

## **How to Create More Inclusive Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

### **Introduction**

During the 2018 Summer WAFWA conference, thirty employees from state fish and wildlife agencies from throughout the West participated in our first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion workshop in Eugene, Oregon. During the workshop, we talked about the challenges of diversifying our workforce, and shared some common language around equity to help move the conversation forward. Many of our agencies want to have a workforce that more fully represents the public we serve, but simply don't have the budget, staff capacity, or institutional knowledge to make this happen.

In our next workshop on Saturday during our Mid-Winter WAFWA in Monterey, California, participants will dive deeper into the challenges, share our knowledge of what is working, and receive valuable information regarding resources and strategies to help accomplish our workforce diversity goals.

### **Workshop Objectives**

Upon completing How to Create More Inclusive Fish and Wildlife Agencies, participating will

- 1) Have a stronger understanding of the impediments to creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for employees of diverse backgrounds.
- 2) Be better able to discuss challenges and strategies with co-workers, that in turn will help them to understand the institutional benefits of a diverse organization.
- 3) Learn about programs and projects around the country that bring diverse talent into the natural resources professions, and how they can be adopted locally.
- 4) Gain knowledge from their peers regarding successful strategies for outreach, recruitment and retention of diverse employees.

### **Workshop Presenters**

**David Buggs** is Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Texas Parks and Wildlife. David has had leadership roles in numerous organizations that promote inclusiveness in natural resources, including Diversity Joint Ventures, Non-Traditional University Partnerships, MINR (Minorities in Natural Resources), and others. He has established programs that provide opportunities for college students from diverse backgrounds to gain useful internship experience with natural resource agencies, which will lead to employment opportunities. Mr. Buggs will lead a lively discussion entitled "Creating a Welcoming Environment".

**Greg Wolley** has been Commissioner for the Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife for the past eight years. In addition to his policy-making role as Commissioner, he has taken a strong interest in the workforce diversity of his agency. He has helped to diversify ODFW's internship pool by conducting outreach to Humboldt State University's Fish and Wildlife departments. Mr. Wolley also coordinated WAFWA's first DEI workshop/training in the summer of 2018. He has worked over the years to develop and support diversity initiatives in city, regional, state and federal governments, and now works independently as a consultant in this role.

## Creating a welcoming environment

For decades, Fish and Wildlife agencies have engaged in science-based management to conserve fish and wildlife and their natural habitats across North America.

These agencies not only provide hands-on conservation measures, but they also engage state and federal elected officials in developing laws and policies to govern conservation measures.

Although there has been some limited gender and racial inclusion in the past, the majority of scientific, political and to a lesser degree, education and outreach efforts have been administered by and catered to a majority white and mostly male demographic.

As the US populations becomes more ethnically diverse, our challenge is how to engage the changing demographic in more outdoor recreational activities and to determine how agencies who support and are engaged in conservation activities, become relevant to this growing population without losing current participants and supporters.

On Saturday, January 11, 2020, from 3:30 to 5:00 pm an interactive education session is planned for all who would like to discuss efforts towards creating a more welcoming conservation environment. Participants should be prepared to discuss the following questions about their agency.

- What are the major issues that hinder the creation of a more welcoming conservation culture?
- Why is this a problem for us?
- What will happen if we do nothing?
- What can we do to change directions?
- What are some of the things being done to create more people inclusion in conservation careers?
- What are the next steps?
- Who owns what part of the next steps?
- How do we track progress?

Come be a part of this engaging session and learn best practices for inclusion from other natural resource agencies. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact Mr. David Buggs at [david.buggs@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:david.buggs@tpwd.texas.gov) or Mr. Gregory Wolley at [tomorrowworkforce@gmail.com](mailto:tomorrowworkforce@gmail.com).