



The  
Wilderness  
Society



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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# President's letter



**This is the first Annual Report on The Wilderness Society's effort to increase the diversity of our teams and partnerships, embed equity in our work and improve our culture to make it more welcoming and inclusive for all. Throughout 2017, we worked to integrate these values into everything we do.**

I'm proud of our staff for the work they did in 2017, and for their ongoing commitment to realizing our vision of a workforce that helps us truly represent the communities we seek to serve, and of public lands that are inclusive of all people. The way our staff stepped up throughout 2017 gives me hope that we can realize that vision together.

This report is a critical step forward in this work, helping us take a hard, honest look at our organization. We will be transparent and accountable moving forward, and will learn and grow as an organization as a result of these efforts.

We accomplished much during the year. First, we introduced a new policy to make our recruitment and hiring practices more fair and open to people with a wider variety of professional, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Constant effort and leadership from our Human Resources team helped us acquire new skills and adopt new ways of thinking by providing numerous learning opportunities.

All staff adopted at least one annual goal intended to make their work more inclusive; more than one-third of the staff served on hiring committees where they took new steps to bring us closer to our vision of a more racially and ethnically diverse workforce; still others were part of working groups charged with implementing major elements of the work, such as Success Measures, Recruitment and Workplace Culture.

Meanwhile, we began to invest more time in the work that some of our teammates have been engaged in, often for years, with communities that represent the rich ethnic, racial and cultural diversity of America.

I want to acknowledge our Governing Council, which has embraced our investment in this ongoing work. The Council's Equity Committee is working to ensure that we are a welcoming organization, building a stronger recruitment network for our staff and Council, and challenging ourselves to make sure that public lands benefit us all.

I also want to thank the Success Measures Working Group which, under the leadership of Montana State Director Scott Brennan, developed quantifiable metrics to measure our progress and collected the data and compelling case studies presented in this first annual report.

Our progress has not been easy, nor did we expect it to be. We also know this work will never be "done." We will continue to invest our time, talent and resources in making The Wilderness Society more reflective of and engaged with the communities we seek to serve, because we know that doing so is essential to achieving our mission of protecting wilderness and inspiring Americans to care for our wild places.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional but personal style.

**Jamie Williams**  
President

# Our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion

The Wilderness Society believes public lands belong to and should benefit all of us. Our organization and work must embody the cultures and perspectives of people and communities across our nation and connect and inspire people to care about the outdoors.

## Who we are

To be a relevant and successful organization in the 21st century and consistent with our values, we must continually challenge ourselves to ensure we reflect a rapidly changing nation. We are committed to ensuring that our workforce represents our nation's broad array of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and political backgrounds. Our effectiveness as an organization is strengthened by a workforce that embodies diversity in all its forms—a rich mix of talent, work experiences, perspectives, backgrounds and beliefs that we need to fully achieve our mission.

**The Wilderness Society's Mission:  
We protect wilderness and inspire  
Americans to care for our wild places.**

## How we work

We will be inclusive in the work that we do, and in the kind of organization we are. Internally this means working as a team that listens to different points of view, recognizes the contributions of every employee and empowers each employee to bring their whole selves to work every day. Externally this means ensuring that public lands are inclusive and welcoming, so that our shared wildlands can help people and nature to thrive.

## Who we serve

We are committed to equity throughout our work, which we define as our commitment to realizing the promise of our public lands and ensuring that all can share in their universal benefits. We seek to respectfully and authentically engage and empower communities that have been historically marginalized in the conservation movement or have not equitably benefited from our public lands. It is by valuing and incorporating diverse perspectives into our work that we will protect our public lands in a way that can truly support the health and well-being of us all, for generations to come.

### Definition of terms

- **Diversity:** Diversity is a measure of the similarities or differences that exist within a group of people.
- **Equity:** Equity is about fairness. It exists when practices and systems work for everyone and when group identity can't predict success and outcomes.
- **Inclusivity:** Inclusivity is the commitment to intentionally engage every person in the group, to make sure they feel respected and their viewpoint is valued, such that each person can bring their whole self to work every day.

# 2017 year in review

In 2017, The Wilderness Society took several major steps to bring our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion to life in our daily operations and decision-making.

On January 1, 2017, we implemented a new recruitment and hiring policy to ensure fair hiring processes are consistently used across the organization. The new policy seeks to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of our candidate pools by thoughtful outreach to communities of color. It includes specific targets for the percentage of people of color in candidate pools and who gain an in-person interview. The Human Resources team created a full-time position, human resources and recruitment manager, to support implementation of the new policy.

The Wilderness Society provided numerous training and educational opportunities throughout the year. The trainings provided staff with information regarding how to create a more equitable and inclusive working environment, including seeking and considering the viewpoints of colleagues from a wider variety of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and professional backgrounds.

All staff were encouraged to complete the new Annual Workplace Culture Survey to assess the state of our organizational culture and identify opportunities to make it more welcoming, equitable and inclusive. Survey responses—by 92% of the staff—are informing priorities and plans for the coming year.

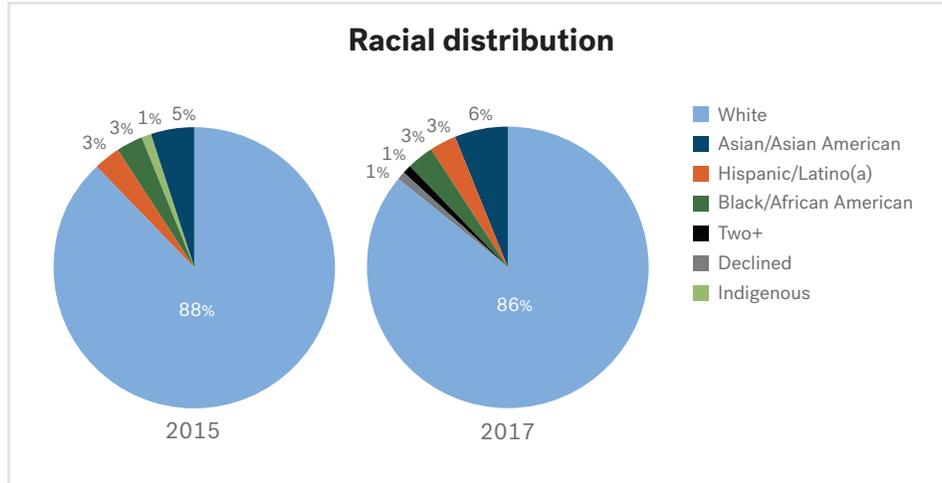
Three staff Working Groups were created: **Success Measures**, to develop quantifiable metrics, (included herein as graphs and charts), to gauge our progress and provide a report to all staff at the end of each year; **Recruitment Leaders Team**, to build specific recruitment plans and offer guidance to hiring committees for each office or department; and **Workplace Culture**, to define behaviors that support a culture where all individuals can bring their whole selves to work every day.

Every staff member incorporated at least one inclusivity-related goal into their individual FY2017 goals, and some also set goals to embed equity in our programmatic work. Progress toward these goals is reviewed quarterly. More than one-third of the staff (51 individuals) participated on a Hiring Committee, and 40 were engaged with Working Groups, thereby deepening their understanding of and engagement in the activities that support creation of a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization.

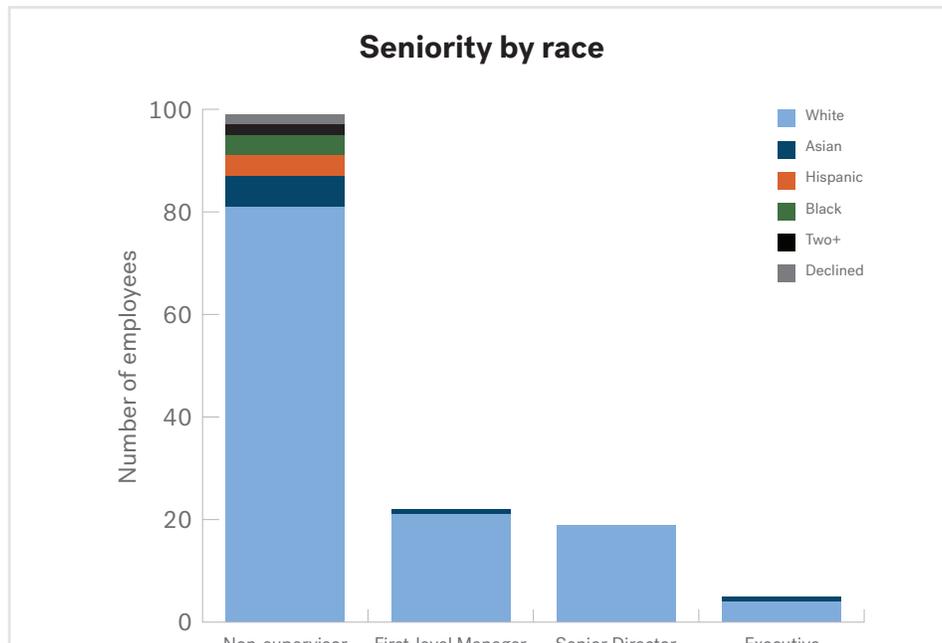


# Staff distribution

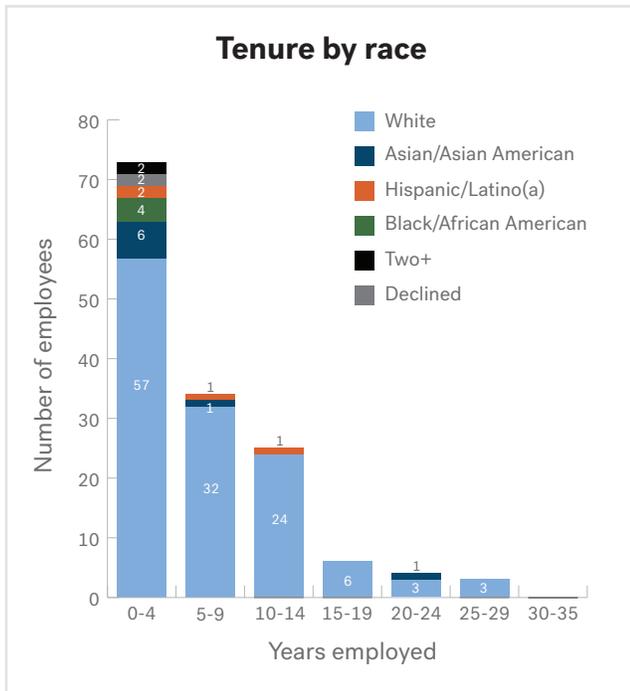
The following details the composition of our staff at the close of 2017. We have limited historical data points (2015) and have included them where available. In future years, we will build on this baseline with consistent annual reporting of this dataset.



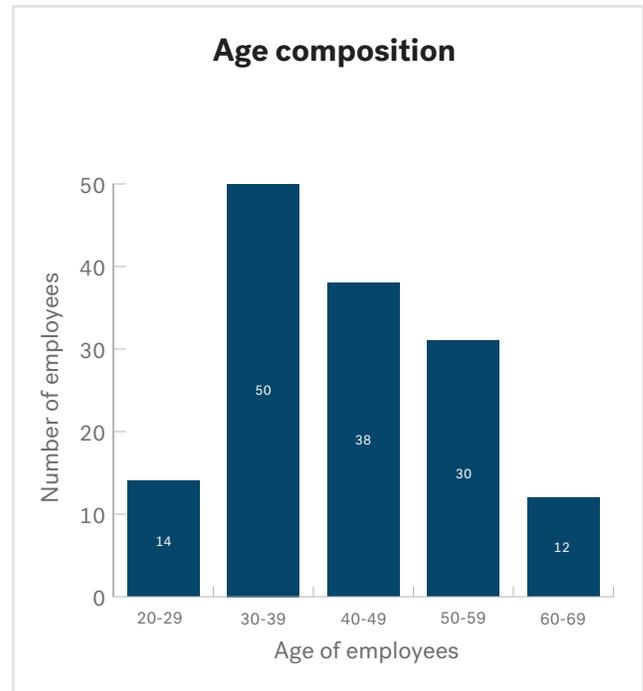
**Figure 1.** In 2015, the staff of 128 was 88% white. Of our current staff of 144, 86% identify as white. The next largest racial group identify as Asian/Asian American at 6%, followed by Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino(a) at 3% each. 1% indicate they are of two+ races, and 1% decline to identify their race.



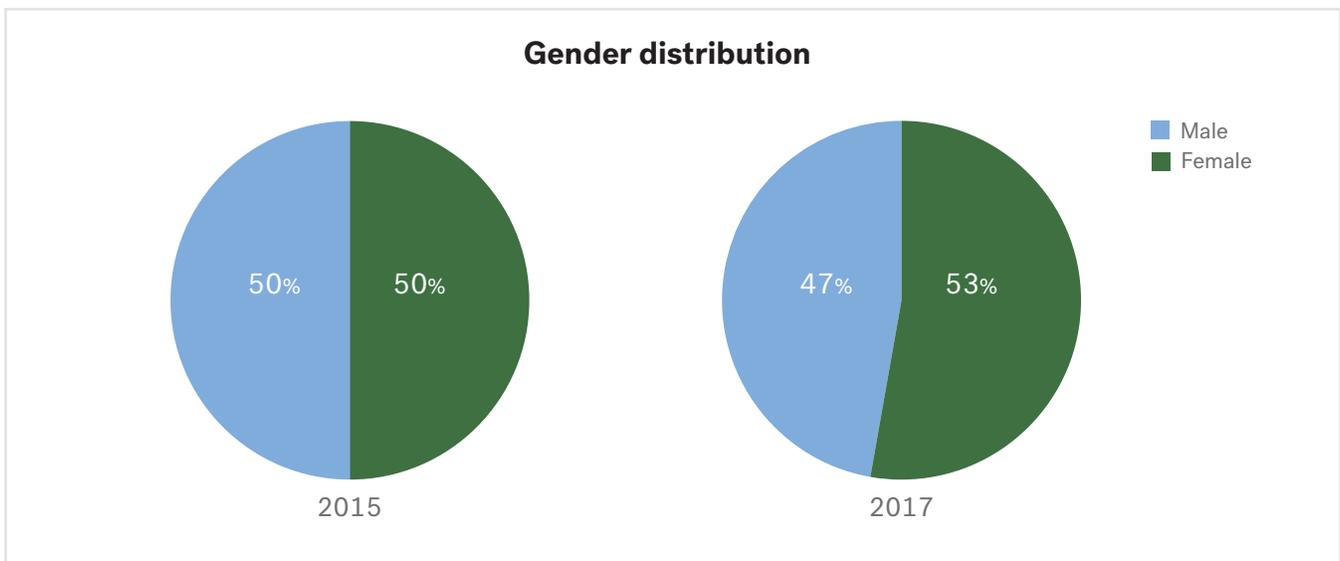
**Figure 2.** Most of the staff identify as white at senior and non-senior staff levels. 4% of senior staff identify as Asian/Asian American and the remainder as white. Of all non-senior staff, 6% identify as Asian/Asian American, 3% as black/African American, 4% as Hispanic/Latino(a), 84% as white, 2% as two+ races and 1% declined to identify. (Senior staff refers to staff at grade levels 1, 2, or 3.)



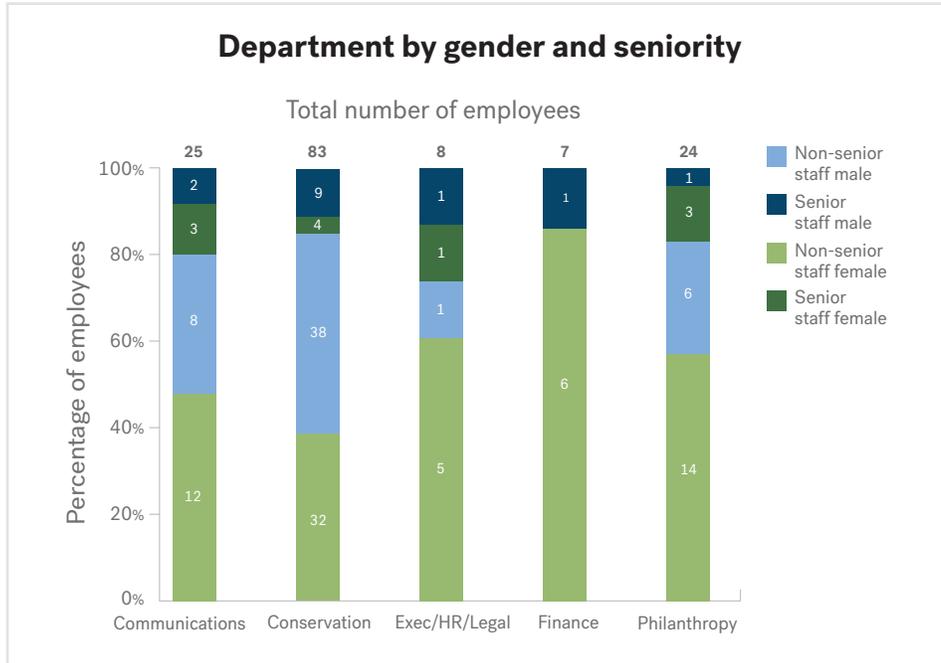
**Figure 3.** Of the staff who have been here for fewer than four years, 78% identify as white, 8% identify as Asian, 6% identify as Black/African American, 3% identify as Hispanic/Latino(a), 3% identify as of two+, and 3% declined to identify. Of the staff who have been here greater than four years 94% identify as white, 3% identify as Asian, and 3% identify as Hispanic/Latino(a).



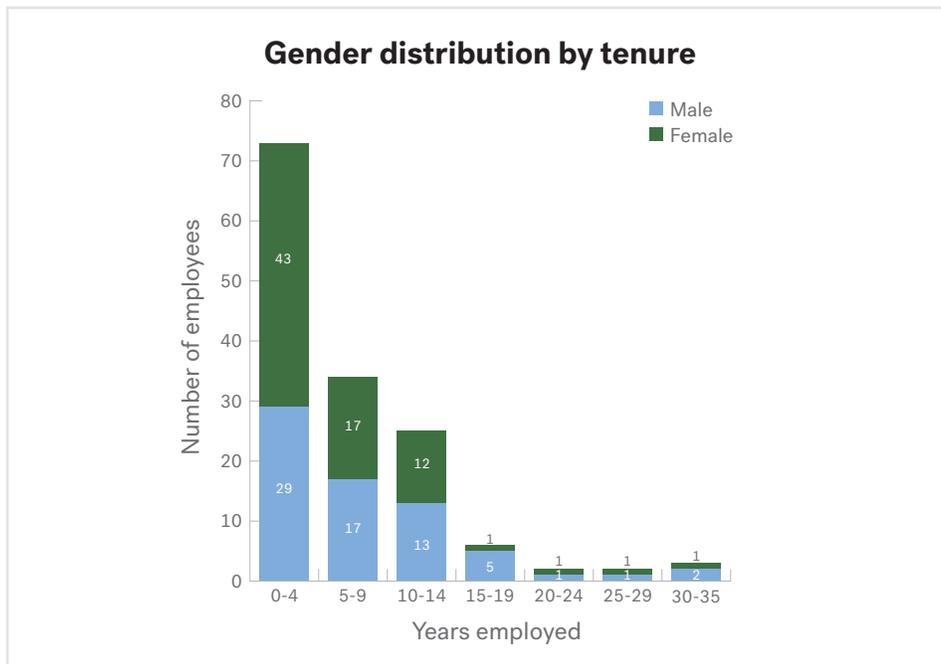
**Figure 4.** The staff range in age from their twenties to their sixties. The largest proportion (35%) is in their thirties and the smallest (8%) is in their sixties.



**Figure 5.** Gender distribution was evenly split in 2015. Currently, 53% of staff are female and 47% are male.



**Figure 6.** While the organization is just over half female (53%), gender balance varies significantly around the organization. Among Conservation and Finance staff, there are notably more males in leadership positions. In contrast, staff in other departments are predominantly female at all levels as of March 2018. (Senior staff refers to staff at grade levels 1,2 or 3.)



**Figure 7.** The zero to four-year tenure bracket stands out as the only bracket where females outnumber males (60% to 40%). This bracket also has the largest number of staff. The remaining tenure brackets are either relatively balanced in gender or have more males. 33 of 77 women (43%) have been here for more than four years, whereas 39 out of 68 men (57%) have been here for more than four years.

# Embedding equity in our work

In 2017, all staff were asked to help make The Wilderness Society a more inclusive organization by identifying and committing to at least one goal for this purpose.

Many went above and beyond this commitment by volunteering for a Hiring Committee or Working Group, challenging their own ingrained assumptions and biases, representing our organization at a conference or job fair in order to reach out to a more racially and ethnically diverse pool of prospective internship and job candidates, forming new relationships across differences within the organization, or by increasing their investment of time in equity-focused programmatic work.

One objective set in 2017 for embedding equity throughout all departments and roles was to revise all job descriptions to include fostering a welcoming and inclusive work place among every staff member's responsibilities. This objective was not achieved. However, some progress was made as job descriptions for all new hires, and for all new positions to which current staff were re-assigned, were revised. This amounted to roughly one-third of all job descriptions being revised during 2017.

The Annual Workplace Culture Survey offered to all staff indicated that staff were somewhat unclear on how to embrace and enhance equity in their work. Addressing this need is a priority for 2018.

Thirteen teams within the organization responded to a request from senior leadership to provide examples of efforts underway within their teams to embody equity and inclusiveness in their work. All aspire to greater activity in this area in 2018, but several staff have already begun to excel in this work.

## Tribes and First Nations: Anne Carlson



**For Anne Carlson, senior climate adaptation specialist in Bozeman, MT, The Wilderness Society's increasing commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion empowered her to devote significantly more time to working with tribes.**

### What motivates your interest in this work?

I was introduced to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) in 2011 by a mutual funder, but I had been thinking about them quite a bit after realizing that their deep ties to their tribal homelands had the potential to increase their vulnerability to climate change. After I shared this concern, CSKT invited me to serve on a Scientific Advisory Team that was part of a new Strategic Climate Initiative for their 1.3 million-acre reservation and then—two years later—on the Oversight Committee tasked with implementing this plan.

In 2014, our engagement deepened again with the advent of a new initiative (co-led by The Wilderness Society) to engage 70 entities and stake-holder groups to address climate change at the scale of the Crown of the Continent landscape based on the best available science. Our collaborative prioritized the inclusion of traditional ecological knowledge from the Crown's seven tribes and First Nations as a starting point for all of our conversations about vulnerable species and ecosystems.

### **What was the greatest success of this partnership in 2017?**

We saw several successes, born out of years of collaboration with the CSKT. The most significant was our ability to rapidly engage tribes in defense of the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. As the first tribally-led designation of a national monument in United States' history, Bears Ears symbolizes just what is at stake for those on both sides of this issue.

We worked with the Tribal Council of CSKT in Montana—Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke's home state—to generate a letter to the secretary and our entire congressional delegation that upheld the sovereignty of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and called upon Sec. Zinke to abandon his review of Bears Ears.

Because of the CSKT's strong leadership, the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (TLC), a coalition of 11 tribes in the Northern Rockies (including CSKT and the Blackfoot Nation) submitted their own letter of support. In both instances, the considerable expansion and deepening of our office's relationships with the CSKT, Blackfeet and TLC over the past decade made it possible for us to enlist their help in a very short time-frame.

### **What was the greatest challenge in this work?**

The greatest challenge is time, the ability to slow down and listen and talk with people to build trust.

### **What have you learned that you'd like to share with others engaged in or contemplating similar work?**

In working with tribes and First Nations, it is absolutely critical to show up *in person*—often for years at a time—when establishing new relationships, and to listen closely. The tribes and First Nations are sovereign governments. For each tribe we need to learn about and thoroughly understand their decision-making processes and governmental structure in order to work effectively together.

### **Where do you see this going in the future?**

Tribal historians have recently shared the results of a decades-long oral history project with us, which involved recording the stories of tribal elders during travels through the forests and rivers of their ancestral territories. For decades, tribal historians have recorded the traditional names of these places, photographed them, and documented traditional uses in these areas, such as hunting and gathering.

This rich historical record will strengthen our efforts to protect some of these places, for instance through the Blackfoot-Clearwater Stewardship Act, which has been introduced in Congress. It has also created a need for us to examine any new legislation we propose in order to ensure that all treaty rights are upheld in new wilderness areas.



## Enhancing diversity in public lands law: **Alison Flint**



**Alison Flint, senior policy analyst in Denver, CO, has long been interested in engaging a more racially and ethnically diverse community in public lands law. In 2017, she was able to invest more time in outreach to law students and young lawyers from different backgrounds.**

### **What motivates your interest in this work?**

I see the talent pipeline problem. There are many promising young legal minds who want to pursue a career in public interest but may not know about public lands law. We need to reach out and more affirmatively introduce ourselves and provide opportunities for meaningful exposure to our work.

Megan Dickie, another attorney in our BLM Action Center, was an early and powerful proponent of our outreach work before her sudden death in March 2017. Megan was passionately committed to our mission, public lands law and connecting more people of color to the outdoors. Her passing has motivated me to live up to her legacy and carry on the work she would have done.

### **What was the greatest success of this partnership work in 2017?**

The Wilderness Society received an outpouring of gifts in Megan's memory, with which we created The Megan Dickie Wilderness Leadership Fund.

The lack of paid summer opportunities can be a major barrier to recruiting more racially diverse law students, and Megan's Fund alleviated that barrier for us. We were able to reach out to a broader community of law students and provide two paid summer internships to third-year law students in 2017. Both interns enjoyed their summer experiences so much that they have continued their work with us.

In addition, we formed some important relationships with partners who can help us introduce more young lawyers to public lands law, such as the Colorado Pledge to Diversity Program. The pledge has been working since 1993 to expand the participation of historically underrepresented groups in the legal field by "matching" first-year law students with paid summer employment opportunities. We were one of the first non-profit participants in the pledge and have helped the program address its own barriers to more non-profit participation.

### **What was the greatest challenge in this work?**

Figuring out where we, as a nonprofit organization, can fit within existing structures and programs designed to enhance racial and ethnic diversity in the legal field. Groups like the Center for Legal Inclusiveness and the Colorado Pledge to Diversity do important work but tend to focus on law firms and corporate legal departments.

### **What was the greatest surprise?**

We were able to encourage more than 20 law students from two schools in Colorado and one in Wyoming to come to Denver on a weeknight in November, with exams looming, to connect with area non-profit organizations and learn about opportunities in conservation and environmental law. The event was co-hosted by our new partner, the Center for Legal Inclusiveness, and included a tour of our office in Denver. Turns out, inviting students into our physical space in an informal meet-and-greet setting was important. One student let me know that he had long been interested in environmental work but had always assumed that he would not fit in at an environmental non-profit until he had the chance to visit one and challenge that assumption.

## What have you learned that you'd like to share with others engaged in or contemplating similar work?

Progress will not be seamless. We have to take the long view and recognize that it will take time to build relationships. It helps to identify what we can bring to existing programs and structures designed to enhance diversity and inclusion.

I would also encourage others to take the time to arrange opportunities for the audiences you are trying to interest in employment to come to your office and see the environment for themselves, and not just in the context of recruiting or hiring for a specific position.

## Where do you see this going in the future?

The existing Megan Dickie Wilderness Leadership Fund has enabled us to recruit two highly qualified law students to come work as interns in our office in Denver this summer, where they can be immersed in public lands law and get out on our magnificent nearby public lands. One grew up in the heart of Mexico City, and the other is Cuban American, born and raised in Miami. Neither has any previous experience with or connection to public lands, but they are eager to join us this summer and explore the possibility of a legal career in conservation.

A new endowed fund is being established by Megan's family, which will support our ability to offer clerkships or fellowships in future years, and ensure that Megan's commitment endures.



## Pride Outside: **Hannah Malvin**



**Hannah Malvin wasn't sure if she should mention Pride Outside, the organization she founded in 2016 in Washington, DC, to get members of the LGBTQ community outside, when she interviewed for her position as a recreation policy associate in the People Outdoors Program of The Wilderness Society. To her delight, she found an institutional commitment to engaging new communities, and a firm and growing investment to support her outreach efforts.**

## What motivated your interest in this project?

I wanted to support the LGBTQ community and share the gifts of wild places. I noticed there were strong, coordinated efforts across the country to connect African Americans, Latinos, women and youth with the outdoors. While the LGBTQ community had amazing individual groups getting folks outside, there was less of a national network or public voice in the outdoors. I wanted to help fill that gap.

Having the chance to enjoy the outdoors with your community, or discover it for the first time, is very special. Extending an invitation is so important for getting folks to try outdoors experiences, especially if they don't know where to go, what to do or what to bring.

## What was the greatest success emerging from this work in 2017?

Last fall, I worked with Elyse Rylander of Out There Adventures to create the first LGBTQ Outdoor Summit. It took place at the REI flagship store in Seattle and sold out with 140 attendees from the conservation community and outdoor industry. The Wilderness Society sponsored the summit and gave me time at work to help design and organize it. Other sponsors included National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, National Parks and Conservation Association, the Audubon Society, Student Conservation Association, REI and The North Face.

Attendees ranged from interns to vice presidents at conservation organizations, outdoor industry companies, environmental education and youth serving organizations, rangers at the National Park Service and Forest Service and more.

We had a great group of speakers and participants who were thoughtful, collaborative and energized. The sessions went very well, but what seemed to be most valuable was creating a space for LGBTQ outdoor professionals to come together openly and unapologetically. Attendees said the LGBTQ Outdoor Summit was validating, affirming and even life-changing.

## What was the greatest challenge in your work during the past year?

Pulling off the summit in four months was a challenge! Thinking through what we should cover, whose voices we should feature and how to facilitate a positive experience for people coming from different perspectives and for different reasons was a real learning experience.

## What was the greatest surprise?

I'm surprised and thrilled to get to co-lead a working group for the International Ranger Federation connecting and supporting LGBTQ park rangers around the world. I never imagined when I launched Pride Outside with a Facebook page and a hike with 10 friends that it would lead to building community among LGBTQ park rangers internationally!

## What have you learned that you'd like to share with others engaged in similar outreach work?

Originally, I was focused on getting more LGBTQ people outside. What I've learned is that this work is much more about community building and using the limitless power of the outdoors to bring people together and forge a sense of belonging. LGBTQ identities can be hidden, so finding one another and forging friendships across different generations, geographies and backgrounds has been meaningful and special. So many LGBTQ people who work in the outdoors, whether as park rangers, outdoor educators or staff in conservation or the outdoor industry, feel isolated. The need for opportunities to connect with other LGBTQ individuals is huge.

## Where do you see this going in the future?

One of my favorite parts of this work is listening and learning as we go about how best to serve the community, which means the future can be hard to predict. But, this year I want to focus on building strong networks for LGBTQ folks to find one another and connect in the outdoors, the conservation community and the outdoor industry. Both online and in person, I want people to feel less alone and more a part of a vibrant queer outdoor community. I'd also love to build more chapters of Pride Outside beyond Washington, DC.



## Stepping up: Kellie Shaw-Walker



**Kellie Shaw-Walker joined the Communications and Marketing team in 2016 as its first operations specialist. At the time, she was one of four African American women working at The Wilderness Society. Today, there are three. In 2017, Kellie joined the Success Measures Working Group to help create the framework for how we will measure the effectiveness of our various initiatives designed to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion.**

She also participated in several job fairs at universities, including historically black colleges and universities, to introduce The Wilderness Society to a more racially and ethnically diverse group of students who might one day become interns or employees.

### What motivates your interest in this work?

At my previous job, I was responsible for new employee recruitment and onboarding and enjoyed that work. My boss here is Kitty Thomas, vice president of communications and marketing, who was charged with leading the development of the diversity, equity and inclusion effort. Kitty noticed my interest in this work and suggested I might consider joining the Success Measures Working Group as it was getting organized.

### What was the greatest success emerging from this work in 2017?

I'd say the work of the Success Measures Working Group has been the biggest success I've been a part of. Our leader, Scott Brennan, did a great job of leading a team with a wide array of talents and skills to come up with a sound approach to measuring progress. He created an environment where everyone was heard and everyone's talents were tapped to arrive at the best possible work product.

In addition, Julie Shackett, our human resources and recruitment manager, got me involved in representing The Wilderness Society at job fairs last year. I am very glad to say we are beginning to see the results of that work. We will have a new intern joining the Communications team this summer whom I met last year at a job fair at his school. We had a great conversation and he remembered me and was interested in pursuing the opportunity to apply for our program.

### What was the greatest challenge in this work?

The job fairs were challenging because none of the students I spoke with had ever heard of The Wilderness Society. Since there was no way our name was going to attract them to our table, I had to get out in front of the table and draw them in.



### What was the greatest surprise?

I was surprised that at the University of Maryland, it was young men and women of color, representing a variety of ethnicities and races, who were more receptive to our pitch and interested in speaking with us.

### What have you learned that you'd like to share with others engaged in or contemplating similar work?

Go where the people are. That is the only way we are going to achieve the various forms of diversity we seek. We have to identify the audiences we need to reach out to and go to them. They are not going to find us on their own.

I've also learned that getting involved in this work at The Wilderness Society brings unexpected benefits. I've had the chance to work with and get to know great people from other teams in the organization whom I otherwise would never have met.

### Where do you see this going in the future?

I want to keep going to college and university job fairs because we can already see that it is working for us. My one-year term of service on the Success Measures Working Group is coming to a close, but I am hoping to find another meaningful way to stay engaged in the implementation of this work.



## Urban to Wild: Yvette Lopez-Ledesma



**The Wilderness Society's flagship outreach program to engage and support urban communities, low-income residents and communities of color is Urban to Wild.**

Urban to Wild seeks to address the various barriers (access, proximity, inclusion and awareness) that prevent access to parks and public lands for people in urban places. The program is focused on three initial metro areas: Albuquerque, Los Angeles and Seattle.

Yvette Lopez-Ledesma joined our staff in February 2018 as Urban to Wild assistant director, bringing more than 14 years of experience in work and volunteer leadership in social and environmental justice, sustainability and community engagement.

She is part of the team working out of the Los Angeles office, where a recent \$96.8 million tax measure, Measure A, was approved in Los Angeles County to enhance local parks, beaches and other recreation areas and improve access to them for under-served populations.

Yvette serves on the 45-member Measure A Implementation Steering Committee, drawn from key stakeholders, which is providing guidance and making decisions at key steps of the implementation process.

## **What about The Wilderness Society interested you?**

While I had been working on issues regarding access to parks as the deputy director of an environmental justice organization in LA, I was unfamiliar with the work of The Wilderness Society in urban areas. In my experience, your commitment to improving access to parks and public lands for under-served urban communities and getting people outdoors is unique among large national conservation organizations, so I was intrigued and interested in learning more.

## **Where is the Urban to Wild Program going in 2018?**

We're really excited to be growing the Urban to Wild Program in Seattle and Albuquerque in 2018, after years of planning and building relationships in those cities. We have fully engaged in advocacy efforts in both cities focused on transit to trails, parks and open space. While we anticipate all of our Urban to Wild work will be focused on some systemic barriers to accessing the outdoors like transit and parks advocacy, each Urban to Wild campaign will also focus on addressing the unique needs of local communities.

Here in LA, we will continue our core policy work to increase access to public lands, for instance through involvement in transportation planning and bond measures. We'll also sustain our current community-based programming through our engagement with the Nature For All coalition and our direction of the San Gabriel Mountains Forever Leadership Academy, which provides opportunities for people from low-income communities to develop leadership and advocacy skills through trainings and work on projects related to public lands.

Finally, I really want to develop new relationships with community-based organizations that share our goals, including new partners with the health, transit and environmental justice communities.

## **What do you anticipate will be the greatest challenge in this work?**

Addressing the low profile of The Wilderness Society among grassroots organizations working on environmental justice. Right now, people on the front lines are largely unaware that we are active in this work. They've been doing it for decades and sometimes have a "where have you been" question for us. It will take time to build relationships and trust.

## **What has been your greatest surprise?**

The extent to which The Wilderness Society is involved in and committed to being intentional about this work. We have a long way to go but I believe the organization is sincere and realistic about the commitment to engaging with marginalized urban communities.

## **What have you learned that you'd like to share with others engaged in or contemplating similar work?**

It is essential to be supportive of the communities you are trying to reach, on the ground, where they are active. People of color in urban environments care about environmental issues, but they are not going to come to us. We have to go to where they are, we need to be supportive of their experiences in nature and show one another how we can stand up for each other's missions.

There is a lot in our country's history, social and economic systems that have kept people from engaging in these issues. As an organization we have to be persistent and diligent at chipping away at the structural barriers.

We all need to embrace the Urban to Wild agenda and engage in this work. It's deeply connected to and essential to realizing our mission and building a more inclusive movement for environmental stewardship and public lands protection. This work is key to the future of conservation and The Wilderness Society.

# Cultivating a welcoming, inclusive organizational culture

In 2017, The Wilderness Society changed our planning, operations, training and onboarding procedures to emphasize inclusivity, and we established the following outcomes:

- Build at least one goal around inclusivity into each staff member's workplan for FY2017
- Assess progress toward that goal as part of the quarterly check-in conversations
- Enhance our onboarding practices for new hires
- Create a Workplace Culture Working Group
- Conduct a survey to identify highest priority needs for skill-building among supervisors
- Provide education and learning opportunities focused on inclusive behavior

**All of these outcomes were achieved.**

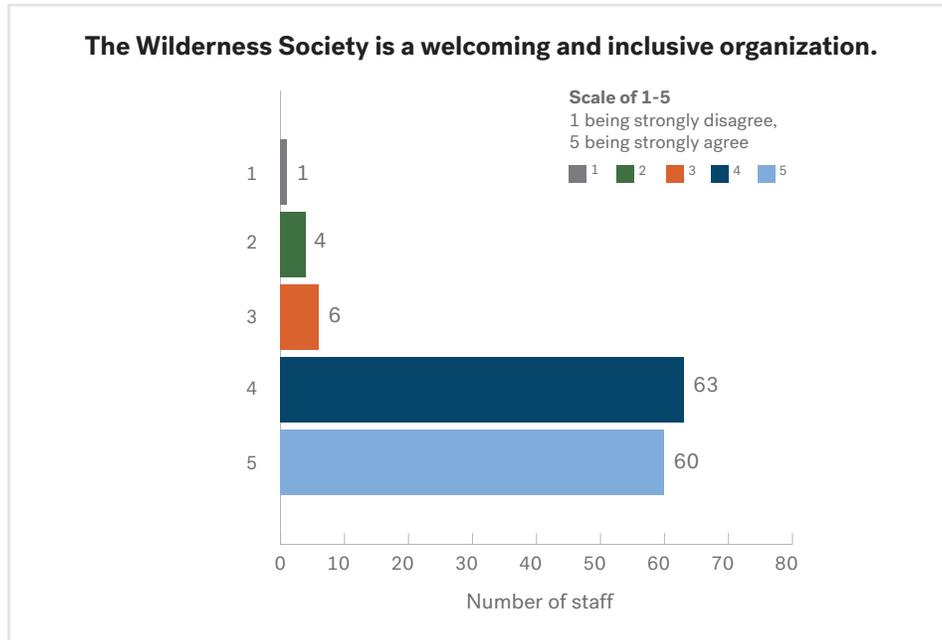


Education and learning opportunities included mandatory orientation to diversity, equity and inclusion principles for all new employees, training for staff participating on hiring committees, a two-day management training with an emphasis on equity and inclusion for all supervisors, a webinar on recognizing and addressing implicit bias, and peer learning groups for managers to discuss topics, such as managing across differences.

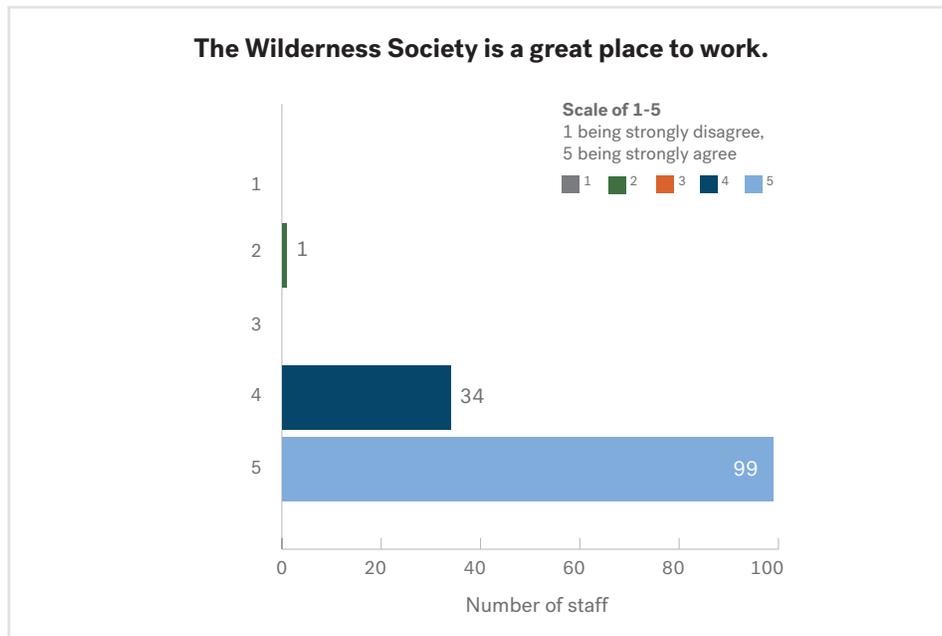


# Annual workplace culture survey

The following four graphs are excerpted from the newly developed Annual Workplace Culture Survey, administered in January 2018, and will serve as the quantifiable metrics for culture and inclusivity for future reports.

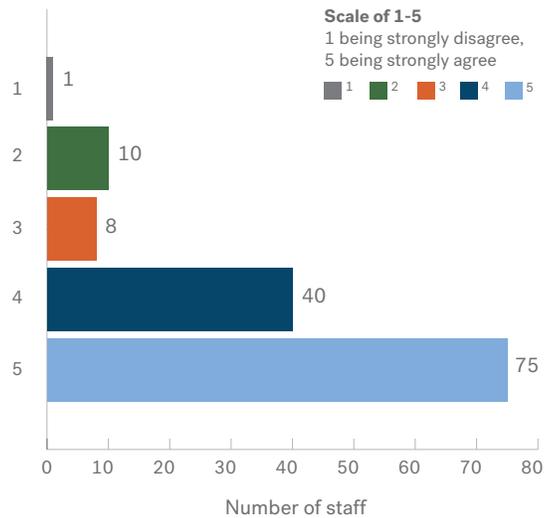


The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition that The Wilderness Society is a welcoming and inclusive organization, but 11 respondents (8%) did not agree. The average response was 4.32.



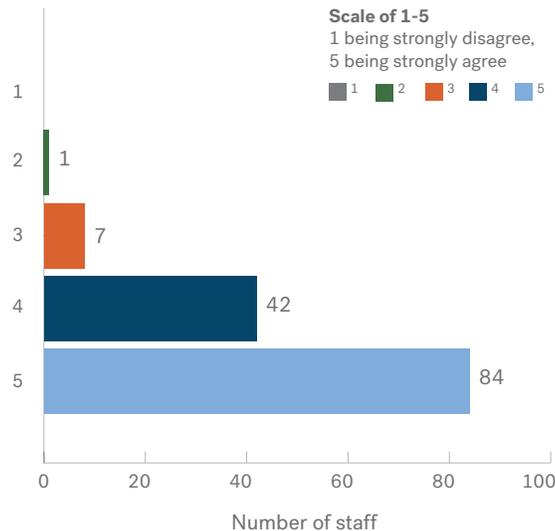
All but one person agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition that The Wilderness Society is a great place to work. The average response was 4.72.

**The Wilderness Society's policies support me to successfully integrate and balance my life and work.**



Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that our policies support their ability to balance work and life; however, a notable minority (15%) did not support the statement. The average response was 4.33.

**My daily work environment is welcoming and inclusive.**



A clear majority (94%) find their daily work environment to be welcoming and inclusive; seven respondents were neutral and one disagreed. The average response was 4.56.

# Workplace culture at The Wilderness Society

## Describing our current and aspirational workplace culture

In October 2017, The Wilderness Society's Workplace Culture Working Group, comprised of 9 members and led by Anne Carlson, interviewed 38 staff across the organization, asking them to identify what is great about our organizational culture right now as well as some things that need to change or that would make our workplace culture more inclusive. The Workplace Culture Working Group's efforts were complemented by the Annual Workplace Culture Survey, which was analyzed by our consultant Angela Park. The themes outlined below emerged both in the interviews and in the survey analysis.

## What is great about our workplace culture?

- Widely held passion for and commitment to our mission
- Collaborative, creative, friendly and collegial work styles
- A high degree of trust and a team approach to problem-solving
- Flexible work arrangements
- A commitment to work-life balance



## What can be improved about our workplace culture?

In both the survey and the interviews, staff identified some aspects of our culture that could be changed to increase inclusivity. For example, as in 2016, staff members who spend less time in outdoor recreation sometimes feel less than fully included in the organization, as do staff working in home offices or smaller offices.

The current political climate, coupled with our passionate approach to our work and commitment to excellence, is increasingly challenging in terms of managing workloads, stress levels and our ability to embrace and work across political differences within and outside the organization.

## Other areas identified for improvement include the following

- Better integration, communication and more fun events across the organization
- Improved knowledge and appreciation of all teams' roles and work across the organization, especially those in operations or support roles
- Increased racial and ethnic diversity of staff
- More and deeper learning activities
- Improved transparency and staff engagement in decisions across the organization

Finally, some of the positive attributes of our organizational culture are not as equitably distributed across the organization as they could be. Respondents indicated that some offices and departments benefit more from flexibility and emphasis on work-life balance.

# Perspectives on race at The Wilderness Society

In 2017, Communications Intern Matilda Kreider wrote about diversity, equity and inclusion efforts at The Wilderness Society in an assignment for her journalism class. Her article, “Case Study—Barriers to experience: Understanding race in professional environmentalism,” was published on George Washington University’s Planet Forward blog and cross-posted to The Wilderness Society’s Medium site.

In addition to covering the under-representation of people of color in environmental organizations and the outdoor recreation industry, the article shared the experiences of three African American women who worked at The Wilderness Society: Kellie Shaw-Walker (operations specialist on the communications team), Anastasia Greene (communications manager for the Northwest Region) and Heather Davis (former assistant director, People Outdoors Program). The three women offered their insights and observations. The following is an excerpt from the story, used with the author’s permission.

Kellie grew up in the Maryland suburbs outside of Washington, DC, and spent her childhood summers visiting family in Detroit. Though her grandmother always insisted she spend time outside each day, her childhood didn’t give her much experience with the wilderness.

Anastasia, who leads regional communications strategies for the Pacific Northwest, believes that spending time outdoors “shouldn’t be a prerequisite for working in environmentalism.”

**“When you are in the lower socioeconomic bracket, you’re not thinking about going to a park. Not one that isn’t close,” Walker said. “It’s not even on your radar because you can’t get there.”**

She further noted that “It is an environmental organization, so there are people who are just going to love getting outside and extreme sports...

But I think part of the culture that we really have to address is the expectation that if you don’t like these things or if you can’t do these things that you’re somehow less.”

While both have had concerns, they are encouraged that The Wilderness Society is headed in the right direction.

Heather Davis served as the assistant director of The Wilderness Society’s Urban to Wild campaign until October 2017, when she took a management position at the National Wildlife Federation. In an October departure email to The Wilderness Society’s staff, Davis wrote that she was tired of being pigeonholed into certain positions because she is a black woman.

**“I am realizing that as young as I am, I am tired,” she wrote. “I am tired of the burden of feeling like I must and I need to work on justice issues in the conservation and environmental community simply because this is baggage that I carry and bring as a woman of color.”**

“This is why our diversity, equity and inclusion work as an organization and as a community is so imperative and important because there are other Heathers out there with the skills, desire, and passion to work on conservation and environmental issues, but we need the conservation community to see us as professional conservationists first and people of color second and not assume that because we are passionate about something that we necessarily want to make a career out of it,” she wrote.

In his message to all of the staff sharing this article, Jamie Williams wrote “This article shows us as we are—imperfect but truly committed to becoming a better organization by investing in a welcoming workplace culture, building a stronger recruitment network to diversify our staff, and challenging ourselves to make sure that public lands benefit us all.

# Implementing robust recruitment and strengthening fair hiring practices

## Introduction

In 2017, The Wilderness Society set out to identify and attract a more racially, professionally and politically diverse pool of qualified applicants for open positions at the organization and make our hiring practices more fair and consistent. Major activities included implementing a new hiring and recruitment policy, increasing outreach to communities that are not well-represented on the staff, and engaging more staff in the recruitment and hiring process.

To support all of these endeavors, Julie Shackett was appointed to a new, full-time position as human resources and recruitment manager. She provides support and guidance to the hiring manager and committee for every position opening that is filled, as well as helping ensure that each new employee has a smooth transition to their new job. Julie also co-leads the Recruitment Leaders Team with Pam Eaton. This group of 14 staff from across the organization works to identify and ensure that we are reaching out to organizations, individuals and at job sites that reach communities of color and other under-represented communities.

## Hiring and recruitment policy

The new recruitment and hiring policy took effect on January 1, 2017. It requires new practices at every step of the process, from planning for a new position and securing approval for its creation, through recruitment and advertising, candidate selection and follow-up.

For example, the policy requires that all positions be advertised in at least seven unique sources that reach individuals, associations or organizations representing people of color, different professional backgrounds and/or political affiliations.

Furthermore, a specific goal was set for each office regarding the percentage of people of color in the candidate pool at the first in-person interview stage. This goal was calculated based on the office location for the position using census data. A 25% goal was set for offices in Albuquerque, NM; Anchorage, AK; Denver, CO; Pasadena, CA; Oakland, CA; Seattle, WA; Tucson, AZ; and Washington, DC. A 10% goal applies to Boise, ID; Bozeman, MT; Hallowell, ME; Jackson, WY; and Sylva, NC.

Over the course of the year, all supervisors received training in the new hiring policy and their role in it. We did not initially appreciate the need for training for all hiring committee members about the policy, its goals and best practices for ensuring the hiring process is fair and equitable. Regrettably, most of the 51 staff who served on hiring committees in 2017 did not receive training before they served. However, such training was introduced in October and is now becoming a regular part of the process for newly-convened hiring committees.

## Job descriptions

Our approach to writing job descriptions for new positions was also refined to focus more on the critical skills necessary for the position, and less on previous experience in the conservation field. For example, many job descriptions now include experience in the conservation field as a plus, but not a requirement. We also include a statement regarding our organizational commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Moreover, a demonstrated ability to work successfully in teams representing a rich mix of talent, backgrounds and perspectives—across race and gender—is now required of all employees. We were able to introduce this requirement to nearly one-third of all current job descriptions in 2017, well short of the 100% that we had planned.

## Outreach to new communities

We also began building relationships with individuals and organizations who can help us get our open positions in front of a more diverse group of job candidates, and we created a recruitment database to capture the information critical to maintaining these relationships.

Led by Julie Shackett, several staff attended six job fairs, including four at historically black colleges and universities, to introduce students to employment and internship opportunities available at The Wilderness Society. Expanding our outreach to people who are differently-abled, we also attended a job fair at a university for people who are deaf or have hearing impairments. In addition, The Wilderness Society co-sponsored and Julie participated in two conferences designed to provide more opportunities for constituencies that are under-represented in outdoor activities and conservation work.

To broaden the recruitment effort, we established the Recruitment Leaders Team, led by Julie Shackett and Pam Eaton, comprised of one “recruitment lead” for each of our offices or departments. The team was tasked with creating and implementing a plan to make new connections to people and organizations of color in order to increase the racial diversity of our applicant pools.

The new recruitment database contains 57 records of job sites, organizations, associations and individuals representing a variety of racial and ethnic groups. Each recruitment lead is developing their own database of contacts and plans for cultivating them. Still to be captured and included in our database are more than 115 unique sources for recruitment identified by hiring committees in 2017.

A policy requiring at least two contacts per year with each individual or organization on the Recruitment Database is designed to help ensure that new relationships are maintained.

## Outcomes

The Human Resources Team observed some initial skepticism from some hiring managers about the organization’s ability to achieve the goals set forth in the new recruitment and hiring policy. During 2017, metric goals for the percentage of qualified people of color in the pool of candidates to be interviewed were met and the percentage of people of color on staff increased to 12.5% (18 out of 144 employees), compared to 9.1% (13 out of 143 employees) in 2016.

## Quantifiable metrics

7

**Number of career fairs and events** attended to connect with under-represented communities

57

**Number of records** in the recruitment database **reflecting new relationships** with people and organizations representing different racial and ethnic groups

15

**Number of positions hired under the new policy**

## Quantifiable metrics



Percentage of positions that achieved targeted interview **pool diversity**



Percentage of staff who **participated in hiring committees**



Average percentage of **people of color in each full applicant pool**



Percentage of positions where target threshold of **completed interviews** was achieved



Percentage of candidates having an **in-person interview** who were people of color



Percentage of **positions filled** with a person of color

## Lessons learned

Several important lessons have emerged during 2017, foremost among them is that people from all backgrounds and geographical regions are interested in our organization and our work. We have also learned that training for staff is critical because many of the barriers to robust, inclusive and fair recruitment and hiring practices and an equitable workplace are unconscious. Our efforts to establish new relationships are beginning to bear fruit and this work should be continued.

When unconscious biases surfaced during the hiring process, the Human Resources team's involvement and guidance provided a balancing counterpoint that was helpful in getting hiring managers and committees realigned to focus on must-have skills.

Despite our progress here, we recognize we still have work to do in this area to help our hiring managers and committees select candidates whom they don't already know and who may not have a conservation background.

Through our experience implementing the recruitment and hiring policy during the last year, we found that the vast majority of current staff appreciate the importance of doing this work. That appreciation was frequently voiced and, in addition, was demonstrated by the high level of engagement of hiring managers, committees and supervising senior staff, which rapidly grew over the course of the year.

**People from all backgrounds and geographical regions are interested in our organization and our work.**

# Conclusion

The Wilderness Society has adopted what will be an enduring effort to achieve the aspirations in our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. This work will continue to include efforts to:

- Ensure that our workforce represents our nation’s broad array of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and political backgrounds;
- Create an environment that empowers each employee to bring their whole self to work every day;
- Respectfully and authentically engage and empower communities that have been historically marginalized in the conservation movement or have not equitably benefited from our public lands.

The organization is dedicated to honestly assessing our progress and measuring the results of our efforts. To that end, the Success Measures Working Group developed a critical assessment tool, the Annual Workplace Culture Survey, and quantifiable metrics to be monitored and reported annually. Additional quantifiable metrics, for which data capture was not possible in 2017, are being recommended to the Executive Team for measurement and reporting in future years.

Certain key lessons have emerged from the work conducted throughout The Wilderness Society in 2017. Some of these lessons have been reinforced by the experience of colleagues who have been reaching out to racially and ethnically diverse communities for many years.

- Sustained education and training is essential to enable staff, even the most well-intentioned, to effectively implement activities that encourage diversity, equity and inclusion in hiring, programmatic work and daily interactions with one another.
- In making our hiring decisions, we have to be vigilant in keeping to the principle that “must-have skills” does not always require prior work experience in the conservation or environmental space.

- We must go to the individuals and communities with whom we are trying to build new relationships. They will not come find us.
- Building relationships with new constituencies is best done face-to-face and takes time for listening and learning in order to develop mutual trust and understanding.
- We need to devote more time and attention to building our staff’s understanding of what it means to embed equity in our daily decisions and activities.
- We will encounter unforeseen barriers and must be persistent and thoughtful in overcoming them.

The Wilderness Society is deeply committed to this work and to ensuring that our learning and progress continue. We recognize the importance of transparency and accountability as we move forward. Most importantly, we know that success is critical to achieving our mission: to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places.

