

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

TWS VISION

WITHIN THE 2019 – 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN AND BEYOND



**APPROVED BY
TWS COUNCIL
JUNE 2, 2021**

TWS VALUES

Integrity
Service
Excellence
Knowledge
Inclusiveness

On May 17, 2019, The Wildlife Society Council approved a five-year [Strategic Plan](#) (2019–2023) to maintain or improve the Society’s performance in five core areas:

- ♦ Wildlife Sustainability
- ♦ Member Services
- ♦ Organizational Sustainability
- ♦ Leadership
- ♦ Organizational Integration

As consistent with the [TWS Standing Position on Workforce Diversity within the Wildlife Profession](#), themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are reflected throughout the Strategic Plan document. Despite engaging in a number of DEI-focused initiatives, however, TWS has yet to fully contextualize how the organization “values” inclusiveness; how DEI feeds into advancing the Strategic Plan’s core area strategies; or how to effectively operationalize statements on DEI into meaningful progress within the wildlife profession.

As 2020 brought into sharp focus the continued inequity present in our everyday lives, TWS made a [pledge](#) to do more than just say “All are Welcome.” The leadership and staff of TWS promised members that they would take greater responsibility in proactively recognizing, supporting, and developing programs to enhance human diversity in not just TWS but across the wildlife profession.

As a first step in fulfilling that pledge, TWS leaders at all levels continued the conversation about DEI with members and collaboration partners. Through this period of listening, learning, and reflection, TWS leaders gained a greater awareness of the challenges and injustices facing a number of underrepresented communities in the wildlife profession and as then President Gary White concluded in his August 2020 message to members:

TWS must change if we’re to cultivate a profession that is truly welcoming to all.

In the fall of 2020, TWS Council created the opportunity to cultivate a more equitable profession by prioritizing resources to further develop DEI efforts and capacity within TWS operations. As a preliminary step, this document seeks to clarify the role and importance of DEI within TWS and establish a shared vision of progress.

Goals identified in this document were developed through collaborative engagement with diverse TWS stakeholders and relate to the Society’s five-year Strategic Plan. The list is not comprehensive and development of tactics remains forthcoming. Continued discussion with members and collaboration partners will help further our collective understanding of, and purpose as it relates to, DEI and regular feedback loops remain an essential component of prioritizing annual activities and reassessing goals.

DEFINING **DEI**

DIVERSITY is the broad spectrum of identities reflective of the overall human population resulting in a richness of perspectives and contributions.

EQUITY is fairness in providing resources, access, and opportunities with recognition of historic, institutional, and systemic disparities.

INCLUSION is intentional cultivation of a culture that actively respects and values individuals, embraces meaningful contribution and participation, and provides equal access to opportunities and resources.

To be useful in guiding TWS over the next five years, strategic planning must be based on a comprehensive framework that includes not only a vision and core areas, but also an implementation process that ties operations, human resources, and budgets to the vision and themes.

This document provides a strategic direction for enhancing DEI within TWS and the wildlife profession over the next few years and beyond. It does not outline specific operational tactics but rather provides a foundation for developing future action-based initiatives within the planning framework already established for TWS decision-making.

This approach serves three purposes:

1. **Operational Planning & Integration** — DEI cannot be viewed in isolation. The challenges surrounding DEI are often complex, nuanced, and/or structural. Likewise, opportunities to enhance DEI are far-ranging in effect, scope, timing, and feasibility. Including DEI directly within the annual planning, integration, execution, and assessment of critical TWS operations, enhances flexibility and the likelihood that DEI tactics achieve desired outcomes as they will be weighed against differing priorities and operational limitations, like capacity and budget.
2. **Transparency & Accountability** — Through providing greater clarity on how DEI directly affects TWS core area strategies, TWS acknowledges an obligation to members and the profession to develop and advance DEI initiatives through commitment of both financial and non-financial resources. Establishing a strategic direction and shared vision of progress provides accountability towards achieving desired outcomes.
3. **Process & Results** — Working through a structured and comprehensive framework for annual implementation of tactics provides a way for TWS and members to manage expectations of process and results. Progress on DEI will not happen overnight. It will require patience, perseverance, and continued collaboration. Working in a clear direction, evaluating progress, and celebrating successes on a regular basis will ensure that a strong focus remains on becoming a profession truly welcoming to all.

Want to help TWS develop tactics and implement new initiatives? Whether you're a longtime member or new to TWS, we want to hear from you. Our Council and staff are regularly assessing new opportunities to advance strategic goals through our Annual Operations Plans. If you have a tactic or enhancement you would like TWS to consider regarding DEI or would like to contribute to one of our ongoing DEI initiatives, please complete this [short survey](#). Help inform, adjust, improve, and advance our DEI goals.

For more information on TWS's strategic planning framework, including a detailed sequence of the Annual Operations Plan Process, please see our [Strategic Plan](#).

The Wildlife Society achieves a positive impact on the sustainability of wildlife populations

The conservation of plant and animal species, communities, and populations is affected by the actions of all people, acting individually and collectively. The future of biological diversity, therefore, requires the conscious engagement of all people, regardless of their nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, spiritual views, social status, disability, or other factors that shape an individual's life experience.

Neither The Wildlife Society or the wildlife profession, currently reflect the richness of human diversity representative of the people who affect—and are affected by—wildlife. To achieve the best possible science and management of wildlife, TWS must take steps to identify and mitigate structural forces that have created barriers, injustices, and inequities within the wildlife profession. A more diverse professional community of individuals results in a broadening, strengthening, and improvement of approaches to research, education, management, and policy making. Failure to address significant barriers to inclusion of all perspectives, talents, and interests, undermines excellence in wildlife stewardship.

Cultivating a more diverse profession requires the authentic, deliberate, and thoughtful engagement of all stakeholders, not just those currently underrepresented. All members share in the responsibility of promoting a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment.

VISION

The Wildlife Society cultivates a safe, welcoming, and inclusive culture that empowers and supports all members and their work.

The Wildlife Society Council and leadership are knowledgeable of and responsive to the historic and continued forms of bias, prejudice, and discrimination present within the wildlife profession.

“The policy of The Wildlife Society regarding workforce diversity within the wildlife profession is [to]...Promote a professional culture that welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds and values the resultant richness of perspectives and contributions.”

The Wildlife Society

Standing Position on Workforce Diversity within the Wildlife Profession

The Wildlife Society is a recognized and trusted organization for expertise on science-based wildlife management and conservation.

A shared public understanding and appreciation of the value of wildlife, science, and management determines the degree to which society shows its support with funding and trust in our profession's work. To be recognized as a prominent, trusted leader in wildlife conservation, The Wildlife Society must demonstrate a commitment to all of its stated values: integrity, service, excellence, knowledge, and inclusiveness.

This includes truly embracing the complexity and value of diverse stakeholder interests through actively assessing and addressing gaps in our current strategies and operations, broadening outreach efforts, and better understanding the concerns and needs of the wide range of people affected by wildlife management and conservation, including those unaware of their connection to wildlife. Reluctance to adapt to changing values or engage with a broader stakeholder base could result in adverse opinions towards, and loss of trust in, the role of wildlife professionals.

Meaningful recognition of traditional ecological knowledge, increased cultural competency, active engagement in learning opportunities, and creation of accessible pathways will help to enhance the efficacy of current and future leaders of TWS.

VISION

The Wildlife Society Council, staff, and membership represent the richness of human diversity involved in efforts to discover, educate, inform policy, and involve the public in wildlife science and management.

The Wildlife Society champions greater access, participation, and representation in wildlife science, management, and conservation and supports research, understanding, and awareness for issues of concern from all nations and underrepresented communities.

"The policy of The Wildlife Society regarding workforce diversity within the wildlife profession is [to]...Support policies, programs, and practices that advance efforts to recruit, mentor, and retain professionals from a broad spectrum of identities reflective of the overall human population, including individuals from historically underrepresented backgrounds."

The Wildlife Society

Standing Position on Workforce Diversity within the Wildlife Profession

The Wildlife Society supports, encourages, and enables its members to conserve and manage wildlife through the application of science

Through inclusion of a greater proportion of the population in wildlife science and stewardship, The Wildlife Society enables our members and the broader wildlife profession to more effectively manage wildlife, the ecosystems on which they depend, and the human communities that interact with them. To support, encourage, and enable a diverse and representative membership and profession, TWS must identify and remove barriers that have negatively and disproportionately affected underrepresented communities in wildlife science and stewardship, including those that were deterred from entering or subsequently left TWS or the profession.

Providing relevant and impactful services and resources to all members, both current and prospective, requires expanding programs to understand and meet the needs of all members. Adherence to a single member services model or reliance on traditional approaches to member engagement are no longer effective or appropriate.

Eliminating barriers and cultivating mechanisms for support at all educational and career stages will create a Society and profession that is truly safe, equitable, and inclusive.

VISION

The Wildlife Society actively identifies and dismantles barriers to entering the wildlife profession and provides equitable support to all members throughout their educational and professional careers, through inclusive networking opportunities, leadership training, and ongoing professional development.

The Wildlife Society sets educational and experiential standards for science-based wildlife research and management that remain relevant and emphasize equity in practice.

“The policy of The Wildlife Society regarding workforce diversity within the wildlife profession is [to]...Expand and develop successful, collaborative programs for training, recruiting, and retention of members of groups historically excluded from natural resource workforces. Develop and implement programs to support individuals in their learning and skill-building such that we build equitable and inclusive cultures and daily climates in our discipline, Society, daily practices, policies, and workplaces. Collaborate with other professional societies, private foundations, state and federal agencies, and institutions to build upon programs that have demonstrated successful outcomes.”

The Wildlife Society

Standing Position on Workforce Diversity within the Wildlife Profession

STRATEGIC PLAN – ORGANIZATIONAL **INTEGRATION** – CORE STRATEGY

The Wildlife Society supports and encourages networking among TWS organization units, Council, TWS communities, and staff to leverage synergies and communications that advance science-based wildlife conservation

Community building and adoption of high expectations and standards of inclusive conduct help encourage norms of inclusion and respect that can contribute to restoring positive relationships and elevating greater understanding of different values, cultures, and beliefs. Embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in the structure, policies, procedures, and operations of The Wildlife Society at all levels of the organization will help improve representation, professional respect, and cooperation.

To achieve desired outcomes, however, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts must be structured around the collective and shared goals of the organization and reflected in the actions of TWS leaders at all levels. This includes collaborative engagement with members, organization units, and partners that supports a greater sense of self, purpose, and belonging in the profession and an unambiguous commitment by TWS leaders to creating a diverse, inclusive, and just environment for all.

Currently, there is a perceived disconnect between the stated and demonstrated values of TWS. This perception can result in behavioral conformity to majority standards which inhibits the sharing of diverse perspectives and experiences that contribute to novel advancements within the profession. Through working together and leveraging individual and organizational synergies, TWS can help foster a stronger professional society with open communication, shared success, and empowered individuals.

VISION

The Wildlife Society effectively communicates, coordinates, and engages in collaborative efforts with organization units, members, and partners focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

The Wildlife Society embeds diversity, equity, and inclusion in the culture and operations of the organization and provides resources and tools to support diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout all levels of TWS and the wildlife profession.

“The policy of The Wildlife Society regarding workforce diversity within the wildlife profession is [to]...Recognize the diversity of human cultures and linkages between these cultures and conservation of biological diversity at regional, national, and international scales. Such recognition includes acknowledging the roles and values of traditional and cultural knowledge in wildlife studies, management, and conservation at all scales.”

The Wildlife Society

Standing Position on Workforce Diversity within the Wildlife Profession

The Wildlife Society is professionally managed and financially robust

Many factors affect organizational sustainability. Internal factors include governance, culture, leadership, planning, human resources, organizational learning capacity, and financial management. External factors include stakeholder behavior (relevancy), government/legal action, and outside pressures affecting programs and reputation. The continued relevancy and success of TWS requires identification of issues that could affect organizational sustainability and implementation of measures to refine decision-making, strategies, and operations over time.

In 1998, TWS Council charged the newly formed Gender and Ethnic Diversity Committee with assessing the current conditions for underrepresented groups in both the wildlife profession and TWS. In 1999, the committee advised Council that underrepresentation cannot be ignored and must be corrected for the survival of the profession. Despite numerous programs to diversify TWS, widespread inequities persist. This may indicate certain programmatic weaknesses in how TWS has approached organizational diversity.

The norms and values of an organization typically reflect those who are and have been in leadership roles in the organization. Organizational norms influence internal structures. The influence of existing internal structures often predetermines how well a program functions and achieves its stated goals. A holistic and intentional paradigm shift will be needed to fully integrate the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion into TWS priorities and effectively drive progress for the profession.

VISION

The Wildlife Society recruits and retains a innovative, diverse, and accountable staff to support the organization and maintains staffing capacity to effectively develop and enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, policies, and practices.

The Wildlife Society recognizes that people at all levels of experience and expertise have important insights to offer and provides empowering mechanisms for communication on diversity, equity, and inclusion without fear of retaliation.

“The policy of The Wildlife Society regarding workforce diversity within the wildlife profession is [to]...Promote a professional culture and climate that precludes discrimination, harassment, or bullying.”

The Wildlife Society

Standing Position on Workforce Diversity within the Wildlife Profession

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

VISION WITHIN THE 2019–2023 STRATEGIC PLAN AND BEYOND

- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** cultivates a safe, welcoming, and inclusive culture that empowers and supports all members and their work.
- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** Council and leadership are knowledgeable of and responsive to the historic and continued forms of bias, prejudice, and discrimination present within the wildlife profession.
- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** Council, staff, and membership represent the richness of human diversity involved in efforts to discover, educate, inform policy, and involve the public in wildlife science and management.
- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** champions greater access, participation, and representation in wildlife science, management, and conservation and supports research, understanding, and awareness for issues of concern from all nations and underrepresented communities.
- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** actively identifies and dismantles barriers to entering the wildlife profession and provides equitable support to all members throughout their educational and professional careers, through inclusive networking opportunities, leadership training, and ongoing professional development.
- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** sets educational and experiential standards for science-based wildlife research and management that remain relevant and emphasize equity in practice.
- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** effectively communicates, coordinates, and engages in collaborative efforts with organization units, members, and partners focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.
- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** embeds diversity, equity, and inclusion in the culture and operations of the organization and provides resources and tools to support diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout all levels of TWS and the wildlife profession.
- ♦ **The Wildlife Society** recruits and retains a innovative, diverse, and accountable staff to support the organization and maintains staffing capacity to effectively develop and enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, policies, and practices.
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