven't in the past.
- 2 – Need to think about impacts to populated areas.
- Need to involve people in the planning phase. There are more people interested in getting involved in conservation. Millennials, for example, want to be involved. We could engage more community scientists. We can also incorporate more social scientists.

### **Breakout Group 3**

- We have huge tasks with SWAP – it's a big list!
- We need to be accessible in different places and languages. We need to think about who we don't work with on a regular basis.
- This work requires a lot of relationship building.

### **Breakout Group 1**

- We also discussed how to build better relationships with Tribes.
- We had similar discussions about politics. We also struggle with capacity to create these new connections.
- We can show up in places where these communities are.

## Breakout Room Discussions – Room 2

1. What are the challenges you and your agency face in engaging the full diversity of residents in your state and Tribal Nations in the SWAP revision process? Where are there opportunities?
  - Kimberly Szcodronski (MT FWP) says they have just started the Steering committee in Montana, so this is where they see an opportunity to bring people in outside of the agency
    - Gives the opportunity to hear different voices in the SWAP revision process
    - The challenge is how to approach the Tribes to start the conversation as they are spread throughout Montana – How do you bring in a couple people to represent the whole diversity of Montana
    - Second challenge is that
  - Eileen Dowd Stukel (SD Game, Fish, & Parks) says that the opportunity here is funding
    - The challenge is to get people excited for the planning process. It is a long process, and it is difficult to get people invested for the long haul because it is challenging and sometimes boring
  - John (New Hampshire) points out that an opportunity is to spend time within the community engaging with people that they have not in the past
  - Mark Humpert adds that there may be a biased against urban areas as people often focus on the untouched habitats away from population centers
    - It is important to focus on those populated areas too so that people can see and experience the value of it
    - Having a mindset outside of the traditional biologist viewpoint
2. What are the challenges you face in engaging the full diversity of residents in your state and Tribal Nations in SWAP/conservation implementation? Where do you see opportunities?
  - \*Consider where you prioritize conservation actions geographically.
  - Szcondronski says that Montana is behind on the implementation process so that challenge is that until they know what they are doing it is difficult to plan ahead
    - These presentations help to keep this information in mind
  - Dowd Stukel adds that people care more about the environment. People are more action oriented, especially younger generations, so it would be wise to utilize that community science

## Breakout Group 4

1. What are the challenges you and your agency face in engaging the full diversity of residents in your state and Tribal Nations in the **SWAP revision process**? Where are there opportunities?
  - Transportation struck me. How do you ensure everyone has access. City bus doesn't go to the State park.

- I'm new to the SWAP Coordinator role. Reaching out to Tribal partners gets different levels of interest. Some Tribes are more interested in the process than others. Participating in SWAP doesn't always guarantee funding, so it's on good faith and spending time working on it.
- Looking around the office, I just see similar faces. I don't see People of Color, diverse backgrounds. That's a significant challenge in knowing where to start in doing the internal reflection. It's changing, but not as quickly as needed.
- States need to be more open to working with other communities.
- State agencies may not be as accessible when everyone is working remotely – some meetings are easier in-person.
- Opportunities
  - The more nonconsumptive NGOs have been more active in participation.
  - Need to share recommendations on Tribal engagement from earlier Learning Series.

2. What are the challenges you face in engaging the full diversity of residents in your state and Tribal Nations in **SWAP/conservation implementation**? Where do you see opportunities? \*Consider *where* you prioritize conservation actions geographically.

- We're not allowed to use the words diversity, equity, and inclusion in our agency. We have to be careful how we word those conversations in our agency, which can affect how we work with local communities.
- A lot of SWAPs are identified on rare species and environments, which prioritizes where we work. Working in urban environments can be sometimes tricky in seeing how SWAP fits in green spaces. Drawing those connections can be challenging.

## Discussion

- Do you have recommendations for best practices?
  - Deja - Engagement can be tough, it takes time to build relationships. It takes time to develop the right context and know who the leaders are. A lot of the work is extractive – we ask people to “pick their brain,” but that's a painful image. How can you provide for people to create a safe space to talk? Many of these organizations are also under-funded, what can you offer them instead of just asking them for something. You can't just expect a community to give you something when you approach them.
  - Alex – Sometimes you need to leave the table and go to the communities where they are. You need to be active, not just passively seeking information.
- Corina – Thanks again to everyone for joining today! We look forward to continuing to work with everyone today.

**Past & Future SWAP Learning Series (Tentative Schedule)**

Date	Topic (w/Recording Link)	Recording Password	Link to Notes
Wednesday, November 16, 2022	<a href="#">#1 Engaging Tribes and Indigenous People in State Wildlife Action Plans</a>	0T?41Gz.	
Wednesday, December 14, 2022	<a href="#">#2 SWAPs and Climate Adaptation Guidance</a>	XU.=69*j	
Wednesday, January 18, 2023	<a href="#">#3 State Wildlife Action Plans and Renewable Energy</a>	=7NSqgQT	
Wednesday, March 15, 2023	<a href="#">#4 Interactive data and tools for SWAP planning and implementation</a>	+6@f9jQW	
Wednesday, April 19, 2023	<a href="#">#5 Engaging Diverse Partners &amp; Making your SWAP More Relevant</a>	\$p?=lg95	
Wednesday, May 17, 2023	#6 Using the SWAP & Landscape Conservation Framework for Interjurisdictional Landscape Conservation		
Wednesday, June 21, 2023	#7 Making Your SWAP RAWA-Ready		
Wednesday, July 19, 2023	#8 Incorporating corridors into your SWAP		
Wednesday, August 16, 2023	# 9 Connecting federal planning efforts into SWAP (NWRS, USFS, BLM)		
Wednesday, September 20, 2023	#10 Incorporating Fish & Wildlife Health and One Health into your SWAP		