

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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President's letter



This is the second 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 2018, we worked to integrate these values into everything we do.

2018 marked a year of great strides toward realizing our commitment to becoming a more welcoming, inclusive, and just organization. In our second Annual Report on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion we illustrate many of the efforts made, milestones reached, and challenges faced as we continue on our path toward integrating equity into everything we do.

As a team, we have supported each other in reconsidering both the “who” and “how” of our work. Not only have we increased the racial diversity of our staff, but we have engaged with many more communities that have been historically underrepresented and misrepresented in the conservation movement. In addition, we have operated with a greater focus on achieving equitable outcomes in our daily work. Over the past year, we have engaged in shared learning and individual planning to put equity into action.

We took a major step forward in July 2018, when we welcomed Wordna Meskheniten to the new position of Senior Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Special Advisor to the President. After learning from and listening to people across the organization, Wordna began to lead and facilitate our progress in many ways. She developed a training program in equity and inclusion for all staff, engaging internal and external resources, and offered several opportunities for staff to gather to develop our common understanding of this work. She counseled our leadership and managers in ways to infuse equity into our goals, at the organizational, programmatic and individual levels. Wordna has also connected with team members around the country to learn about existing programmatic work that has strong equity components and consider how we might be more effective in maintaining and furthering our equity outlook and outcomes. I could not be more thrilled to have Wordna as our partner on this journey and have come to rely on her keen insights.

We know that our journey toward building a more diverse and inclusive organization is still in the initial stages. Our advancement has not been perfect, but it is rewarding to see the progress we have made. As one of many conservation and environmental organizations working to change whom is engaged in our public lands, it is essential that we remain diligent because our collective determination will have an immense impact on our field, our country, and our planet.

There are a number of partners and supporters who are lifting up many of these efforts and we are honored to work with them. We would like to extend particular thanks to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for its leadership—the foundation is supporting The Wilderness Society and many others to better embed equity, inclusion, and diversity into their programs and organizations.

I am grateful that we are reflective of our progress made and open about our lessons learned. Join me in renewing our individual and our collective commitment to realizing the full promise of our vision and mission for all people and the lands we love and depend upon. Let us embrace the journey ahead, knowing it will be long, include highs and lows, unexpected turns and gifts, and the satisfaction of persistence toward our worthy goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jamie Williams
President

Letter from Senior Director of Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion



For many years, we have worked to increase our capacity to be more inclusive in our practices, attract and retain a more diverse team, and work toward more equitable outcomes.

It is a great honor to support The Wilderness Society as we continue our journey toward becoming a more equitable and inclusive organization. For many years we have worked to increase our capacity to be more inclusive in our practices, attract and retain a more diverse team, and work toward more equitable outcomes. I am excited to build on that foundation with dedicated colleagues whose expertise in their respective fields drives their eagerness to learn how to enhance their work and contribute to creating a more equitable and diverse conservation movement.

This year's Annual Report on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion captures how we implemented our commitment to equity in two major themes: progress and partnership. You will read about the progress we have made in increasing our team's diversity and developing a more inclusive workplace culture as demonstrated by our organizational demographics and team members' responses to our 2019 Annual Workplace Culture Survey. You will also see the areas where we still have room to grow. Furthermore, you will learn some of the individual and collective steps team members have taken toward centering equity in our work and connecting with community and conservation partners to achieve mutually beneficial goals. Lastly, the report ends with a reflection on the next frontier of our equity journey.

Before you is the result of collaborative efforts of numerous team members who put considerable effort into ensuring this year's report followed the great precedent of our first one. I would like to acknowledge our Executive Team for their steadfastness in lifting up equity in all facets of our organization's work. I would also like to thank this year's Success Measures Working Group for their responsiveness and helpful insight throughout the information collection and drafting process. Finally, I would like to express profound appreciation to Deanna Esan, our Summer Equity & Inclusion Intern, for helping to bring all these pieces and perspectives together.

When I consider our efforts over the past year, I am reminded of an African Proverb which states, "If you wish to move mountains tomorrow, you must start by lifting stones today." Every word shared, every message sent, every goal set, and every partnership forged develops our skills for ensuring equity and justice within our organization, throughout the conservation movement, and across the public lands we pledge to protect for all future generations.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wordna M. Meskheniten". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Wordna Meskheniten

Senior Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and
Special Advisor to the President

Our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion at The Wilderness Society

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 benefitted 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.

2018 year in review

2018 marked a year of much momentum in our equity work. We published our first Annual Report on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in April 2018, which was a collaborative effort of many team members across the organization to measure our progress in 2017. Our 2018 biennial All-Staff Retreat was largely focused on our equity work, featuring, among other things, an equity and inclusive goals workshop, annual report on diversity feedback townhall, and Keynote Speaker Rue Mapp from Outdoor Afro. In addition, at the retreat we unveiled our “Embedding Equity” posters, featuring the various ways in which program staff embedded our equity principles into their daily work and connected with new communities and organizations.

We initiated a 15-month Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Workplan which established how different sectors of the organization would contribute to embedding equity into our policies and practices, increasing diversity of our workforce, and advancing the inclusivity of our culture. We began to revamp our goals, strategies, and desired outcomes for the remainder of the current Administration with an eye toward ensuring we are embedding equitable outcomes and inclusive strategies in our programmatic work. One new action that took place this year as a result of that workplan is that all team members designed individual performance goals to be SMARTIE (Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, Equitable) in alignment with what we learned at The Management Center trainings for managers and all team members.

In July 2018, we hired Wordna Meskheniten as our Senior Director of Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion and Special Advisor to the President. Wordna conducted a listening tour gathering information and input from team members across the country on the scope and breadth of past efforts and vision for equity work going forward. Additionally, she organized multiple shared learning opportunities for staff to re-ground themselves in connecting our commitment to equity with their daily work. Her charge has been to guide the organization’s vision of equity as well as support The Wilderness Society in developing an organizational culture that values and respects the identities of every team member and mirrors this inclusiveness with our partners and the communities we serve.

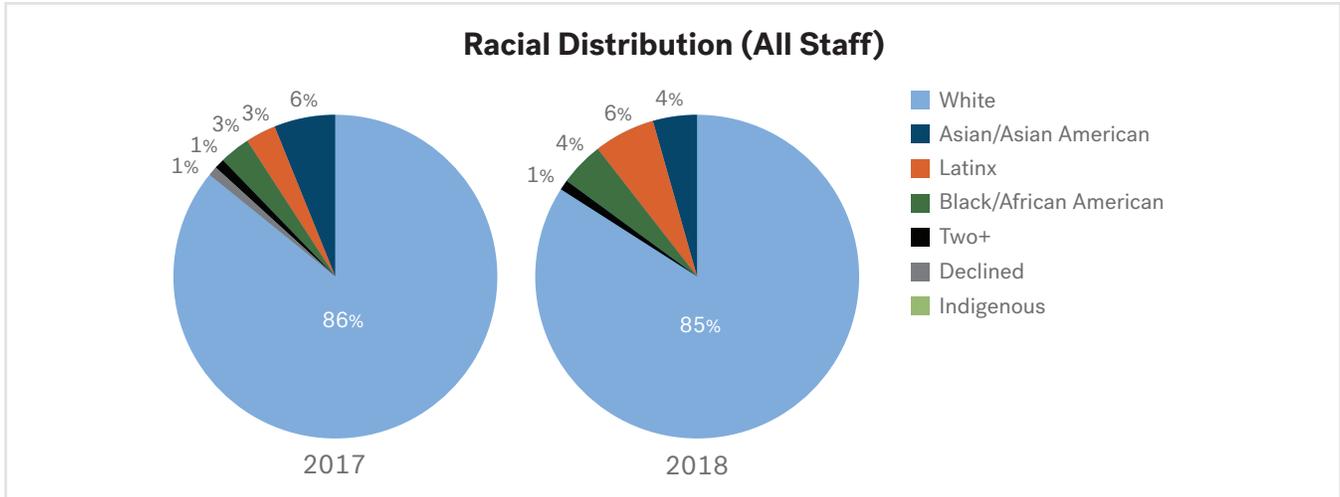
We launched the Native Lands Initiative (NLI) in late 2018 through which we seek to improve aspects of our partnering work and our commitment to reciprocity with Indigenous communities by way of staff training, immersive trips, historical data collection and capacity rebuilding, accountability, and access to content.

2018 was a year of growing momentum for equity at The Wilderness Society which will advance our greater integration of equity into our organizational vision as we embark on strategic planning in 2019.

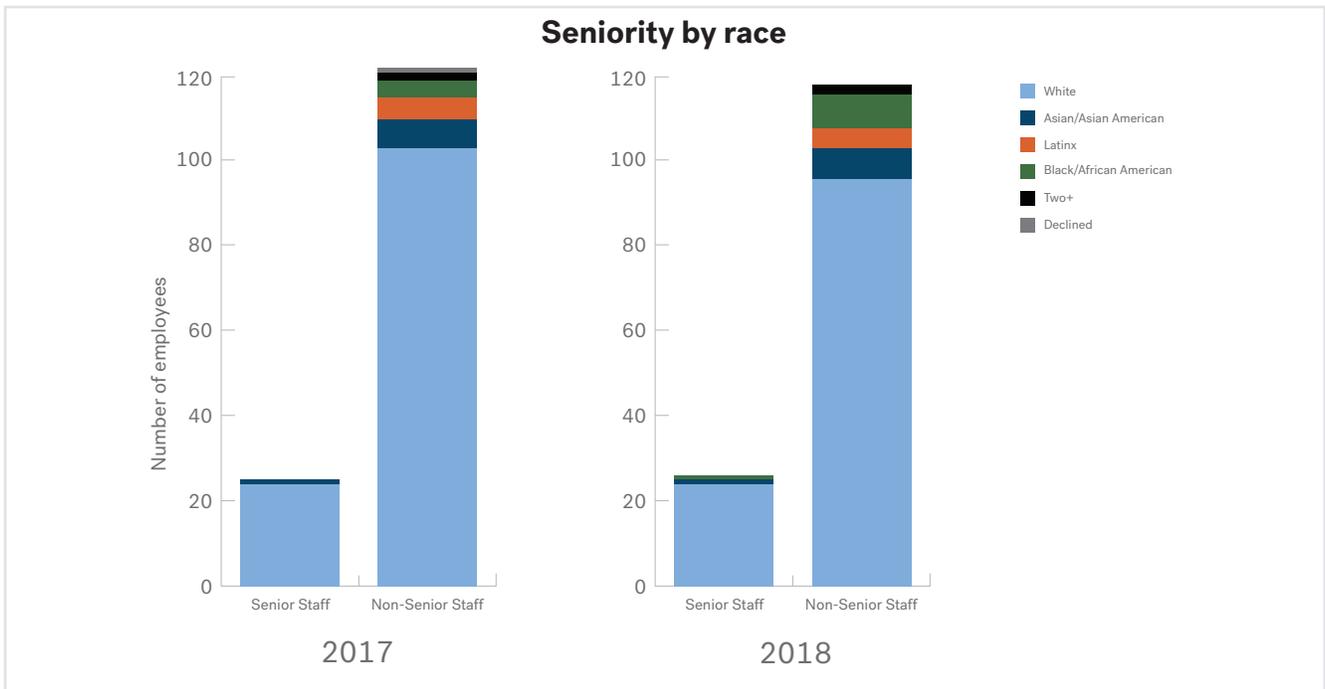


Staff Demographics

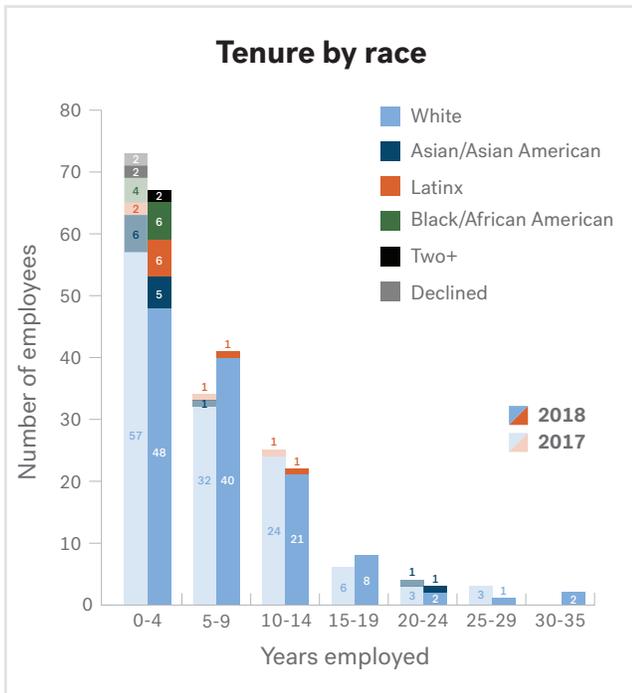
The following details the composition of our staff as of December 31st, 2018. We have shared data from 2017 for comparison and will continue to report on these data points annually. The Wilderness Society had a total of 144 staff members at the end of 2017 and 144 team members at the end of 2018.



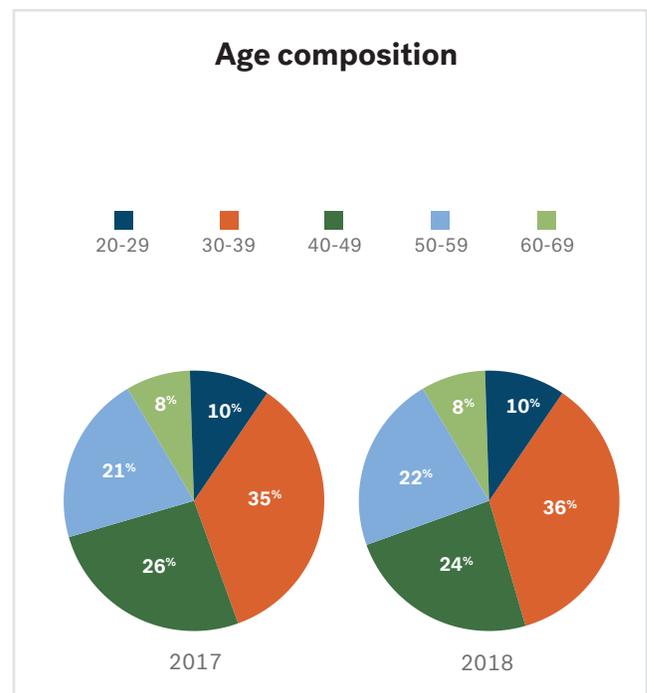
85% of The Wilderness Society staff identify as white. The next largest racial group identifies as Latinx (6%). An equal percentage of survey respondents identified as Black/African American or Asian/Asian American (4%). 1% of staff are of two or more races. Despite a decrease in the number of Asian/Asian American staff at The Wilderness Society between 2017 and 2018, the overall number of people of color at The Wilderness Society has increased.



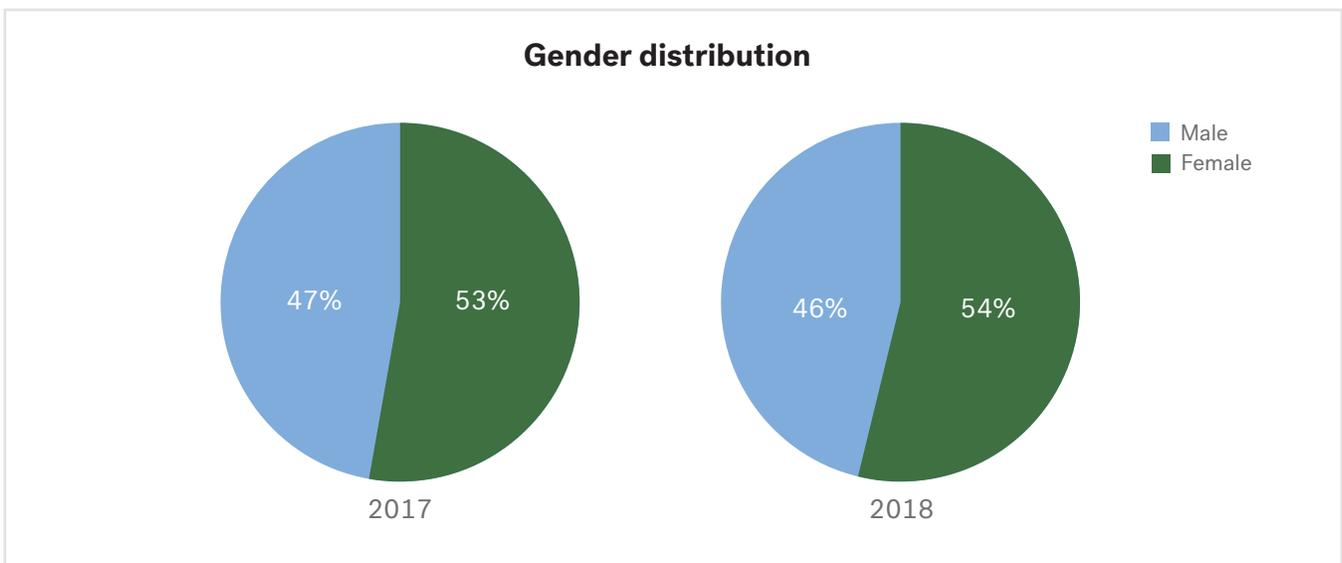
The majority of staff at The Wilderness Society identify as white. Black/African American and Asian/Asian American staff account for one senior staff position each (8% of senior staff). Of the non-senior staff, 5 identify as Asian/Asian American (4%), 8 identify as Latinx (7%), 5 identify as Black/African American (4%), and 2 are of two or more races (2%). One more senior staff member identified as a person of color in 2018 compared to 2017.



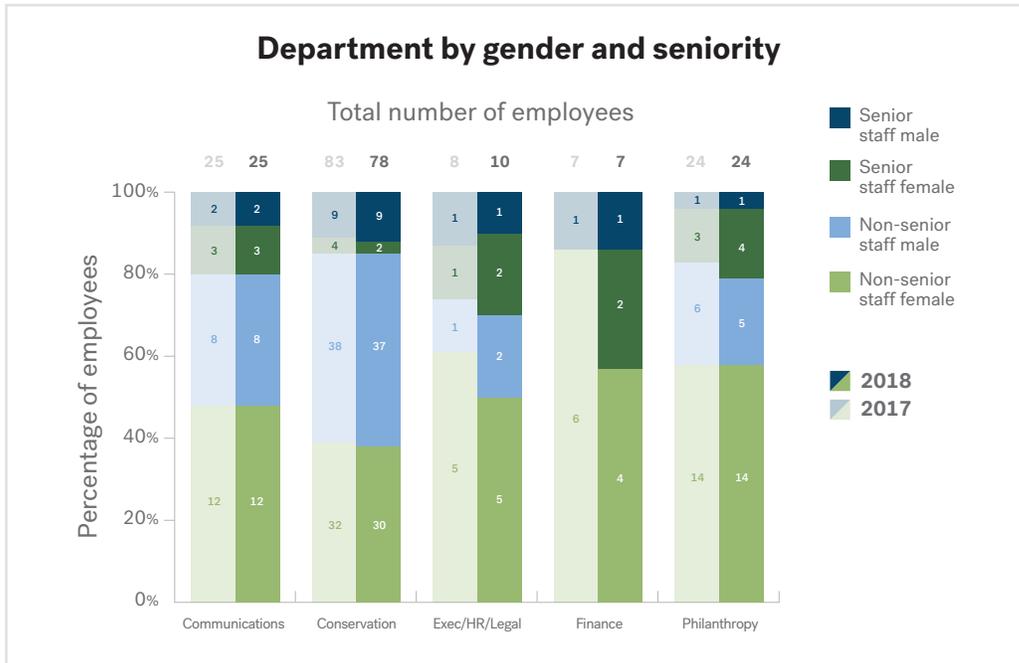
The majority of white staff have been with The Wilderness Society for 5 or more years, and the percentage increased from 2017 (54%) to 2018 (60%). The overwhelming majority of staff of color have been with the organization for fewer than 5 years. The percentage of team members of color who have been with the organization for 5 years or more has decreased from 2017 (22%) to 2018 (14%).



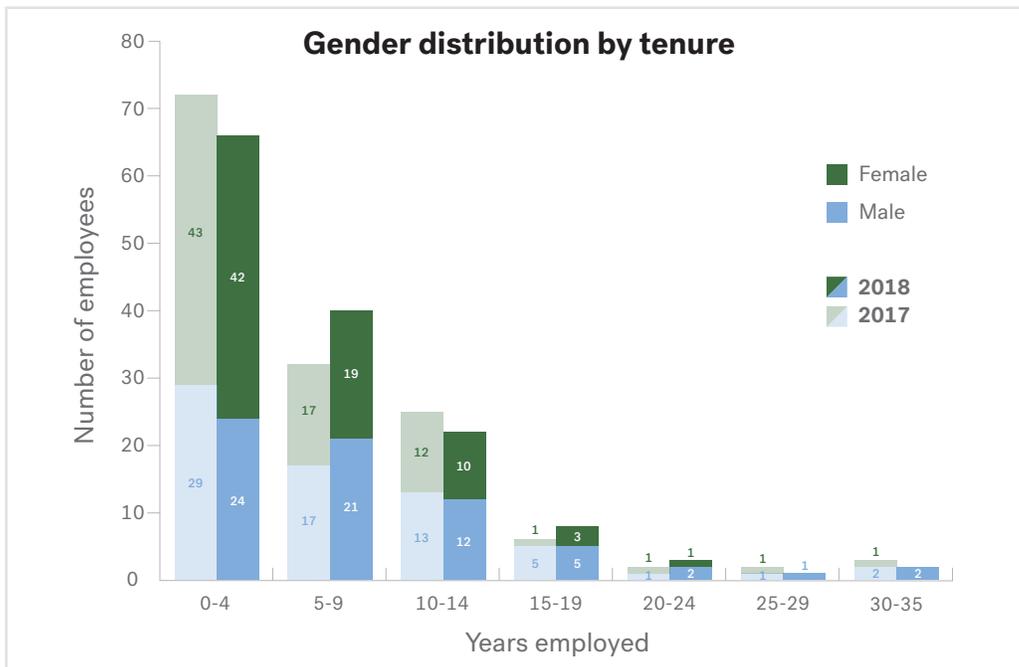
The largest proportion of The Wilderness Society staff (36%) is in their thirties and the smallest proportion of staff (8%) is in their sixties which is the same as 2017.



The Wilderness Society is 54% female and 46% male, similar to the 2017 survey's finding that The Wilderness Society employs slightly more women than men.



Gender balance across the organization is similar to last year's data. Staff remains predominantly female in all departments except for Conservation. The finance department, which only had men in senior level positions in 2017, gained two women in senior level positions in 2018.



46% of The Wilderness Society staff's tenure has been for 4 years or less; most employees that joined in the past four years are female. Male staff outnumber female staff as tenure increases. 44% of female staff at The Wilderness Society have a tenure of over 4 years compared to 64% of male staff. In 2017, 57% of male staff had worked at the Wilderness Society for over four years compared to 43% of female staff.

Continuing Equity-Focused Hiring Practices

Since establishing our new hiring and recruitment policy in 2017, we have made great strides in ensuring that equity is a focal point of each stage of our hiring process.

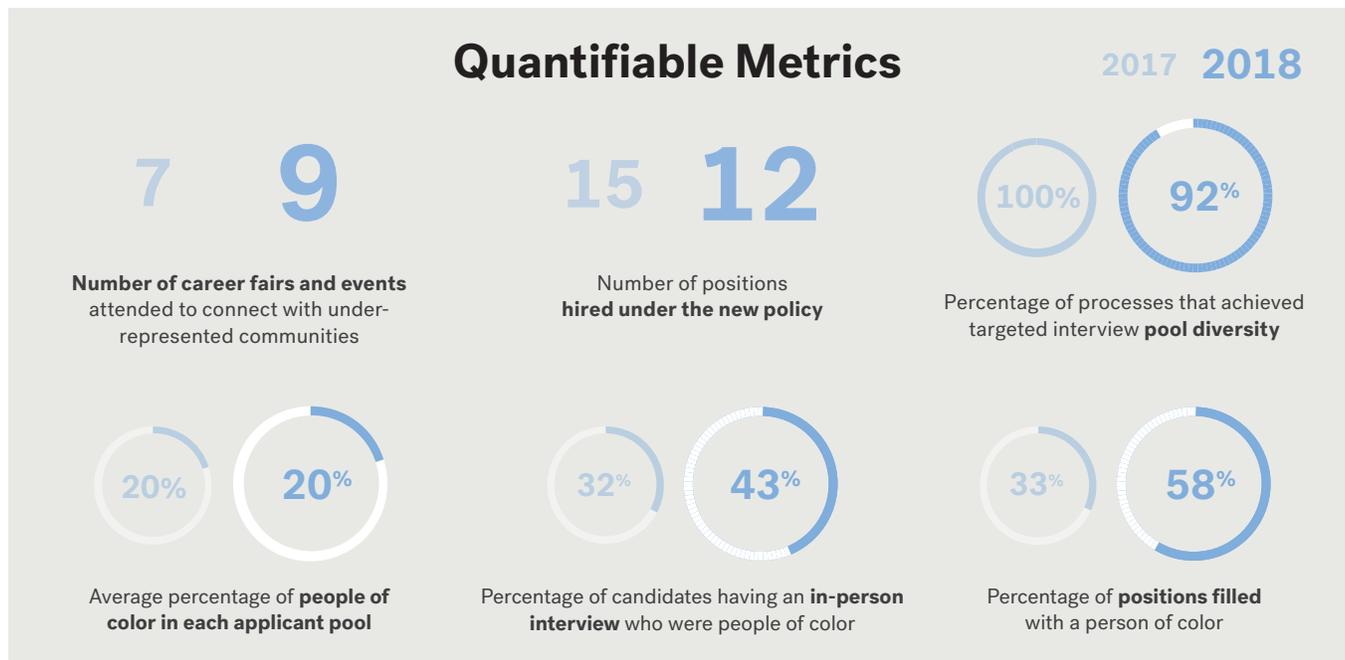
The goals of our process are to:

1. Recruit the finest professionals and broaden the rich mix of talent, work experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, and beliefs needed to fully achieve our mission.
2. Create 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.
3. Attract and retain employees with the experience and expertise that enables us to embed equity throughout our work.

From job descriptions and recruitment to phone screens and in-person interviews, we have considered many of the ways implicit bias could potentially overshadow efforts to fully and fairly consider each candidate's qualifications for our open positions.

After the first year of implementation of the hiring process, we amended our policy to be responsive to feedback from team members and improve upon the process. The changes included:

- Adding a required question about our equity work to the list of interview questions
- Providing hiring managers with a job description template
- Including a member of Human Resources as part of every hiring committee
- Requiring that one of the top three must-have skills for every position must be an equity-based skill
- Instituting a metric goal for advancing qualified candidates of color to the phone screen stage (10% or 25% depending on location of position)



Additional Reflections on Lessons Learned:

Over the past year, we have found many hiring managers dedicated to the new hiring process, seeing it not only as a means of broadening our applicant pools with a richer mix of backgrounds and perspectives, but also a means to identify the most qualified candidates. In particular, hiring managers have embraced practical assessments as a creative means of distinguishing the most skilled and capable applicants. These have taken many forms including:

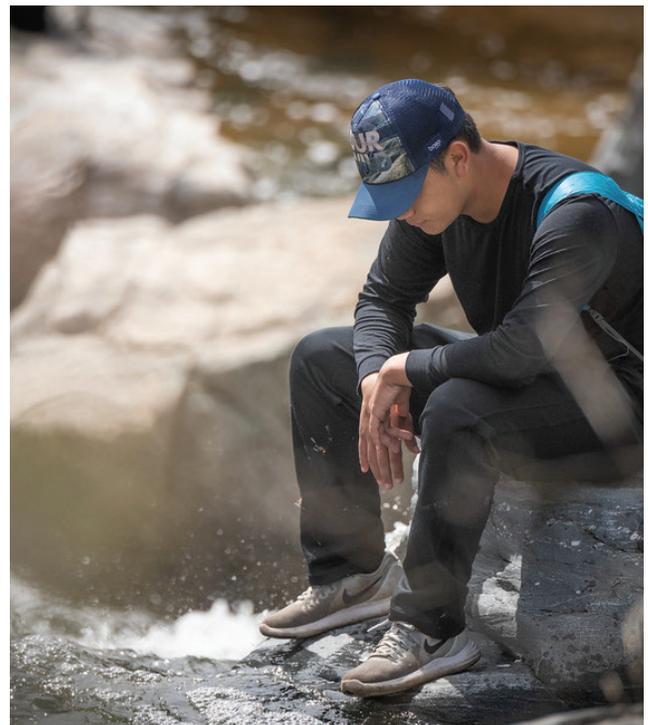
- Writing exercises, provided either before or during the in-person interview stage
- Proofreading a letter
- Mapping out a social media strategy
- Role play: Responding to real-life scenarios one might encounter on the job as part of the in-person interview

As our hiring evolves under the policy, we recognize the need to continually refine our practices to mitigate for unconscious bias and provide targeted guidance to hiring managers and hiring committees on how to reduce bias throughout all steps of the hiring process. Another key focus area for growth in hiring is recruitment. With increasing staff diversity being one of the tenets of our commitment to equity, it is important that we build and maintain a more diverse professional network which takes ensuring that team members see diversifying their individual networks as a priority for their team's work. Staff have expressed a need for additional support in reaching broader audiences for open positions and beyond and have also shared they experience some discomfort in talking about our equity work with external groups new and old. Our focus in the coming year will be to identify ways to provide that support either through trainings or additional staff resources so that as an organization we can extend our circle of influence and reach new allies and partners.

While we have created a solid foundation for hiring, we recognize other important unaddressed areas on the horizon that have a huge equity impact such as retention, promotion, and raises. We are currently discussing how to develop baseline policies that establish more equity across each of these areas.

It is important we build and maintain a more diverse professional network

Finally, as we look to deepen our implementation of equity throughout all of our policies and programming, we are aware of the need for additional funding and time to construct and manage new systems of operating and engaging with each other, our partners, and stakeholders.



Living Out Our Commitment

Team members continued to be thoughtful about how to be more inclusive in their daily work as well as how they could advance equity from their unique positions within the organization. From connecting youth with wilderness and conservation to engaging local and faith communities in our efforts, team members demonstrated dedication to our commitment to equity in numerous ways.

What was the catalyst for this project?

The idea for the Youth in Wilderness program began about a year before I came to The Wilderness Society. Through Youth in Wilderness, youth can form an emotional connection to wild places through wilderness and outdoor education. The program was designed in response to the fact that youth are disconnected from the outdoors, including youth of color who are underrepresented on public lands, and need opportunities to access the physical and psychological benefits of being in nature.



What impact do you think this work had on those involved in this collaboration?

One of the defining characteristics of the program is that it is not a direct service program. Instead of creating the infrastructure to put youth on the ground, we created an opportunity to collaborate with organizations that

Liz Vogel Youth in Wilderness



have strong track records of working with youth- the Appalachian Mountain Club, City Kids Wilderness Project in Washington, DC, the YMCA, Cottonwood Gulch Institute in Albuquerque, NM, Baxter Youth Conservation Corps in ME, and Ironwood Tree Experience in Tucson, AZ. Young people travelled to new places and developed an amazing connection to our public lands. Out in nature, they gained leadership skills and self-confidence. They were inspired by conservation professionals and expressed a growing interest in conservation work. Being outdoors gave them a sense of healing, belonging, and wellbeing. The organizations we work with grew their programs to help all youth and include more youth of color in outdoors initiatives. It has been inspiring to see the tangible benefits in my first year of the Youth in Wilderness program.

How are you incorporating lessons learned from this experience in your daily work?

We all bring different things to our work and I've come to view the structure of our partner organizations as being similar to a group of people. Approaching collaborations in the Youth in Wilderness program is like working with a group of people because like any diverse group of individuals, all organizations have their own personality,



challenges, and moments of celebration and sadness. I take lessons learned from managing those differences and use them to center respect and equity in my work. My experience with Youth in Wilderness has involved transforming challenges into strengths and treating every situation as an opportunity to be more inclusive and understanding.

What was the most enlightening moment you encountered during this project?

We were camping in a rugged, dry area with 10 high school students from Tucson, AZ. One evening, I facilitated a silent reflection activity to encourage a moment of mindfulness and connection to the outdoors: everyone separated from the group for ten minutes to fully engage with nature through various senses. When the students returned, I asked everyone to share what they experienced. One young woman remarked that she had never truly noticed the clouds, and how quiet it could be outside. She thought that everyone should be able to experience what she did because the opportunity to take the time to be in nature is scarce in her neighborhood. Getting to know her feelings about our time outdoors was really powerful and motivates me to keep working to provide these transformational experiences for all youth.

How can the results of this project influence future work of your team or our organization?

Through the Youth in Wilderness program, we are developing the next generation of conservation stewards and are laying the foundation for youth to become engaged citizens. The youth impacted by these equity-focused programs will be the advocates of the future and inviting them to develop their power and knowledge of public lands is crucial. Young people are feeling deeply connected to the lands they visit and are becoming stewards of our wild places.

How can lessons taken from this project be used to educate others on the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation?

The Youth in Wilderness program is a testament to the fact that the demographics in the world of conservation are changing. Underrepresented people are gaining power and strengthening the movement to protect our wild. This is something that needs to be addressed and supported through TWS's work and by other organizations in our field. Getting all youth, especially youth of color, outside is inextricably tied to creating the next generation of stewards and ensuring access to public lands in the future.



Alexa Sutton Lawrence

Amplifying Stakeholder Voices in the Great Dismal Swamp



What was the catalyst for this project?

This work started with my personal knowledge of how important it is to engage cultural heritage groups, particularly in regional areas where a lot of people have a strong sense of community. I started to think about an effective way to engage with communities in the Great Dismal Swamp area of southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. I felt that the best thing to do would be not just to reach out but to build a relationship. My work began with a thorough literature review. In reading the scientific, historical, and other literature about these communities I started to understand what Dismal was. The presence of several stakeholder groups including African-American Descendants of Enslaved Laborers, multi-ethnic Descendants of Free People of Color, the Nansemond Indian Nation, the Monacan Indian Nation, and the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe made it clear that it was a priority to take cultural considerations into account. I set up meetings with folks there by sending emails and making cold calls, which got enthusiastic responses. I asked those I spoke with to direct me to other people that were also interested and that snowballed into this group of people who are passionate about their public lands.

What impact do you think this work had on those involved in this collaboration?

Organically building investment into this community and our goals helped everyone to become more bought into the work. They were taking leadership and inviting others to participate, empowering the community around them. People that were more reticent were encouraged to join because they knew they had a say in who gets a seat at the table. There was a variety of roles that people could occupy so everyone had their own niche to fill.

How did you overcome the specific challenges of this work?

With this work being in its infancy, there have not been any significant challenges so far but I'm well aware of the many potential pitfalls. Public land management and infrastructure siting can be a sensitive issue so being clear in what kind of organization The Wilderness Society is, being clear about our mission, and remembering that we're interacting with a complex set of stakeholders is important to avoid big mistakes. It's necessary to present our moral framework, our ethical compass, to explain exactly what we're trying to do.

How are you incorporating the lessons learned from this experience in your daily work?

In a lot of ways, my work with Dismal is my daily work! This is something that's fully integrated into my work and priorities at The Wilderness Society. Moreover, I'm applying the lesson that it's important to engage people early on, as opposed to reaching out with a fully realized plan that was made without their input and expecting



people to interact with it. People care more about something they helped build. If you help bake the cake, the cake tastes better. I have also learned that I can be incredibly open when there's messiness in a situation. Being open to talk about the complexity of an issue has informed the way that I collaborate with my colleagues.

What was the most enlightening moment you encountered during this project?

I'm delighted by how much trust I can build in pursuit of our mission. People appreciate the effort it takes to drive to their offices, homes, and ancestral lands because it's a gesture of caring and trust. It also drives home the importance of face-to-face time, which makes it clear how much you value someone and their interests.

How can lessons taken from this project be used to educate others on the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation?

We can start projects by asking some crucial questions: who is here? Who was here? Who will be impacted by the work that we are doing? We can get to know those communities for who they are and understand the social implications of our work before we start presenting people with our goals. This keeps us from bulldozing over people and as a result, we get to appreciate the unique and diverse perspectives of communities and understand how their values affect their own work.



Travis Belote Developing the Next Generation of Ecologists



What was the catalyst for this project?

Before starting at The Wilderness Society, I would go to conferences and find that they weren't made up of a diverse selection of attendees. I felt there was a lack of diverse perspectives because most of the scientists in the room, myself included, shared not only the same racial background, but a similar socioeconomic background as well. I thought one of the best ways to address this issue would be getting directly involved in increasing diversity within ecology and conservation by working with SEEDS (Strategies for Ecology Education, Diversity, and Sustainability Program). Working with SEEDS Director, Teresa Mourad, I joined the steering committee for EcologyPlus. We came up with this program with the intention of establishing remote internships because it was important not to exclude anyone due to lack of access to internship opportunities. SEEDS got the funding for EcologyPlus through the National Science Foundation's INCLUDES program, and we were able to get students involved in research, networking opportunities, and job fairs.

What impact do you think this work had on those involved in this collaboration?

My main goals for our interns were for them to come to Yellowstone, get exposure to research and learn some technical skills, network with scientists, and gain a better understanding of all the possibilities for them in the field of

conservation. They got to learn more about the work we do here at The Wilderness Society and learn some GIS and data skills. Truthfully, I think the best way to gauge the success of EcologyPlus is to ask Edem, Elijah, and Kerrin. I think we were a great team, but I also believe they are the best speakers to their own experiences.

What was the most enlightening moment you encountered during this project?

I was opened to new ideas about the nature of the research questions we can ask. Working with GIS, I use data on the human modification as a measure of wildness or how natural an area is. I work to predict which places will be natural in the next century, and what the consequences of human interaction with nature might be. Elijah introduced me to the idea of including census data in my research which added a whole new dimension to these research questions. Now, I think about the social impact of conservation efforts in terms of the distribution of people in natural areas, how close they are to amenities like parks, and how they can be affected by access to nature and inclusion in conservation planning efforts. These are real issues and they are scientifically relevant. Thinking this way centers equity as an integral part of my work, not just “extra” or “side” work.

How can lessons taken from this project be used to educate others on the need for diversity, equity, and/or inclusion in conservation?

Call people and ask how you can help. Then, be ready to put in the work—we worked extremely hard on EcologyPlus, sometimes from 7:30am to 11:30pm—because the total commitment was worth it. It is always a good idea to ask how you can be helpful. Be open to being vulnerable. It is nice to bond with colleagues whether or not our connections are centered around work obligations, from talking about research questions to eating and listening to music together. We gain trust and new perspectives through connecting in multiple ways and these connections help us come up with and work in partnership on better solutions to our problems. When you trust people, you can be a little more vulnerable in talking about the challenges we face without worrying too much about saying the wrong thing.



Edem Yevoo's Perspective:

Before EcologyPlus, I had an interest in going to graduate school, but I wasn't quite sure and I didn't know how to approach professors to talk more about it. The webinars, academic meetings, career and internship fairs, and regular check-ins really shaped my experience in the program. Equity is something that was focused on throughout, and I found that EcologyPlus didn't try to mask stigmas and biases in the field; instead everyone focused on equity and diversity from the beginning. There was diversity among the people involved with the program as well as across the kinds of work they did. Now, I hold a position at the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Soon, I'll be starting a Master's degree at the University of California at Berkeley in Energy and Resources, specifically focusing on sustainable energy access and development. I am concerned with who has sufficient access and what places have been limited in terms of sustainable energy development.

Elijah Catalan's Perspective:

I was working with Dr. Middendorf on a project about environmental inequality in D.C. I knew I wanted to go into environmental science, but I wasn't sure about where I wanted to go with it or what my options were. Dr. Middendorf was a partner with EcologyPlus and encouraged me to apply. There were a lot of people to work with, and Travis was my mentor. The best part of EcologyPlus for me was the trip to Yellowstone and the additional project I worked on with Travis. Based on our GIS work, I was selected for an additional fellowship with the Garden Club of America. One of the best practices programs like EcologyPlus and organizations like The Wilderness Society can perform in terms of increasing equity in the field is continuing to bring different perspectives to the table. As someone in conservation, I plan to contribute to equity by showing up. I think I can provide a good example of what equity and inclusion can bring to the field and promote those values in future work.

Tim Fullman

Promoting Stewardship in Faith Communities

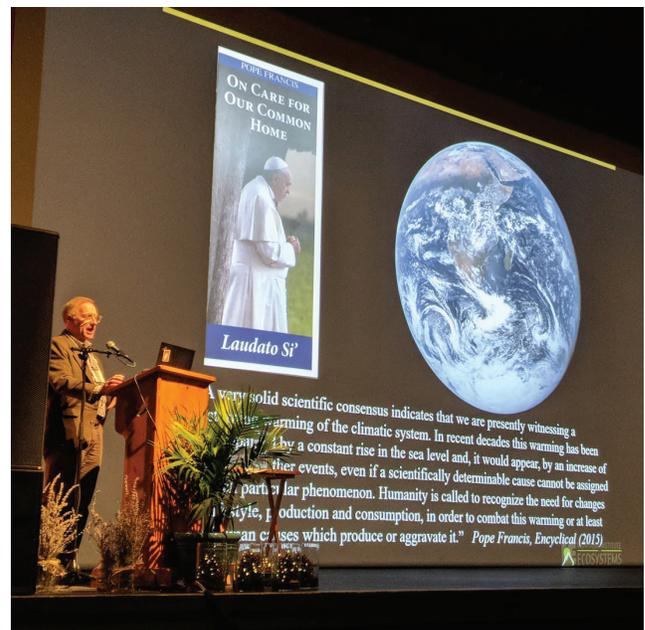


What was the catalyst for this project?

I am inspired to pursue conservation work because of the convictions of my Christian faith. It was not until I attended science communication and leadership training as one of the Wilburforce Fellows in Conservation Science, however, that I felt supported and challenged by my peers to pursue building bridges between the faith and conservation communities as part of my official work. It turned out that within The Wilderness Society Anne Carlson and I were working on engaging with faith communities independently and it was a pleasant surprise to find out that we had a mutual interest. Multiple discussions grew out of this, and at the 2018 All Staff Retreat we were able to share these ideas more openly and learn about other faith community engagement efforts. That's how we connected with Mike Quigley and Meredith Gower, and a team of people with similar interests started to form. From there the growth of the group was very organic. Louise Bruce, Alexa Sutton Lawrence, Ben Greuel, and Gabriel Otero reached out to us so they could participate too.

What impact do you think this work had on those involved in this collaboration?

One major impact was on our ability to bring our whole selves to work. Engagement with people in the faith community on the part of The Wilderness Society allows us to be more open about our backgrounds and how they motivate us to work in conservation. We've had people join our team for many different reasons from being persons of faith, to wanting to better engage strategic partners, to believing that diversity should be accepted broadly; all these perspectives have come together to reinforce the work we do as we learn more about each other and the communities in which we work. This has led to new opportunities. Gabriel found that in his work, faith communities tend to overlap with other underrepresented identities. He worked with a Latino church youth group in Colorado, helping to feed the homeless. That blossomed into hikes on public lands where he got to express the importance of stewardship. That was something that started with the bridge of faith. In Alaska, relationships I developed to better engage faith partners have led to us organizing talks from a visiting climate scientist at a university and a local conservative church. People who might never have come to the same table before are interacting because of connections made around faith work.



How can the results of this project influence future work of our organization?

Working with faith communities is a good reminder of the breadth of diversity. We can all get in ruts where we focus on the same people or try and solve problems the same way all the time. Our work has surfaced some possible tensions within The Wilderness Society regarding which groups and communities we consider appropriate for inclusion and equity. In order to more fully realize our commitment to equity and inclusion it is important that we be willing to reexamine the groups with which we partner. There is a long history of people of faith working toward conservation and values supporting conservation exist in many faith texts. We should consider the strengths of faith communities and seek opportunities to partner together toward shared values, even with those we don't think of as traditional conservationists. These lessons we are learning with faith communities can be applied broadly within The Wilderness Society to further relationships with many diverse groups. Our experiences show that we shouldn't assume that certain groups won't be willing to work with us. In reaching out to diverse communities, you may be surprised with the level of engagement you get back and what shared values and opportunities exist.



Gabriel Otero Supporting Student Conservation Efforts



What was the catalyst for your interest in this project?

I wanted to create a pathway for students at Colorado Mesa University to get involved in conservation and provide them with the support I really wanted from environmental organizations back when I was a student there. I connected with the Latino Student Alliance, Gay-Straight Alliance, Black Student Alliance, Native American Student Alliance, Outdoor Program, Sustainability Council, and the Ho'olokahi Polynesian Club. I wanted to challenge the idea that youth are apathetic and noncommittal when it comes to conservation issues through education and support; my hope for this collaboration was that they would feel like their voice matters and their perspective belongs in these conversations, and that they would be inspired to become long-term activists.

What impact do you think this work had on those involved in this collaboration?

There were students I worked with that have gone on to do amazing work in forestry, parks, monuments, and other facets of conservation. One big thing I was glad to contribute was guidance. Many students were curious about how they could contribute to conservation but had



anxieties about their place in the environment as well. They want clean air and water, and a place to live, just like everyone else, and being able to give them tools to fight for those rights was a powerful experience for me.

What was the most enlightening moment you encountered during this project?

I came to know the work of Grand Valley Students United, a group of high school students dedicated to advocacy in their town of Grand Junction, Colorado. These are students that help organize each other and members of their community, care deeply about issues like climate change, and are very persuasive in their strategies. They're mavericks. They challenge the status quo because they're inspired by the events that happen around them and aspire to be on the right side of history. Because they're not affiliated with any organization, it's hard for bad actors to act like they have any agenda besides the interests they express publicly. It's so amazing to see young people actively involved in issues and providing novel ways to solve them.

How can the results of this project influence future work in similar areas of interest?

Student voices are important in conservation and will be present in future work. Their numbers, passion, and perspective will provide strength to the movement, especially as people from a wider variety of backgrounds enter secondary education at higher rates. Members of the conservation community can continue to provide

guidance and comfort to empower students to be actively involved in conservation. We all have the ability to use our positions to widen the scope of who should be involved in environmentalism and how.

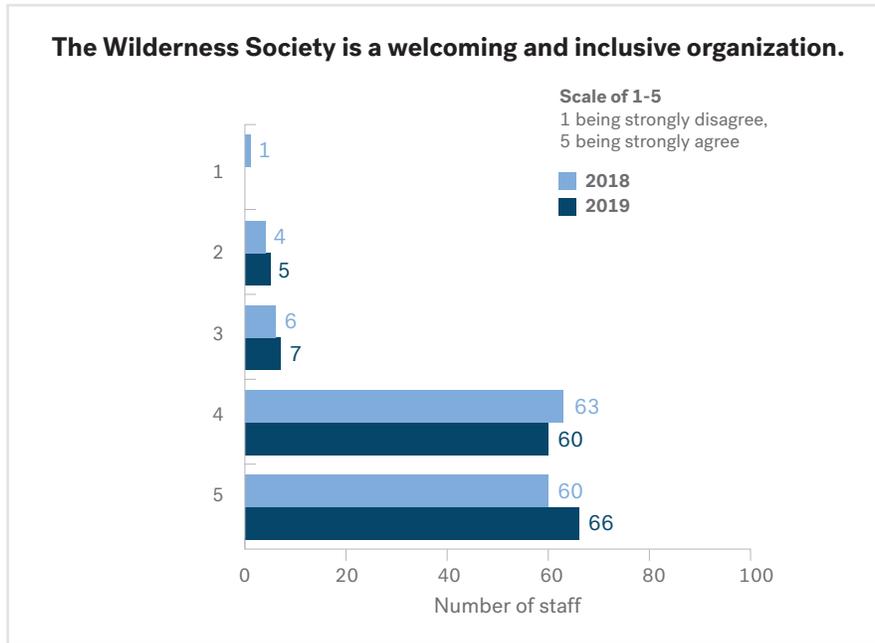
How can lessons taken from this project be used to educate others on the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation?

I hope that exposure to this narrative gets people to incorporate equity into their work. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is part of everything we do and should be approached as central to our work. Student groups found support with one another and built allyship. They used common ground to break down their silos. I am bringing the lesson I learned from them into my interactions at work. I think their collaborations are so poignant and representative of the kinds of partnerships that can be fostered at The Wilderness Society. We can invest genuinely in communities by elevating their voices and listening. Everyone has their own way of expressing personal values. We can also work to ensure community interests are represented by recruiting talent from underrepresented communities and paying them appropriately for their work.

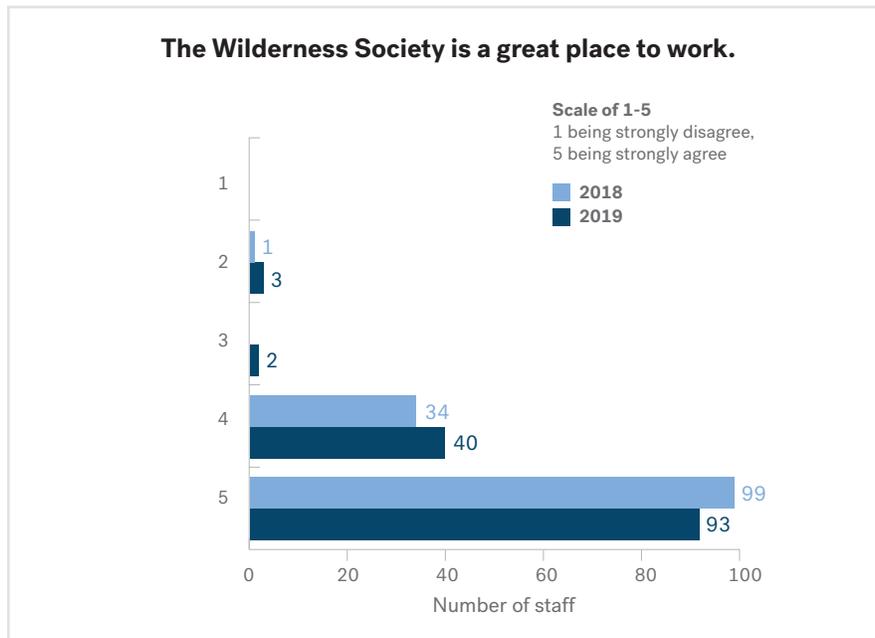


Annual workplace culture survey

138 respondents, or 96.5% of The Wilderness Society staff, participated in the 2018 Annual Workplace Culture Survey. For the 2017 Annual Workplace Culture Survey, there were 134 respondents and a 92% response rate.

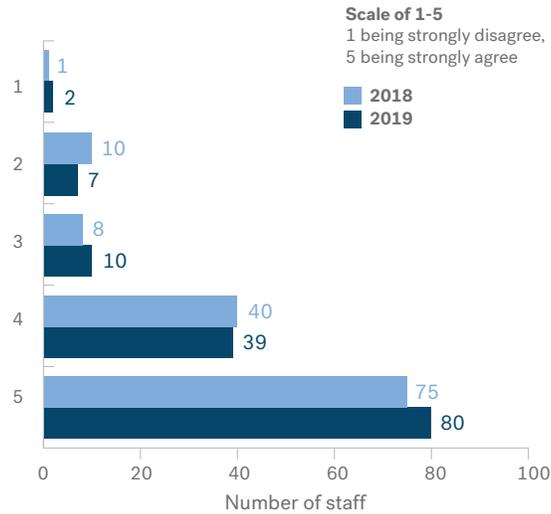


Most respondents (91%) agreed that The Wilderness Society is welcoming and inclusive. 9% of respondents disagreed about the inclusiveness of The Wilderness Society. In 2018, 92% of The Wilderness Society staff agreed that the organization is welcoming and inclusive, while 8% of staff disagreed.



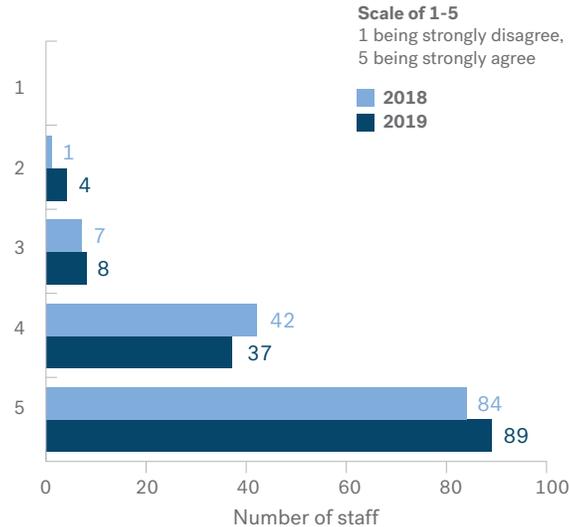
The vast majority of staff (96%) believe that The Wilderness Society is a great place to work. Previously, 99% of respondents agreed that The Wilderness Society is a great place to work. More staff disagree with the proposition that The Wilderness Society is a great place to work in the 2019 survey than the 2018 survey.

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



87% of staff agree that The Wilderness Society's policies promote a healthy work-life balance. In the previous survey, 86% of staff agreed with the proposition. The number of respondents that disagreed with the statement remained nearly the same between the two surveys.

My daily work environment is welcoming and inclusive.



The majority of The Wilderness Society's staff agreed or strongly agreed their daily work environment is welcoming and inclusive. 12 respondents from the 2019 survey disagreed with or had a neutral response to the proposition that The Wilderness Society is welcoming and inclusive, as opposed to 8 respondents from the 2018 survey.

Enriching Our Learning

At The Wilderness Society, we recognize that embracing and working toward equity is not done without continuing to build our knowledge. Over the past year, we have engaged in learning experiences and conversations to advance our understanding of what equity, diversity, and inclusion means and looks like in our daily lives as professionals and individuals. Through multiple staff and partner-led learning sessions, we explored the topics of social identity, race & ethnicity, gender, and work-life balance, among others.

Learning Sessions over the past 12 months:

- All Staff Retreat Equity Planning Sessions - organized by the All Staff Retreat Planning Committee
- New Hire Equity Orientation – facilitated by Angela Park (consultant)
- Revisiting Our Understanding of Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion – facilitated by Wordna Meskheniten
- A Conversation on Equity & Environmentalism – facilitated by Wordna Meskheniten
- The Wilderness Society’s Native Lands Initiative – Respecting First Peoples and Ancestral Homelands – facilitated by Daisy Purdy (consultant)
- Race, Ethnicity, & Cultural Connections to Land in Southeast – facilitated by Alexa Sutton Lawrence
- Equity Work at the National Park Service: A Conversation with Dr. Megan Springate – facilitated by Hannah Malvin
- For Managers: Managing for Racial Equity, Inclusion and Results – facilitated by The Management Center
- Work-life Balance and Avoiding Burnout – facilitated by Anne Carlson
- New Hire Equity Orientation – facilitated by Wordna Meskheniten

In October 2018, Wordna Meskheniten organized an open conversation with all staff titled “A Conversation on Gender, Equity & Current Events.” With a different format, this conversation was held as a confidential space to reflect on national events, including the Kavanaugh hearings, and their impact on team members personally and in their daily experience at work. This was a widely attended conversation where team members had the opportunity to share their thoughts, experiences, and hopes for gender equity within our organization and across our nation and be heard respectfully and with understanding.



On the Horizon:

Many team members have shared a desire to have more opportunities to connect and advance their knowledge around principles of equity, inclusion, privilege and bias among others. Starting in the fall 2019, team members will have more regular touchpoints for both individual and collective learning. And like many of our fellow partner organizations committed to equity and justice, we will institute some required sessions to ensure everyone has a baseline of understanding.

Closing Reflections

The Wilderness Society has taken many steps toward carrying out our commitment to equity. Our continuous improvements around implementation of SMARTIE goals, our revision of our equitable hiring policies, and our continued reflection on how we meaningfully engage with our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts provide us with quantifiable metrics to take our commitment to equity from aspiration to reality.

We also value the qualitative aspects of embedding equity in the work of our organization. As illustrated in the narratives of our team members, we are embracing conversations that uplift the perspectives of those whose voices are not often at the center of our work to protect wild places. Being an inclusive organization involves valuing the interests of our constituents, partners, and potential partners and connecting on common values. The shared learning team members have participated in have opened us up to new opportunities wherein we consider our privileges and the history of conservation as we move to interact with people and engage communities in the fight for our public lands.

As we move into the next phase of our equity journey, we are excited about the many opportunities to deepen our work at The Wilderness Society and contribute to building equity across the broader environmental field. The Wilderness Society has launched a vision and strategic plan initiative to chart the course for the future and one of our priorities is ensuring that equity is included in our vision and across all programming.

Below are a few initiatives that will allow us to continue to advance our equity efforts in 2019 and beyond.

- Through our Native Lands Initiative, we aim to: enable us to better acknowledge and respect peoples who have been part of the landscapes since time immemorial; gain insight into our organization’s historical approach to conservation within these landscapes; and enhance our ongoing and future work and partnerships with Native communities and Indigenous partners. We seek a multi-faceted understanding of the connections between our staff, board, and Native peoples with the

goal of strengthening these partnerships in ways that critically address the impact of our work and federal lands decisions on Indigenous rights.

- TWS was selected as one of eleven organizations participating in a year-long Environment + Equity Leadership Cohort. The program focuses on peer learning across environmental organizations committed to deepening their integration of equity throughout organizational policies, practices, culture, and external programming.
- Organizational skill-building will also continue in the form of learning experiences designed to bridge personal and professional perceptions of equity and justice.
- Lastly, we will remain vigilant for ways we can support other organizations, particularly those led by and serving people of color and Indigenous peoples, in the conservation space.

Fundamentally, The Wilderness Society’s commitment to equity has set us on a long road of learning, growth, and change. The stories shared, lessons learned, and goals set urge us to reflect on how far we have come and to contemplate what more we can do. We understand that there are no shortcuts along this journey and that our individual and collective efforts are all necessary for organizational success.

