



The
Wilderness
Society

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Table of contents

Letter from our President	3
Letter from our Governing Council Chair	4

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 5

New Strategic Plan	6
2020 year in review	8
Staff Demographics	9
Board Demographics	13
A Small Needful Fact (Poem)	14
Reflection on 2020	15
Advancing Equity and Diversity Through Hiring, Recruitment and Retention	17

Sharing Stories, Uplifting Voices 18

Serena Alvarez - Cesar E. Chavez National Historic Park	18
Andrea Alday, Edit Ruano, Kerry Leslie - Inclusive Messaging Guide	20
Juan Perez - Communities at the Heart of Climate Action	22

Annual workplace culture survey 24

Equity in Action: Personal Commitments	26
--	----

Closing Reflections 28

President's Letter



This Annual Report is 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 2020, we worked to integrate these values into everything we do.

2020 was full of unprecedented challenges that rocked the country and our world. At TWS, the year highlighted the importance of putting our new strategic framework and principles to work, continuing to center equity in our work and to build a more inclusive conservation movement.

As the COVID-19 pandemic pushed us into working from home, we adjusted quickly and worked to find ways to support each other through difficult and uncertain times. The racial uprisings in the summer of 2020 moved us to consider new ways of connecting with and supporting communities of color and deepened our resolve to building an organization that works against racial injustices. We understand that a conservation movement that is not working toward anti-racism cannot be truly reflective of and responsive to the diverse communities who care so much about America's public lands and the sustainability of our planet.

As we continue to advance our work in the face of a challenging pandemic, I have been so inspired by our team for their resiliency, support of each other and our partners, and striving even harder to uphold equity in our practices. I especially appreciate the time we took this past year to connect as a team in more personal ways, to engage in staff trainings and discussions on anti-racism, and our deeper engagement in caucus groups to help us build a more inclusive and mutually supportive culture across difference.

We stand at a critical inflection point in history where we must address the interwoven crises of climate change, loss of nature, and systemic racial injustices. With the election of a pro-conservation President and Administration, this is an important moment to put our principles into action by partnering with communities in conserving America's wild, public lands so critical the clean air,

water, and natural systems on which we all depend. We must be even more intentional that our place-based and landscape work reflects the diversity of the country, with special focus on communities we have not served in the past. We must also we share power by helping build more representative coalitions that will then be able to create the kind of equitable solutions for all people to benefit from public lands.

As we consider the culture of TWS, let us continue our progress in increasing our competency to work inclusively across difference. Our efforts are not just about training, but about the deeper work we are doing in our caucuses and peer learning with one another and with ourselves.

It is more important than ever that we center equity and inclusivity in all of our work. The future of our movement depends on our ability to challenge our past and find new equitable ways of preserving America's public lands for our future.

I'm humbled to have witnessed the resilience of our organization over the past year despite all its challenges. Being with you all through the trials and triumphs has taught me so many lessons. As The Wilderness Society continues to grow and advance, I will continue to listen, to learn, to practice, and to act. The Wilderness Society is facing an exciting time in its history, and I am grateful to be embarking on the next chapter of our equity journey with our committed and supportive team.

Best,

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

Letter from our Governing Council Chair



This pivotal moment in time has given us the opportunity to further the pursuit of the diversity we need to see in our public lands.

It is with great pride I can say through turbulent times the staff at The Wilderness Society has kept its enduring spirit by remaining committed to our organization's mission, to each other, and the communities and lands we serve. 2020 challenged us as a nation and as individuals yet TWS adapted swiftly to forge a sustainable and more equitable future for all.

This pivotal moment in time has given us the opportunity to further the pursuit of the diversity we need to see in our public lands. We are coming to understand that addressing the challenging history of the conservation movement is essential to building a future where all people benefit from public lands.

Our new strategic framework helps to ensure equity throughout our work. What is exciting about this new direction is that by applying an equity lens, TWS plays a role within the conservation movement that centers people and their connection to the lands we love.

In the face of the climate crisis, urgent action is necessary and calls for us to be bold and to commit to creative thinking. With the long-standing partnerships and

new connections, we are building, we are taking intentional steps to ensure that the impact we have on all of conservation work is one of where equity and justice is not simply a hope, but is best practice.

While we are still at the beginning, I cannot be more inspired by the bright minds shaping the way.

Respectfully,

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

Crandall Bowles
Chair, Governing Council

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at The Wilderness Society

The Wilderness Society believes public lands 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.

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 creating working environments where each employee can 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 with and learn from 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.

Land Acknowledgment

The Wilderness Society recognizes Native American and Indigenous Peoples as the longest serving stewards of the land. We respect their inherent sovereignty and self-determination and honor treaty rights, including reserved rights that exist off their reservation.

We acknowledge the historic and ongoing injustices perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples and are committed to being more conscientious and inclusive and working with Indigenous Peoples to advance the establishment of trust and respect in our relationships. We seek the guidance of Native American and Indigenous Peoples to effectively advocate for the protection of culturally significant lands and the preservation of language and culture. We strive to support actions that respect the priorities, traditional knowledge, interests and concerns of Native American and Indigenous Peoples to ensure a more just and equitable future.

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.

New Strategic Plan

In February 2020, our Governing Council approved our new strategic framework. After several months of deep engagement from staff and Governing Council, as well as a cross section of external partners, we developed a thoroughly vetted strategic framework that will serve as our TWS's North Star for years to come.

Our vision: A future where people and wild nature flourish together, meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing planet.

The Wilderness Society's Mission: Uniting people to protect America's wild places.

Guided by our Strategic Planning Committee, a racially and geographically diverse team of staff and Governing Council members with a wide variety of expertise, the strategic plan demonstrates our commitment to building a more inclusive conservation movement that ensures ALL people benefit equitably from public lands.

From the collective impact results, we strive for to the principles we stand by, and establishing an organizational Native Land Acknowledgement, our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and justice is woven throughout the framework and is emblematic of our dedication to ensuring our actions result in equitable outcomes for our team, partners, and the communities we serve.



Collective Impact Results

These are the five key results we aim to achieve by 2030 along with partners



Thirty percent of U.S. lands and waters protected



Net zero fossil fuel emissions from federal public lands



A critical mass of people (13 million) reflecting America's diversity, taking action to protect wilderness and public lands



All people in the U.S. benefit equitably from public lands



Full funding for the conservation, restoration, and protection of public lands at all levels

Our Vision

This is the future we want to create, our passion

A future where people and wild nature flourish together, meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing planet.

Our Mission

This is what we do, day in and day out

Uniting people to protect America's wild places.

Our Principles

This is how we show up and what we believe

We love, respect and are part of the natural world.

We believe clean air and water and access to nature are basic rights.

We strive for equity and justice in everything we do and seek to reflect the many communities with whom we work.

We take bold action informed by sound science to protect and defend nature for all.

We collaborate across generations to build a healthier, sustainable future.

Our Priorities

These are the focus areas for our work

Transform conservation policy and practice so all people benefit equitably from public lands.

Make public lands a solution to the climate and extinction crises by securing a resilient, continental network of landscapes and eliminating climate-changing emissions.

Our Theory of Change

This is how we realize our vision and advance 2020-30 strategic framework

The Wilderness Society focuses on making America's system of public lands part of the solution to the most pressing conservation challenges of our day: climate change, unprecedented species extinction and inequitable access to nature's benefits.

We work with partners and support our staff to find common ground around enduring conservation solutions, combining long-term investment in community-led conservation, deep public lands expertise and an ability to catalyze inclusive local-national advocacy networks that share voice, power and impact.

Native Land Acknowledgement

We recognize Native American and Indigenous peoples as the longest serving stewards of the land. We respect their inherent sovereignty and self-determination and honor treaty rights, including reserved rights that exist off their reservations. We acknowledge the historic and ongoing injustices perpetrated against Indigenous peoples and are committed to being more conscientious and inclusive and working with Indigenous peoples to advance the establishment of trust and respect in our relationships. We seek the guidance of Native American and Indigenous peoples to effectively advocate for the protection of culturally significant lands and the preservation of language and culture. We strive to support actions that respect the priorities, traditional knowledge, interests and concerns of Native American and Indigenous peoples to ensure a more just and equitable future.

2020 in review

This year we saw great shifts in our efforts to bring about equity in all facets of our work. From engaging in a comprehensive strategic planning process to building on our Native Lands Partnerships program (formerly Native Lands Initiative) and deepening our skill and will as a member of the first Environment and Equity Leadership cohort among many other steps we have taken as an organization.

Strategic Planning

One of the most involved endeavors of 2019 was The Wilderness Society's engagement in a months-long strategic planning process. Overseen by a committee of board members and team members of varying racial backgrounds, departments, positions and tenure, the process was one that aimed to position TWS to meet the current demands of conservation by centering people and equity in our approach. From engaging and surveying all staff and the Governing Council during multiple stages of the process to intentional outreach to key partners and stakeholders to get input on the direction of iterations of our reworked vision, mission, and priorities, the strategic planning process presented an ideal opportunity to consider how we can better embed equity and inclusion in the fabric of our organization, the who, what, and how of our work.

Public Lands Curriculum

This year we also launched our Public Lands Curriculum. Through collaboration with members of the People Outdoors Team with support from the Avarna Group, this guide provides information and activities to learn and teach about the management, history, benefits, issues, and ways to protect public lands with specific consideration given to the stories of underrepresented communities that are often omitted or overlooked in public lands history. The curriculum was introduced through a series of webinars and gatherings of staff and partners and has been downloaded by hundreds of outdoor leaders, teachers, and youth programs.

Native Lands Partnership

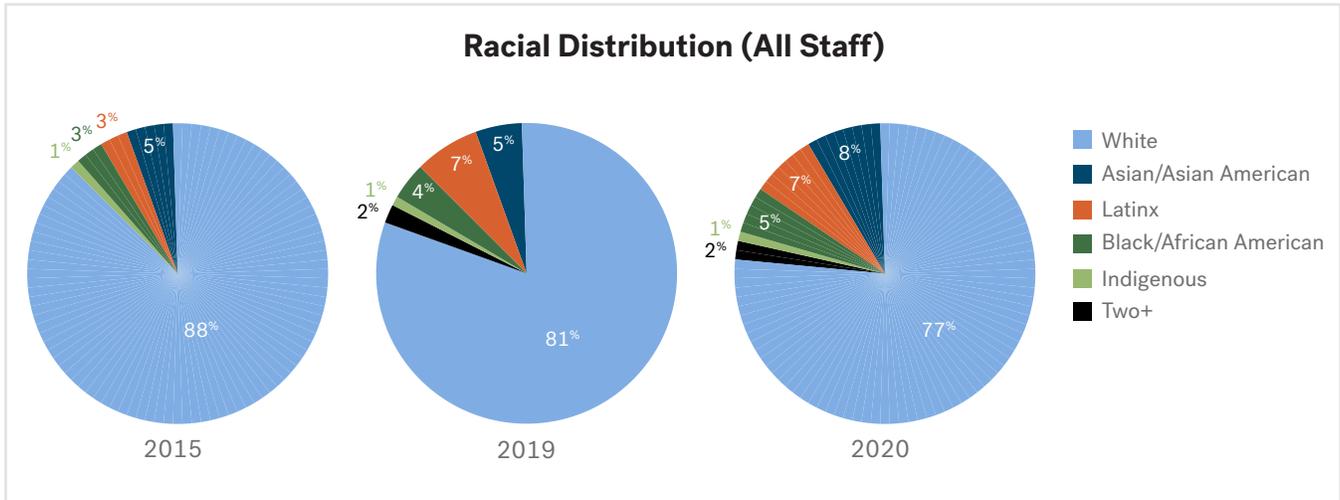
We advanced our Native Lands Partnerships work, which launched in 2018 and was carried out with guidance from the Inclusive Community Cooperative (ICC). The purpose of this program is to ensure that TWS embodies our commitment to equity and justice by cultivating authentic partnerships within and across Indigenous communities. Throughout the course of this year, we took multiple measures to establish a foundation for broadening this work across all of TWS. After allocating dedicated staff time, we were able to identify key pillars for the Native Lands workplan as well as determine an initial set of protocol to adapt our current and guide our future engagement of Native partners and prospective partners.

Environmental and Equity Leadership Cohort

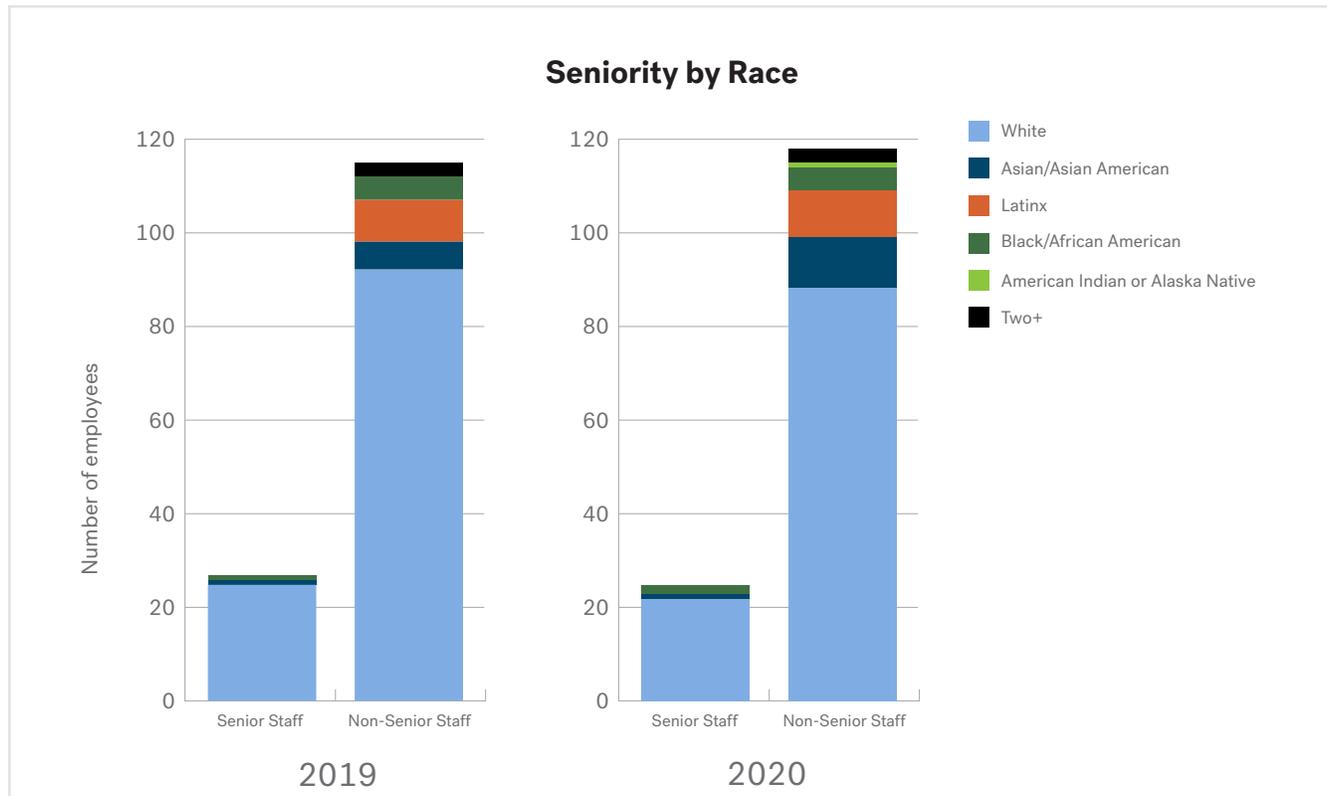
Lastly, a cohort of TWS team members and Governing Council members participated in the first Environment and Equity Leadership Cohort sponsored by The Hewlett Foundation. Following a curriculum designed by Equity Consultant Angela Park with support from Green 2.0, eleven environmental and conservation organizations engaged in deep knowledge-building and sharing best practices as we further our equity initiatives with our respective teams and across the field. Through a series of in-person retreats, group trainings, affinity spaces, and complementary webinars, TWS team members had the opportunity to engage in deep reflection and planning around the next steps of our equity work. Topics covered included organizational change and transformation, managing for equity, and creating an anti-racist environmental movement among others. Each engagement allowed the cohort to consider where we needed to further clarify what equity and justice means for both teams and the organization as a whole and to also contemplate where further action could be taken.

Staff Demographics

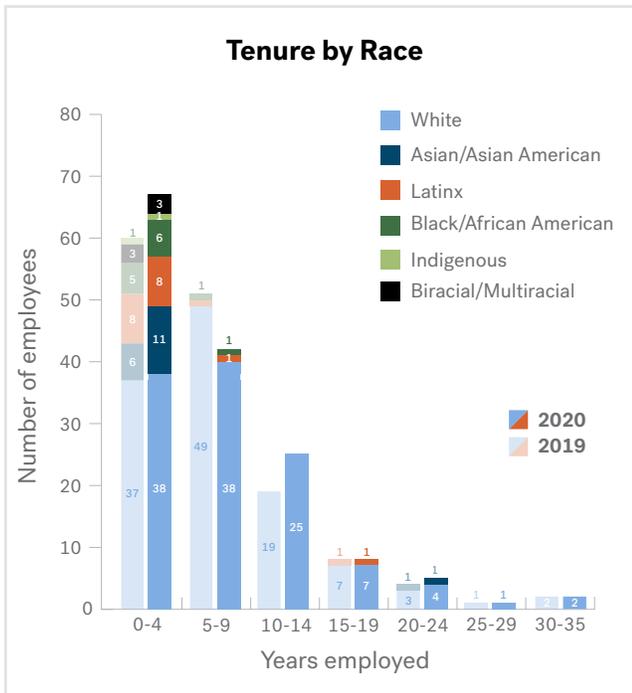
The following details the composition of our staff as of December 31st, 2020 as captured by our HR Employee database. We have shared data from 2019 for comparison and will continue to report on these data points annually. The Wilderness Society had a total of 145 staff members at the end of 2019 and 144 team members at the end of 2020.



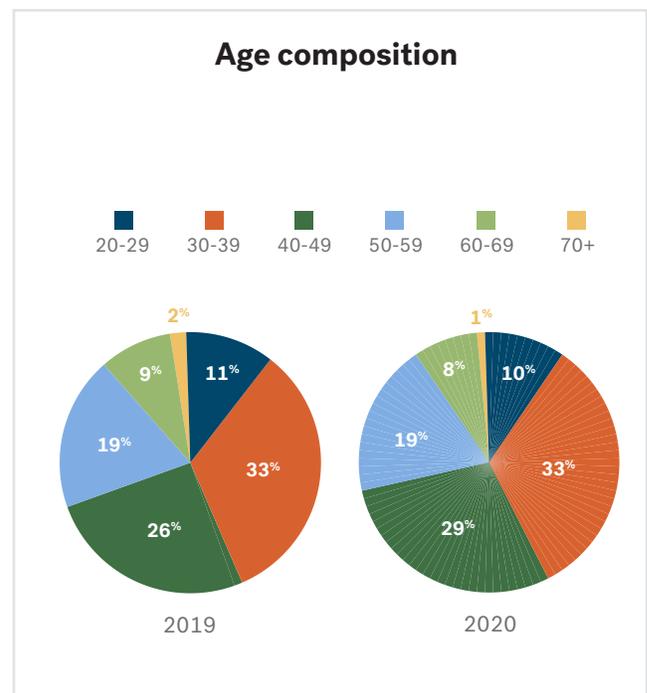
The percentage of staff of color has increased by 11 percentage points over the past 5 years from 12% in 2015 to 23% in 2020.



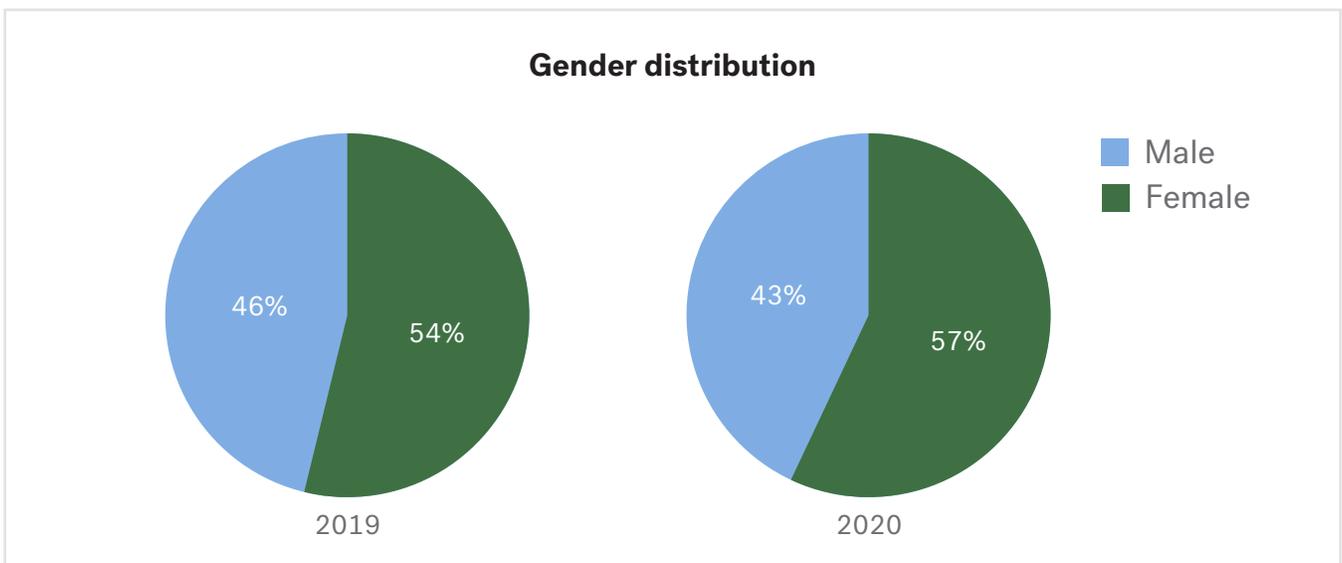
The vast majority of senior staff at The Wilderness Society identify as white. Senior staff added one additional team member of color in 2020 going from 8% to 12% Senior Staff of Color.



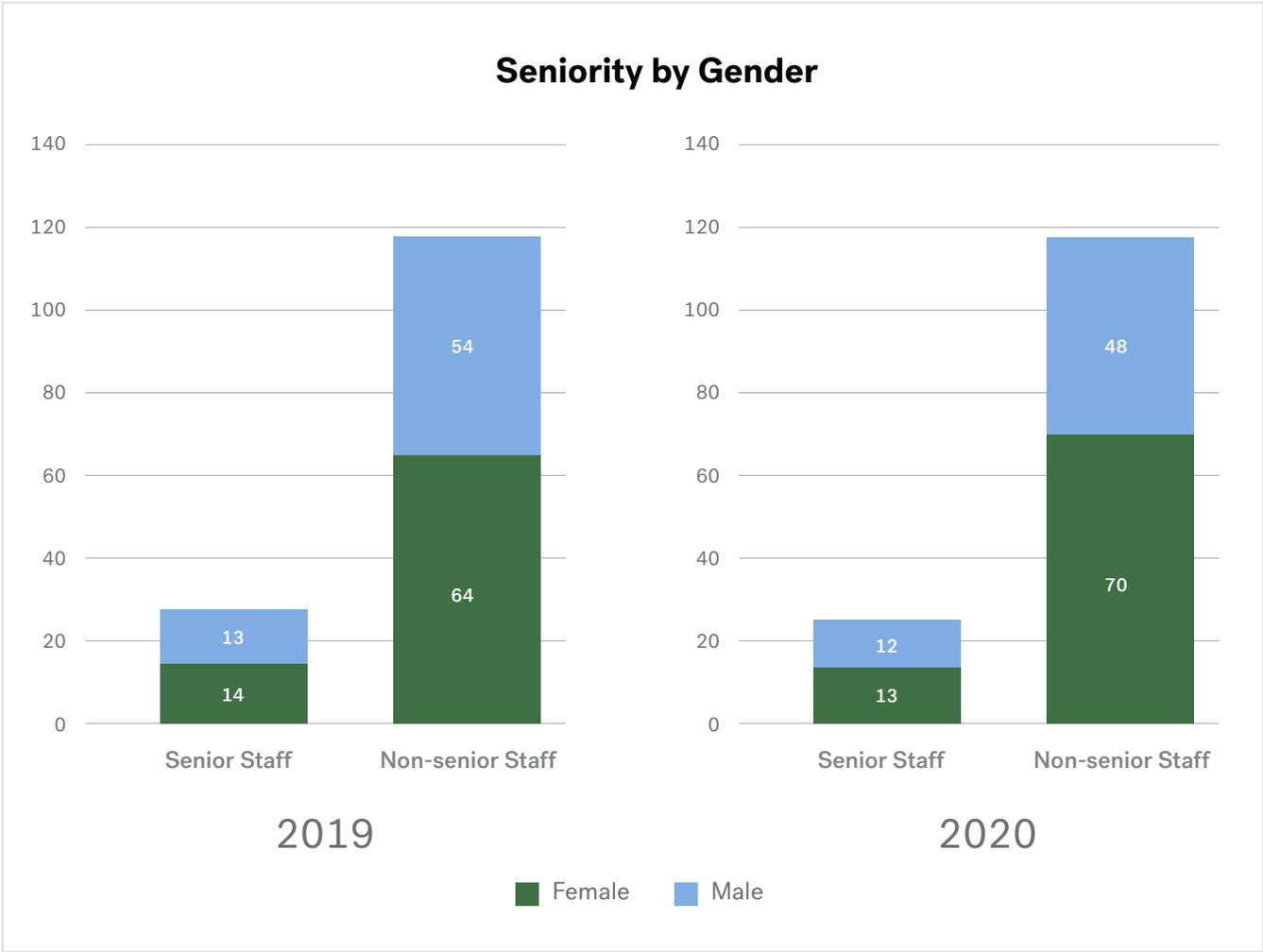
The vast majority of staff who have been with The Wilderness Society 5 or more years identify as white. The overwhelming majority of staff of color have been with the organization for fewer than 5 years. The percentage of team members of color who have been with the organization for 5 years or more has increased from 2019 (14%) to 2020 (15%).



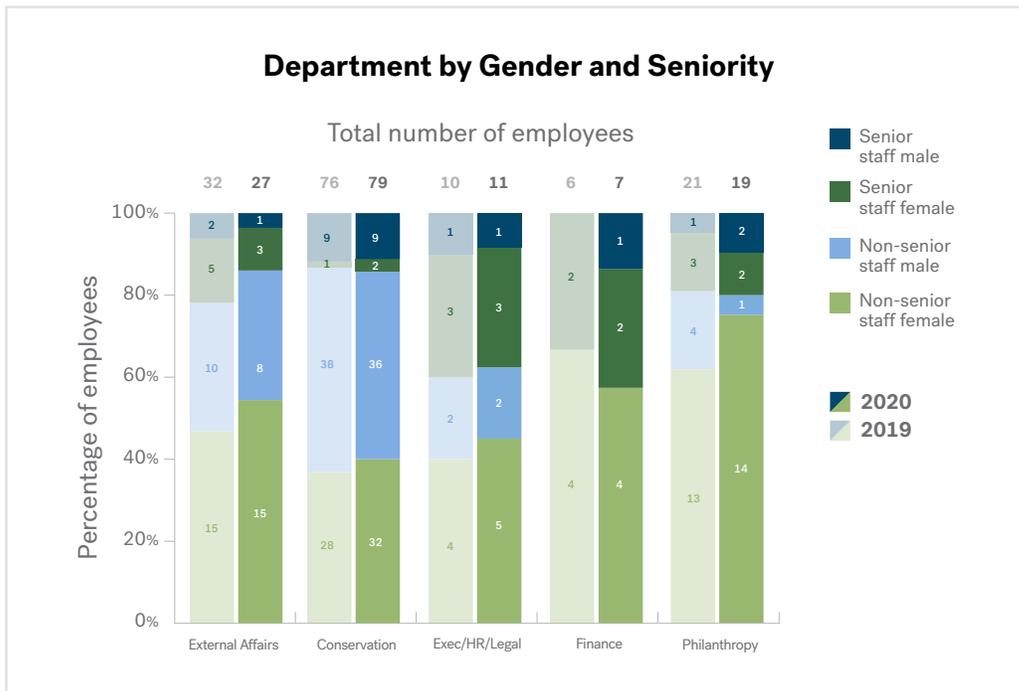
The largest proportion of The Wilderness Society staff respondents (33%) is in their thirties and the smallest proportion of staff (1%) is in their seventies.



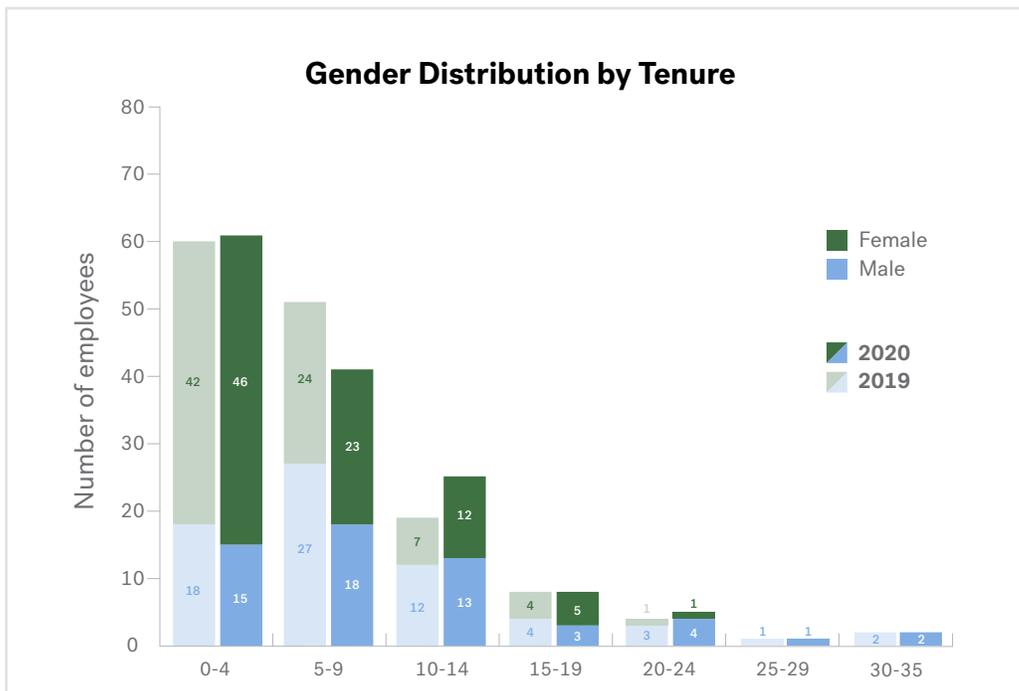
The percentage of female staff members has increased to 57% compared to 43% male.



The ratio of male to female senior staff remains fairly even and consistent.



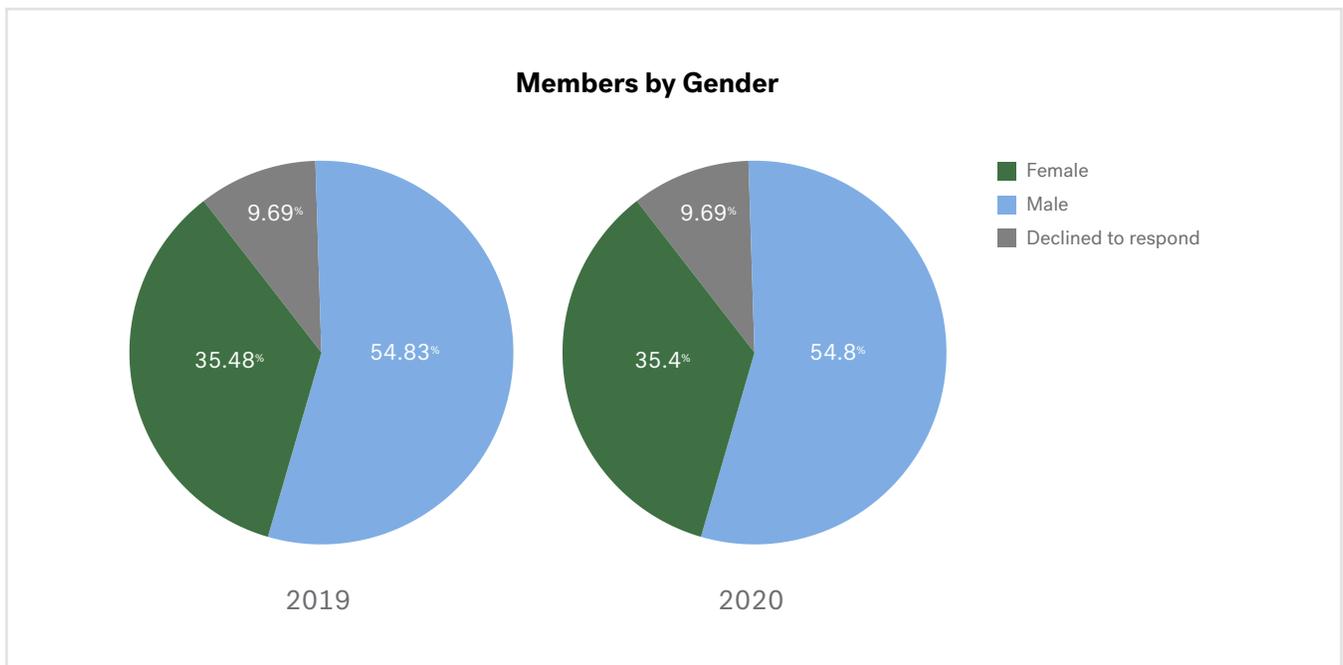
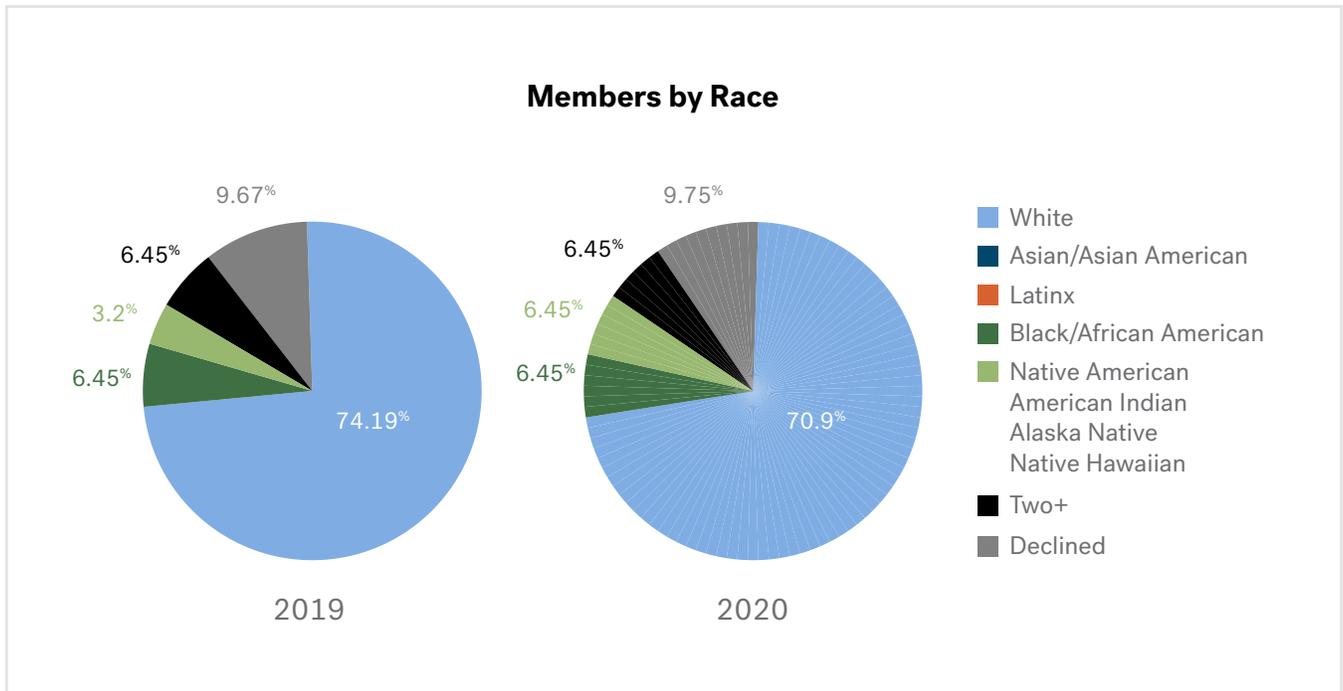
Gender balance across the organization is similar to last year's data. Staff remains predominantly female in all departments except for Conservation.



In 2020, 42% of The Wilderness Society staff's tenure has been for four years or less which is the same as last year. Most employees who joined in the past four years identify as female. Male staff outnumber female staff as tenure increases. 43% of female staff at The Wilderness Society have a tenure of over 4 years compared to 75% of male staff.

Board Demographics

20/30 board members submitted their data for this survey.



Board demographic data has not previously been tracked and reported but began in 2019 and will continue going forward.



A Small Needful Fact

Is that Eric Garner worked
for some time for the Parks and Rec.
Horticultural Department, which means,
perhaps, that with his very large hands,
perhaps, in all likelihood,
he put gently into the earth
some plants which, most likely,
some of them, in all likelihood,
continue to grow, continue
to do what such plants do, like house
and feed small and necessary creatures,
like being pleasant to touch and smell,
like converting sunlight
into food, like making it easier
for us to breathe.

Copyright © 2015 by Ross Gay. Reprinted from Split This Rock's The Quarry: A Social Justice Poetry Database.

Shared as a reflection at our June 2020 Governing Council meeting, this poem is a reminder to honor the humanity of those who lost their lives unjustly and the inevitability and necessity of our collective efforts to make this world a healthier and more just place for all.

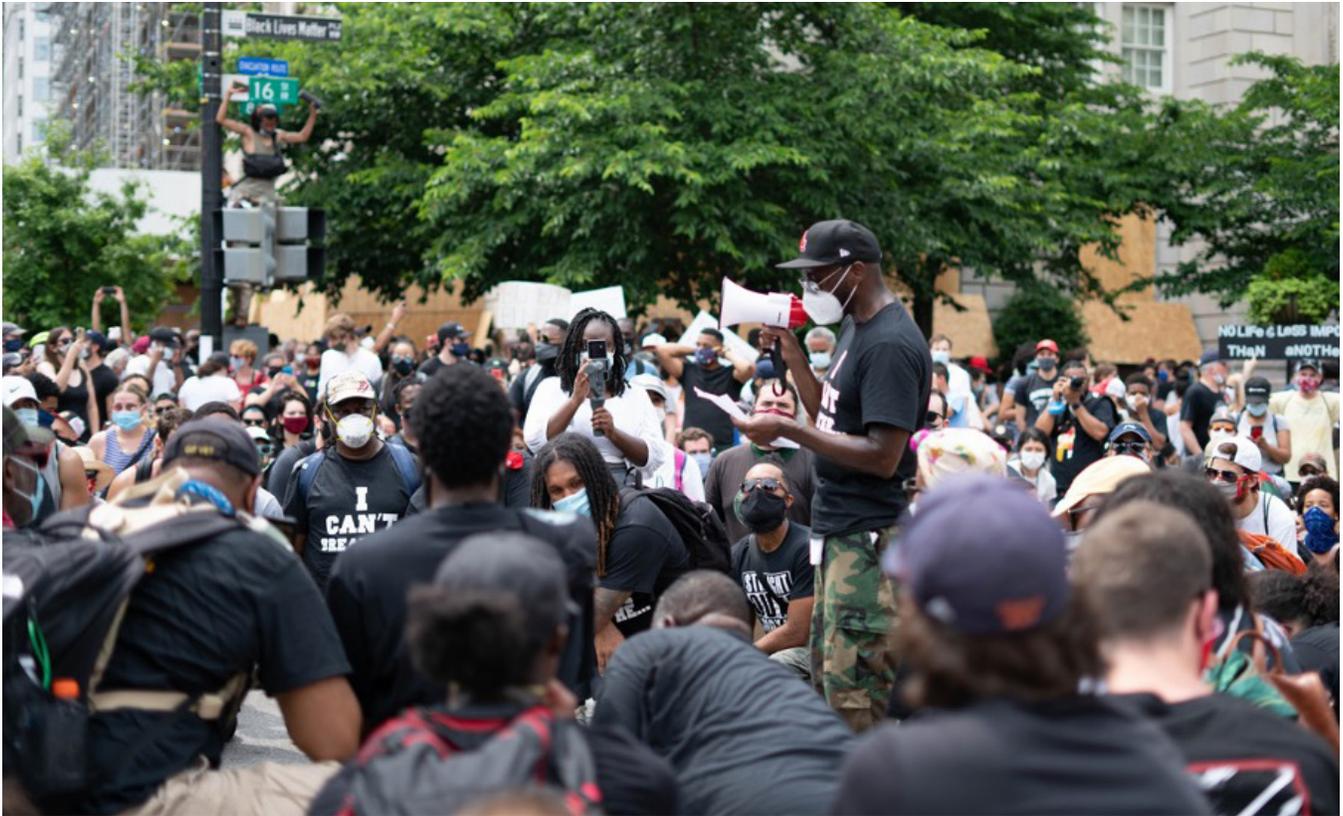
A Reflection on Summer 2020

This year was full of struggle in ways no one was prepared for. The unjust murders of unarmed Black Americans by the police caused an international ripple effect; protestors took to the streets all over the world, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This moment caused leaders from communities to organizations to take a stance against racial injustice and pledge to understand the nuances of systemic racism. This sets the stage of one of the biggest questions moving forward: What does it mean to lean into this moment?



As Black women, the experience of mourning Black people murdered by police was nothing new for us. Though this intense mourning was not novel, the response by the public was more intense than anything we had seen before. For the first time it felt like the feelings we felt inside were being reflected back to us in the response from the rest of the country. For a moment people seemed finally ready to create a new world.

One of the most important things we witnessed was people finally beginning to connect the dots of how systems of oppression intersect, and seemed in some respects that it was the first year that many admitted that systems of oppression exist at all. The same systems of oppression that degrade the environment are the same systems that harm marginalized groups. As we fight for a sustainable world, we have to recognize our leaders who stand in the margins and the intersections. As people closest to injustice, they have a clearer view of oppression.



Coming into this organization we have witnessed TWS’ efforts to contribute to the fight of racial equity as it relates to conservation and a just transition. With every step we take both internally and externally, we are helping to create a new conservation and environmental movement that reflects those most vulnerable to environmental degradation and the changing climate. Our efforts to build equity in our work have led to more culturally and geographically diverse partnerships with Black communities, Native tribes and nations, and other communities of color. The process to create a more just and equitable organization is a long and arduous journey, but we are just beginning to see the positive effects from the efforts of each team member who has worked to embed equity in their work.

It’s our hope that the energy from last year is not lost, and that people continue to reimagine a new way forward. It’s more than marching in the street but examining life and seeing how it can build

justice and equity in one’s personal life and field of work. Whether that’s fighting for environmental justice, or equity in health care and education, racial justice can only be created if we understand how injustice permeates through every aspect of our lives. It’s a matter of transforming what we do to create the world we want to see.

Sincerely,

Campbell Simmons & Mikayla Spencer

Spring 2021 Equity & Justice Interns



Campbell



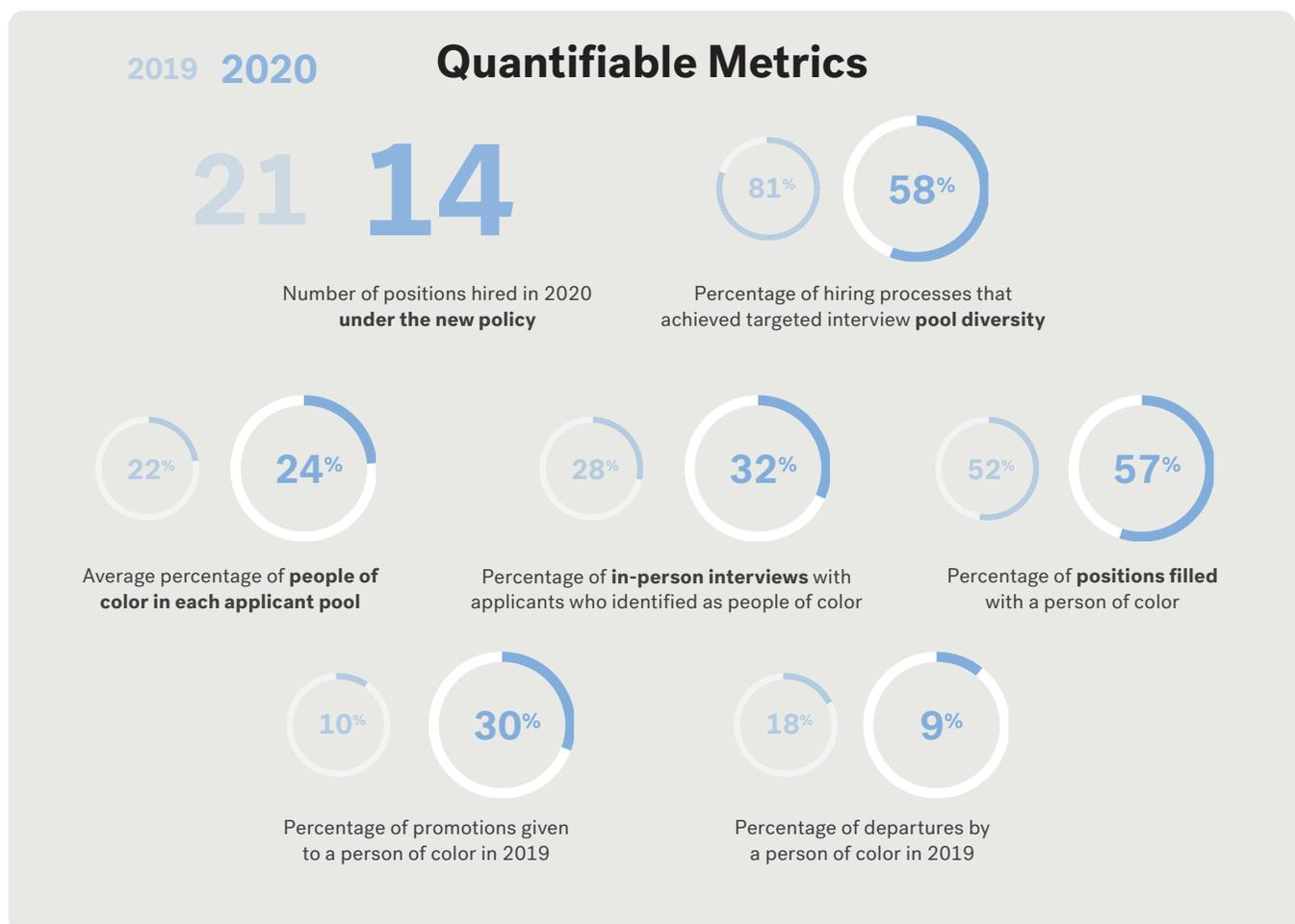
Mikayla

Advancing Equity and Diversity Through Hiring, Recruitment and Retention

We continue to implement our revised hiring and recruitment policy established in 2017 to ensure that our hiring practices are equitable and result in developing a highly qualified and racially diverse team.

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.



Sharing Stories, Uplifting Voices

TWS Partner Equity Interview:

Serena Alvarez, Esq.

Cesar E. Chavez
National Historic Park



Can you tell me a little bit about the project and your role in it? What was the catalyst for this project?

My name is Serena Alvarez, youngest daughter of Rev. Deacon Salvador and Sylvia Alvarez. I'm a Mexican-American attorney, raised among the apricot orchards of East San Jose, located in the Santa Clara Valley of Northern California. For the last decade I've worked closely with Dr. Ray Rast, Professor of History at Gonzaga University, on systems change in national historic preservation and interpretation. Our advocacy focuses on greater and just inclusion of diverse histories across our nation. Through Dr. Rast, I've come to partner with The Wilderness Society in relation to preparation for the introduction of federal legislation creating a Cesar E. Chavez National Historic Park.

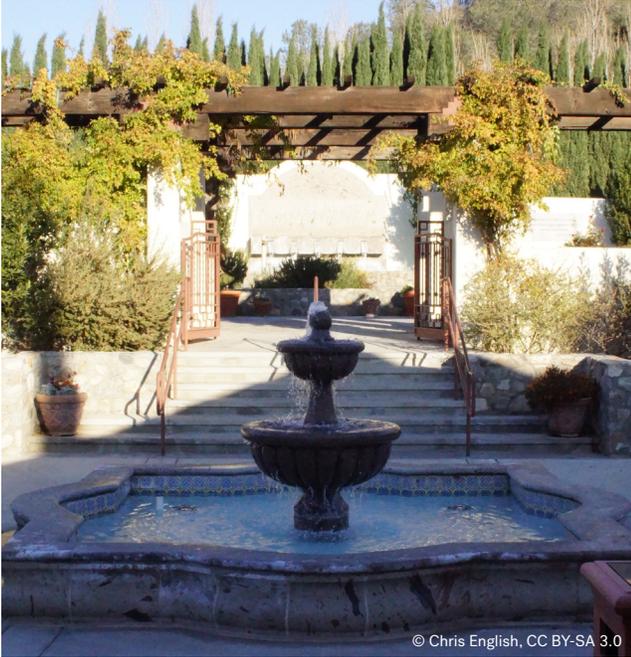
East San Jose, California is home to National Historic Landmark Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission Chapel (McDonnell Hall), situated among iconic barrios credited as the cradle of the Farm Labor and Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. Cesar Chavez credited Father Donald McDonnell and Fred Ross Sr. with changing his life forever through the education they provided to him as he undertook vocational, faith-filled service to East San Jose families. East San Jose continues to be highly respectful and abiding of our ongoing nationally significant historical roots. It has been a humbling honor to serve in a facilitative role among McDonnell Hall stakeholders. Presently, I support educational resources and empowerment of the McDonnell Hall site owner to self-determine its potential participation in the Chavez National Historic Park that may be created through federal legislation.

McDonnell Hall stakeholders have celebrated success in removing barrier preservation criteria that benefits all diverse communities and we continue to push significant systems change in historical preservation and interpretation.

What lessons have you learned from doing this work? Where do you see this project going in the future?

My father, Deacon Sal Alvarez, worked closely with Cesar Chavez for years as a national lobbyist for the United Farm Workers. Cesar taught my father to report problems and working beside my father closely, I learned the same. So, I need to report the problems to members of The Wilderness Society. Resource inequities may stall progress in advancing the Cesar E. Chavez National Historical Park.

You may not know that the National Historic Landmark (NHL) Committee reported to the National Park Service Advisory Board in 2013 on a study it conducted



on the diversity of histories represented in the NHL program. The NHL Committee reported that only 8% of NHLs represented diverse populations, including any community of color, women, and LGBTQ+. Dr. Rast conducted a parallel study, also published, that reported the number of diverse NHLs to be closer to 2%.

How does that relate to our efforts in advancing a Cesar E. Chavez National Historical Park? Well, imagine the pie chart for these NHLs and how small the sliver is for racially and socially diverse populations. And I want you to imagine all of these racially and socially diverse populations having to share resources committed to that tiny, little sliver.

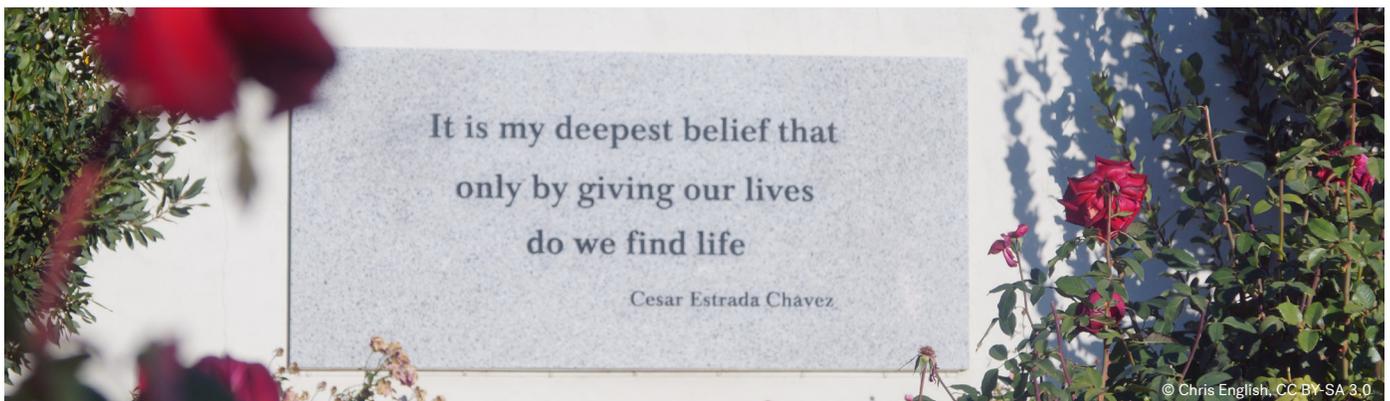
To broaden that sliver of the pie for diverse histories means to invest fiscal resources - accomplishing that is our collective problem. In relation to the Chavez National Historical Park, there are extremely limited resources for the Chavez National Monument in Keene, CA. It would be unjust to create a Cesar E. Chavez National Historic Park including multiple sites, possibly five, and then require the National Monument to share already modest fiscal capacity. As partners, this problem belongs to all of us.

And so we have multiple options to resolve this protracted conflict. First, we can collectively pressure federal representatives to appropriate more resources to redress inequities to more racially and socially diverse populations. Second, we can collectively demand that the budgets, like that for NHL, be re-imagined so that the WHOLE PIE is reallocated and so specific populations are not unfairly and immorally made to crowd each other out of a tiny share.

Resource inequity is a problem I need to report so that you can help.

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

I have been very grateful for the respect and support of The Wilderness Society. We share interests, common ground, and need each other. I look forward to growing our partnership on equity in access to historical and environmental resources. Thank you to all your members!



Equity Interview:

Andrea Alday, Edit Ruano*, Kerry Leslie

Inclusive Messaging Guide



What was the catalyst for this project?

EDIT: It started with common conversations, initially with Andrea, where she shared how she often found herself having to have really difficult conversations across the organization with individuals who were not necessarily seeing the impact of their language and the impact of their messaging. Oftentimes corrections were met with defensiveness, and not really leading to productive dialogue, and more importantly change. I had worked on messaging guides, including inclusive messaging guides elsewhere at other organizations. I thought it was something that we could do here as a way of trying to walk people through in a non-defensive way, and giving them a tool and a resource that they themselves could use to start to ask the questions that we should all be asking about the impact of words, of language, and of messaging.

What lessons have you learned from doing this project?

ANDREA: I've always known that language is powerful, but what really surfaced for me in doing this work is the way it carries people's biases. And I include myself when I say that. I appreciated that this was a collaboration. I had these two brilliant partners to call me out. At first, Edit really needed to coax me into working on the guide, because I also had this innate fear that the project would be viewed as a form of censorship. But I learned in the process that it wasn't about taking away words, it was about opening people's ideas to new language. It was a broadening tactic we were using, not a narrowing one.

KERRY: It reinforced for me the reality that language is not neutral, or stagnant. And that we can't and shouldn't make decisions about what language to use in a vacuum. We spent a lot of time learning about conversations happening between and within communities; and how you need to spend a lot of time listening in one way or another. I also think considering the science behind language and behavior was significant, and just remembering constantly that it's not about strict definitions. Most of us don't think about or care about the strict definitions of words when we use them, but it's about context and culture and the messenger and the listener or reader. And then, I think the last piece for me, was how easy it is for my own biases, and dominant culture conditioning to creep in, even when I'm trying to be intentional about avoiding that.

EDIT: One of the biggest pieces that I learned is that language is complex. To Andrea's point, we didn't want this to be censorship. But we also started thinking it was going to be something that asserted, "say this, don't say that". However, we realize that that's just not how language works. Because context, identity, and relationships matter so much to it, that we couldn't make it something that was simply,

Microaggressions &
learning to recognize
your own bias

“I’ll read this, and it’ll just tell me what not to say”. And I think folks are looking for that a little bit. Instead, we made it something that was more about building understanding. Sharing questions to ask yourself was a deliberate effort on our part. With issues of equity and inclusion, there is no easy answer. The answer takes time, takes thinking, takes deliberateness that I think we often don’t give ourselves space for. And I think for me as a Mexican woman, who’s having these dialogues and conversations, I realized, one of the challenges for myself was just saying, I know this, not just because of an expertise, but also because of my own experience and trying to balance showing up as someone who has an expertise and as a professional, but also as a woman of color and having both of those come together and be respected at the same time.

Sharing is caring ...

- When has language made you feel included or excluded, within or outside of TWS, and what was your response?
- What stood out for you in the guide? What felt like an “aha moment,” and what challenged you?
- What might help you adopt this in your own work? What’s missing?

Did the pandemic shift the project at all?

ANDREA: I think this project would have been powerful and relevant with or without the pandemic. That said, because the rollout happened during the pandemic, it hit during a time when people were more introspective. The pandemic shut out noise for a lot of people. So much got stripped away to the essentials. A lot of people became more reflective about what’s important in their lives and all kinds of issues. I would say that the pandemic helped to frame these issues around the language we use by shutting out some of the noise.

KERRY: On a conceptual level, at least, it certainly put a finer point for me on the need to be conscious of not defining people by their trauma by systemically induced vulnerabilities and reducing folks to a single label. I think we see that happen a lot in conservation and climate work, but also, we saw the same thing happen around COVID-19. For example, we always hear: “Black and Brown communities are disproportionately hit by COVID-19”. And that paints things in a way that erases cultural identity. So, it really gave us another reason why we can’t rely on single broad-stroke language.

EDIT: In this time of pandemic, folks are often writing, and doing storytelling via the written word. So the guide hit at a time when folks were looking for that guidance and that tool, in a way that they might not have if they were meeting on a daily basis and talking. Because people don’t realize that messaging is also about you and I communicating on a one-on-one basis. That’s something we really tried to emphasize that everything communicates, and our messaging matters. It’s a dialogue. So, I think the pandemic put people in a different headspace. And it was good to have them start with the written language piece, and then with time, it could translate to direct, in-person communication.

What is the most Enlightening moment of this effort?

EDIT: The biggest learning to me was around when we were trying to decide what to do with capitalization of racial identifiers. We spent weeks and months trying to figure out how to approach capitalization of the term “white”. We went to as many sources of information as we could from writers and journalists of color, and we just could not find consensus. We were just twisted in knots about what to do and how to phrase it and how to make sure that we were doing right by the guide, and by Black, Indigenous and People of Color. And for me, that was another reminder that we’re not a monolith. There are different opinions and perceptions of messaging and language.

KERRY: For me it was all of the learning about language and messaging pertaining to Indigenous communities and tribes. It was a space that I hadn’t dug into as much, and still haven’t, as much as some of the other spaces, but really exploring and sitting with the nuances and complexities of identities and all of the different terms. Even just the basic concept of saying the name of the tribe whenever you possibly can and being as specific as possible. Deferring to how different groups talk about themselves and knowing that preferred terms vary across the board.

Where do you see this project going in the future?

ANDREA: I think from the inception, we all knew enough about language to understand that this is a never-ending project, because language evolves. We’re constantly going to fine tune, make changes, recognize problems, and address different issues because language is a living thing. So we’re never going to be finished.

KERRY: I want to keep finding ways to stay involved and bringing more staff in this ongoing learning. How do we make this into a product that other staff are both implementing but also contributing to? Because sure, it’s a reference tool, but it’s also a prompt for personal internal reflection and growth.

Equity Interview:

Juan Perez*

Communities at the Heart of Climate Action



What was the catalyst for this project?

Throughout 2019, we created the climate and public lands capacity grants. With these grants, we provide a small amount of funding to people on the ground, mostly groups led by people of color or communities directly impacted by either fossil fuel extraction coming from public lands or by the decision-making of conserving landscapes. Then, last year (2020), we renewed with six organizations. Our next step was to start uplifting underrepresented voices and creating the space for them to share their own stories. One thing we are really good at as an organization is creating maps, but a lot of the time our maps are focused on just landscapes, ultimately erasing people. And so we collectively developed this project. I'm not going to take credit for the idea as someone else suggested doing a story map for Earth Day. We brought this idea to the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, HECHO (Hispanics for the Enjoyment of Camping, Hunting and the Outdoors), Defiende Nuestra Tierra (Defend our Land), Creation Justice Ministries, Better Wyoming and friends of Oregon Mountain-Desert Peaks. For the first year, the idea was to put a human face to the issue of climate change and public lands. On a personal level, one of the things that I wanted to do was

to portray people as champions and leaders in their own communities. I hate when we talk about people of color as incapable, or as though they cannot do anything for themselves. That's why they look like superheroes in the pictures. I love them all..

Where do you see this project going in the future?

We have already gathered 6 more stories! We updated and relaunched the project in June. If we could travel, I personally would have loved to go visit these people and do extensions of these stories. I'd also would have loved to fly these people to DC to do a day of lobbying, because these leaders know their towns, their communities, and their landscapes better than anybody. They're the best advocates we could hope for. I want to continue working together to ensure these stories are heard not just in their respective states but in Congress as well.

Did the pandemic affect this project at all?

It impacted it in many, many ways. Actually several of the leaders we were interviewing were diagnosed with COVID-19, right when we were scheduling things. It felt unreasonable to push them to tell their stories, especially because many of the people we wanted to talk to lived on the frontlines in highly-polluted areas. What are you supposed to do when you're staying home in your "safe space" and you're breathing dirty air? And so many of these people are in their homes without a job and living in a place with one of the worst air qualities in the country. So it was tough. To ensure everyone was safe we had to record the interviews over Zoom. We also compensated every person for their time, though some didn't want it to take the money, because they felt this was important. I appreciated it.



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

There were a lot of intentional decisions that were made throughout this project to ensure that people felt like these were their stories. We posted this on storymap ArcGIS because we wanted to make sure it was in a place where it felt community driven. Also, every single one of the organizations that worked on this had access to the interview clips. We gave them all the infographics and short videos that we made, and every organization has been posting and sharing on their own channels. They felt invested in the project and felt that they were part of it. Best of all, the organizations and leaders are using the content as tools to advocate for themselves. Dr. Rosanna actually led a town hall in California with her elected officials and used the story map in a virtual event with the mayor and some members of the state legislature. That was probably the proudest moment for me: seeing one of the people highlighting the stories, taking the story map, and using it as a tool to ask for clean air and action. This really showed that we can create content that serves the purpose not just for us as an organization, but for people working on the ground.

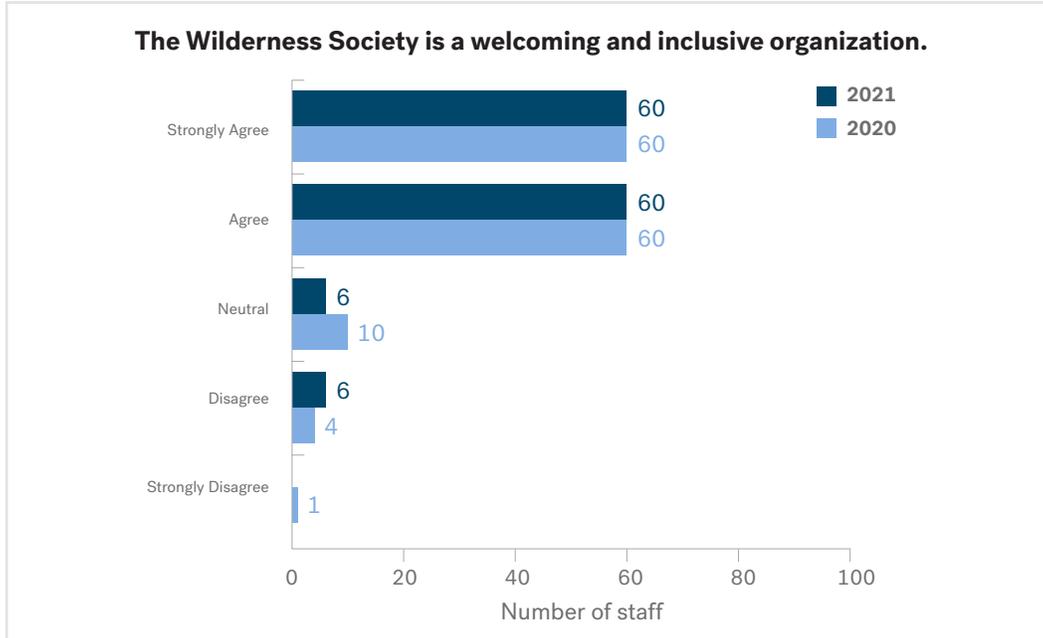
What was the most enlightening moment you encountered during this project?

There were two enlightening moments for me. When I saw the first product of the short videos. I had no idea we could do stuff like that at TWS. So for me, it was like, “Whoa, we can do this. We can literally work with communities, and can hear stories in their own voices, and we can let our platform be the place where their stories are being told.” That to me was pretty cool to see and support. And, also the fact that Dr. Esparza was willing to work with us and that she uses the tool. She’s someone who’s very critical of “big green” organizations. She’s someone who will tell it like it is. That we have been able to build trust, and that the final product is something that Dr. Esparza and other leaders alike are using this product is the best reward that we could earn. Because at the end of the day we should be thankful these leaders are willing to lend their voice to work with us.

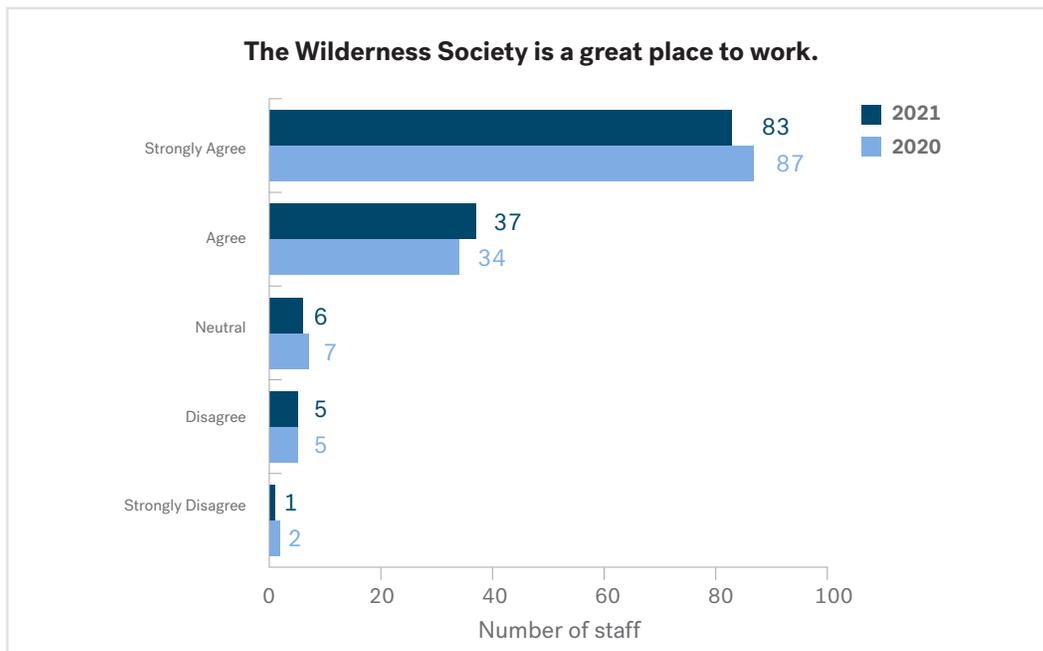
* Edit Ruano and Juan Perez transitioned to roles with other organizations at the time of this publication. Their voices and expertise were so vital to our team in 2020 and we want to continue to honor their contributions here. We are so grateful for their time with The Wilderness Society.

Annual workplace culture survey

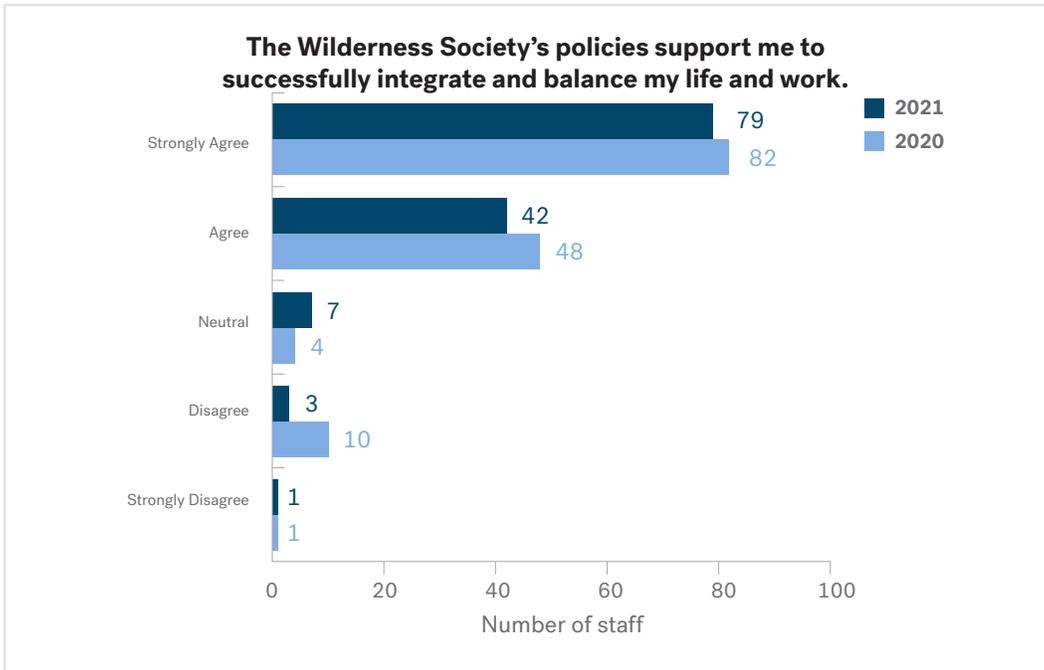
The following data points include self-reported data from team members on 2021 Annual Workplace Culture Survey. 132 respondents, or 91.6% of The Wilderness Society staff, participated in the 2021 survey. For the 2020 Annual Workplace Culture Survey, there were 135 respondents and a 92.5% response rate.



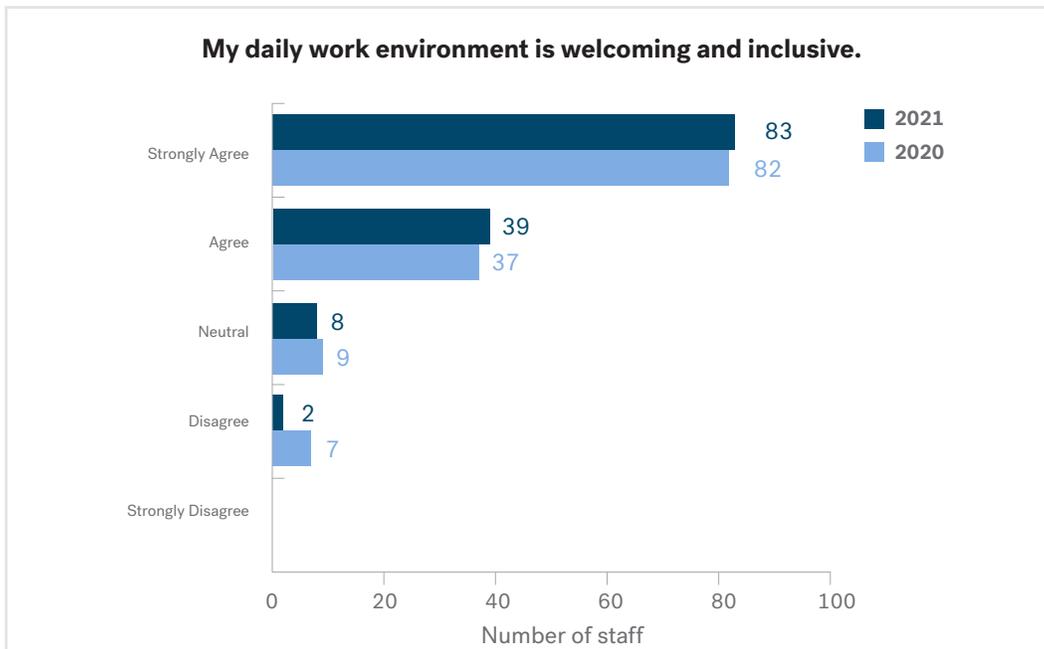
Most respondents (90%) agreed that The Wilderness Society is welcoming and inclusive. 4.5% of respondents disagreed about the inclusiveness of The Wilderness Society. In 2020, 89% of The Wilderness Society staff agreed that the organization is welcoming and inclusive, while 4% of staff disagreed.



The vast majority of staff (90.9%) believe that The Wilderness Society is a great place to work. Previously, 90% 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 2021 survey than the 2020 survey.



92% of staff agree that The Wilderness Society's policies promote a healthy work life balance. In the previous survey, 91% of staff agreed with the proposition. The number of respondents that disagreed with the statement decreased from 2020 to 2021.



The majority of The Wilderness Society's staff agreed or strongly agreed (92%) their daily work environment is welcoming and inclusive. 7.5% of 2021 staff respondents disagreed or remained neutral about the inclusivity of their daily work environment compared to 11.8% of respondents on the 2020 survey.

Equity in Action: Personal Commitments

In our Workplace Culture Survey, we asked our staff to share one action they were committing to take to make a more inclusive organization. Here's what a few of them had to say.

“We recognize that our culture is impacted by our individual actions and behaviors that we do each day. Please share one action that you are committing to take that will make TWS a more inclusive and supportive organization for your colleagues and therefore yourself.”

Uplifting/identifying voices who were previously unseen/unheard/ignored in past environmental movement.

I am committed to calling out injustices (microaggressions) and providing support for others that do not feel comfortable in those situations.

Always listen, continue to learn and stay flexible

I want to commit to making my colleagues feel heard and understood. They have done that for me this year at very hard moments and it has given me strength to keep going.

Listening to affected staff before making significant decisions

Networking and building relationships outside of my own racial identity.

Investing fully in our DEI work, including reading additional books/articles to better educate myself, and being brave in conversations about race.

Asking for pronouns

When I feel a negative reaction to something someone does, take a moment to ask why they are doing this; what is their motivation; and perhaps reach out to create a conversation.

Speak up when something is not right and challenge teams to do better. Hopefully in a way that inspires and does not deter.

Going out of my way to include different perspectives

Moving from transactional goals to more meaningful engagement and transformational goals.

Being more intentional about seeking feedback from partners and colleagues of varied backgrounds and perspectives

Speak up in support of colleagues I agree with

Support and encourage the changemakers within my working and life circles.

Continued outreach to communities of color throughout all our work

Seeking out groups and people whom I have not previously known in order to listen

To always check to see who is/is not “at the table.”

I will raise my voice when I see unfair or otherwise inequitable actions being taken.

Offering lots of options for how people can collaborate with me (phone, email, video call, Teams, trading documents, etc). Trying to get better at working with lots of different work styles

My #1 thing now is to think about mindful communication - I try to listen more and speak carefully. I'm also thinking about my privilege and implicit biases, and educating myself about how I can become a better ally to others.

Intentionally seeking to broaden my understanding of the value systems upon which differing cultural groups/histories/identities are based.

Understanding what makes individuals unique, and ensuring they feel connected to the team.

I commit to facilitating meetings in a way that is respectful of my colleagues' home life needs (keeping it flexible if they need to bow out for kids, etc.) and try to check in with everyone at the start of meetings and lead with humor and warmth.

I will commit to and consistently work to become more consistent of calling the "equity lens" question on all my projects while all staff go through the process of making it part of their own practice.

Be more patient.

Seeking more opportunities to speak out in support of colleagues of color. I'm closer to an introvert than extrovert, and am conflict averse, so I need to challenge myself to step up.

Actively consulting people of color about TWS activities

Embed the messaging guide guidance into my everyday work

Facilitating equitable and inclusive meetings - using agreements, creating space for many to participate, etc.

I will continue to fight for systemic change that results in a more just and equitable world

Being a supportive, flexible team member who recognizes the contributions of fellow staff and partners to our collective goals. Pushing myself to speak truth to power when I have the opportunity to do so.

Help welcome new staff and support colleagues on work that may be overlapping

Assuming best intentions - regardless of relationship

Read more environmental books written by BIPOC authors

Learn more about creating a meaningful land acknowledgement

I have begun to educate myself on racial issues - reading books, listening to podcasts, watching movies/docs - and am intentionally exposing my children to more diverse books and conversations

Seek input, especially from staff and partners based regionally and from peoples/groups who will be impacted by the policy changes we seek.

Fiercely supporting my teammates and the communities I work in

Support my team members with leadership opportunities

Working to grow network for recruitment efforts

Closing Reflections



What a year! The series of events that occurred in 2020 created immense change for us as individuals, as teams, as an organization, for our nation, and global community. This time is indisputably an inflection point in history with effects that will reverberate for years, decades to come.

It is my hope that this year's report is reflective of the myriad of perspectives and experiences our team had this year. Understanding that all of us cannot fit nicely into any box, or survey prompt, or several pages pulled together, we use this space to capture and consider the highlights and challenges we collectively faced on our equity journey each year.

This year, the highlights seemed a bit muted and the challenges a bit more pronounced in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic that engulfed the world. Going from daily interactions with family and coworkers to being quarantined and working and living virtually was hard for many of us, but we continued to be and expanded the ways we are supportive of each other. From taking extra time to connect at the beginning of meetings to calling and texting colleagues between Zoom calls to check in to starting regular TWS Townhalls with thoughtful readings and multiple voices, we did our best to help each other – inspire and uplift each other – through the hardships of this time.

The Summer of 2020 was marked by protests and racial justice uprisings in response to the continued killings of

unarmed Black men and women. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery are just three of the names from what appears to be an endless list of victims of the racial injustice that has plagued our nation for centuries. As a team, we took time to collectively process the toll this violence and these deaths has on so many of us and from that space we established our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Caucus and our White Staff Member Caucus so that we might build connections, deepen our knowledge, and practices skills for racial justice in communities of same/similarly advantaged identity.

Over the course of 2020, some of us lost loved ones. Some expanded our families. Some became closer to friends and family. Some connections were strained. And many of us have felt isolated in ways that are honestly hard to put into words. Our individual and collective, national and global experiences over the past year remind me of the African proverb, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” With deep gratitude, I acknowledge our Equity and Justice Interns, Campbell Simmons and Mikayla Spencer, who brought such amazing energy, insights, and dedication to this report and helped me go farther than I could have on my own.

In a time when it seemed like we could go nowhere but within, we, TWS, still made our way, took our steps, and did so by reaching out, collaborating, encouraging, and challenging each other as we have continued to do year in and year out. With every report, we note that our equity journey is a long one, and with this team, our Governing Council, our dedicated partners, and our new strategic “North Star,” we will go the distance.

In Solidarity,

Wordna Meskheniten

Deputy Vice President of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
& Special Advisor to the President