

Diversity & Inclusion WG
September 20, 2022
AFWA Annual Meeting

Notes:

Welcome and Introductions

- Round table introductions

Texas Parks & Wildlife Natural Diversity Fellowship

- Starting to realize that if we're going to make any movement in DEI, we're going to have to **'break a few things'**
- There are a lot of barriers in the conservation field for DEI
 - Roadblocks to Diversity: job availability, recruitment, isolation (being the only one that looks like you), and lack of relevant support.
- Why not internships? → always attracting the same folks, not new ones = roadblock
 - If not already in established systems → will not get internship
- Created a Natural Diversity Fellowship
 - 24-month fellowship with competitive early-career pay; includes a cohort that creates a support system
 - Includes comprehensive training and development for Fellows & Supervisors
- What problems does this fellowship help address?
 - Internal conversations: new applicants from non-traditional programs; supervisors experience with non-traditional graduates; talk about min qualifications for entry level biologists and equity across the board
- Roughly \$100K support per Fellow; looking at 3 fellows per cohort
- Using a third party to recruit diversity of applications; what we've been doing hasn't been successful

Best Practices for Cultivating Diverse Fish & Wildlife Agency Workforces (mid-report)- Dr. Manfred

- This is a MSCG.
- Goal: identify factors affecting recruitment and retention of diverse staff in state fish and wildlife agencies and use that in providing organizational change guidance
- Didn't have a strong response rate to initial surveys (only 21 states participated) → biased sample
- Initial results show that Belongingness and Authenticity categories—Black and Hispanic don't feel that they belong to these groups; non-binary don't feel sense of belonging or authenticity in the workplace
- Tentative conclusions: low response rate/biased sample; still in early stages of analysis; preliminary analysis shows only modest differences among groups defined by race/ethnicity, WVO's and gender; Generation, belongingness, authenticity and organizational identity predict intention to leave, race/ethnicity and WVOs (utilitarian, mutualist, pluralist, distanced) do not; survey is extremely limited in seeking a path of greater inclusion.

DEI Coffee Talks

- We've pulled in 100-200 people with each of our coffee talks
- Creating a vulnerable and safe place to have difficult conversations
- There are many in our community that are focused on DEI
- Next Coffee Talk is Sept 29
- Informing the way we look at guiding principles, provide guidance
- Looking to provide DEI education in the future
- This work can be intimidating; fear of saying the wrong thing or accidentally putting up barriers
- Always interested in hearing what is important to you, so we can try to create a talk to address those ideas/interests

Work Group Charge – discussion

- Current charge: To encourage each generation of fish and wildlife conversation leaders to value differences in cultures, persons, and perspectives, and show it through their actions in responding to changing constituent demographics and in enhancing the workplace environment.
 - It sounds like it's for a white group; is there a way to reword so it doesn't sound like an us vs them.
 - Should take out the words generation and leaders; we're reaching out to more than those groups.
 - We need to look at who our audience is. Is this a mission statement or a charge?
- Looking for volunteers to help re-work the work group charge; can finalize at the North American Conference in March. (passed out signup sheet)
- List of major activities/ objectives during the last year:
 - Coffee Talks
 - DEI ThinkSheet for AFWA Committees
 - Relevancy Roadmap implementation
 - Drafted MSCG- DEI Academy
- List of activities/objectives for the upcoming year:
 - Increase relevancy of states to broader constituencies
 - Work with other committees and WG in messaging DEI
 - Strategize on how to increase relevancy through diversity
 - Begin developing Best Practices and Guidelines for Diversity & Inclusion
 - Implementing MSCG (DEI Academy, etc.)
 - Review/update DEI WG Charge

DEI Think Sheets

- It's part of a strategy to help AFWA be more inclusive; increase DEI within the AFWA committee structure.

- Increase DEI in the committee and the work coming out of the committee
- DEI is more than just race. ThinkSheet define what Diversity, Equity and Inclusion means in the conservation workplace
- DEI is not a destination, it's a journey.
- The ThinkSheet is a guide for conversation about DEI in the committee structure.
- This is a tool to get things started.

Needs and Deeds- discussion

- Florida: hired someone to help adapt our programs to make them more welcoming
- AFWA: Project WILD partnering NAAEE with an education grant; working on DEI training for Project WILD coordinators; working on indigenizing the north American model and allowing tribal knowledge be part of Project WILD; translating PW into Spanish
- NEGP: surveyed staff and asked for their thoughts on current DEI efforts within the department; will help guide where we need to go in the future
- Minnesota Wildlife Society: held event that allow people to identify themselves (not typical categories)
- TPWD: web team has kept up with keeping the main page inclusive and showing diversity; keeping the webpage fresh

Got to learn to be uncomfortable.

For those interested in ASL course <https://corpsthat.org/>