



**Chesapeake Bay Program**  
*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

## **Diversity Workgroup Meeting Minutes**

March 18, 2020 - Conference Call

### **Meeting Objectives**

- Learn about local efforts that are engaging underrepresented stakeholder groups in watershed restoration activities.
- Reflect on the Taking Nature Black Conference.
- Hear updates and discuss opportunities with the Chesapeake Bay Gateways program.
- Review actions that came out of our presentation to the Management Board last month.
- Review and discuss full results of the 2019 Diversity Profile and revisit our target of 15% people of color in leadership.
- Discuss priority actions and goals for the next two years of our work.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Tuana Phillips	Coordinator, EPA	Jessica Blackburn	Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Francesca King	Staffer, CRC	Kara Pennino	DC DOEE
Jim Edwards	Chair, EPA	Melissa Fagan	CRC
Wendy O'Sullivan	Vice Chair NPS	Kevin Newman	DC DOEE
Mariah Davis*	Choose Clean Water	Shannon Sprague	NOAA
Ola Davis*	Alliance for the Bay	Allison Acevedo	PA Dept of Environmental Protection
Ruby Stemmler*	ecoLatinos	Clare Sevcik	DNREC
Trystan Sill*	MD DNR	Rochelle Altholz	Dept Conservation Recreation (VA)
Brittany Omoleye-Hall	NPS	Edgar Freeman	MD DNR
Amy Handen	NPS	Katie Brownson	USFS
Kesha Braunskill	DE Forest Service	Lauren Taneyhill	NOAA CBPO
Gaby Roffe	Chesapeake Conservancy	Carmera Thomas	CBF
Nancy Merrill-Sullivan	Arundel Rivers Federation	Emily Hendrickson	PA DCNR
Diamon Clark	Baltimore Greenspace	Jan Archer	
Virginia Busby		Jake Newton	
Laura Ford		Mark Barnes	

## Local Project Spotlight: Outreach in a Hispanic Community

Nancy Merrill Sullivan (*Arundel Rivers Federation*)

### Presentation

- Nancy spoke about a community engagement project Arundel Rivers Federation (ARF) has been working on for the past three years. This project was a success because of the partnership structure, they worked with Centro de Ayuda and Water Words that Work, and received grants from Chesapeake Bay Trust.
- Identified the community priorities via Community Based Social Marketing strategies, primarily focus groups which were led by Ruby Stemmler of ecoLatinos. Once the community priorities were identified, they found overlap with environmental interests and needs.
- Nancy acknowledged that ~40% of the population of the watershed are people of color, and it's important for the whole watershed to clean up the rivers. ARF had not previously worked with many underserved communities successfully. This is why it was so important to work with external partners and facilitators. Nancy explained: This was a restoration project with trash issue, very small stream that's not necessarily going to make the South River a whole lot cleaner; it's a smaller project. Usually organizations like ours handle urgent things (i.e. tackling bigger, very degraded tributaries) better than long-term important things.
- The campaign involved children from Centro de Ayuda (Center of Help) who designed signs for the restoration site; politicians and community members then judged and selected winners, with prizes and the top design being made into a sign.
- An issue the community identified was rodents, which were prevalent around the complex because of trash. Part of the issue was that the dumpsters were not accessible, they were difficult to close and the opening was too high. There was also poor signage for the dumpster area. ARF funded a "Rat Round-Up", in which a pest control company did rodent control in the complex.
- Currently, they are finishing up phase two of the project by writing a report. The third and final phase may involve behavior change via signage and education, a solution for the dumpster, rat repellent trash bags, or other ideas. Starting to think about third phase which may include better signage and education, a new style of dumpster or stairs, rat repellent trash bags, or other ideas.

### Discussion/Questions:

1. Nancy mentioned this work was off-mission, a member asked for an explanation of this:
  - a. This was a restoration project with trash issue in a very small stream. It's not necessarily going to make the South River a whole lot cleaner; as it's a smaller project. Usually organizations like mine handle urgent things (i.e. tackling bigger, very degraded tributaries) better than long-term important things.
2. Question about buy-in from others now that project has been going on for a while.
  - a. There is more buy-in and desire for credit but urgency is sort of catch-22
3. Question about catch 22 process, how you all were able to justify listening to the priorities in the community while also tracking deliverables in grant?
  - a. Finding out the community's priorities was built into the grant via the focus groups.
4. Question – you identified the problem that your organization was facing, you identified the community, spoke to community about their specific need. How did you decide on the rat issue versus safety or transportation? Nancy – we had not been involved with transportation issues in city or county, so that was not something we are not experts in and a complicated area. Thought about doing the security gate, but the funder (CBT) pointed out that our missions are about bringing down walls not putting them up. The rodent issue was a priority to the community. Community members thanked them for addressing the problem.

5. Ruby (ecoLatinos) – want to commend Nancy for the fantastic job they are doing with these projects, I helped with second set of focus groups and was able to meet with community members. Want to highlight challenge and opportunity that organizations face when reaching out to underserved communities, this is a great example of the type of problems you may find that don't match your motivation for being in community. Very good opportunity to bring support to these communities that otherwise would have never been addressed. Means timeline might have to be extended to achieve our initial goals. Establishing relationships first
6. Discussion about framing and language when describing projects, etc. This is how many non-profits and philanthropic organizations are often "trained" to speak. Mentioned trainings in equitable community outreach that others have done to improve this.
  - a. Discourse matters as well. Morgan State University, can add immense value in this regard.
  - b. Support for the idea of having trainings around best practices for community organizing. Baltimore Racial Justice Action has a training for White Management and Staff of Non-profits that could be a good resource <https://bmoreantiracist.org/events>

### **Reflecting on the Taking Nature Black Conference**

*Ola Davis, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay*

- First time attending, a lot of energy, unlike any other conference. Everyone seemed genuinely happy to be there.
- Sunrise and meditation walk, and other elements centered on the theme of a DEIJA (accessibility) love story to nature.
- The conference was left a lot of room for DEIJ successes, and facilitated a certain pride in identity – such as diverse background and tree hugger.
- Blog by Tim Hudspeth of Alliance for the Bay:
  - <https://www.allianceforthebay.org/2020/03/taking-nature-black/>
- Memorable quotes from Taking Nature Black:
  - [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel\\_files/40741/taking\\_nature\\_black\\_memorable\\_quotes.pdf](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/40741/taking_nature_black_memorable_quotes.pdf)

### **Chesapeake Bay Gateways Updates**

*Wendy O'Sullivan, NPS CBPO Superintendent and Diversity Workgroup Vice-Chair*

Wendy shared updates, including a snapshot of NPS's grant programs that are advancing DEIJ and the future vision for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways.

- Recently went through process to revise Gateways and their mission statement – helping people discover and connect with broad access across Bay and landscape. Working with partners and individuals to conserve and steward these special places. This is grounded in mission of NPS but with lens of Chesapeake Watershed
- Weaved in concepts of DEIJ into every single one of goals. For example, strengthen the network: the narrative that supports that goes into providing the means to life up and knit together important places, partners, and destinations. Focused on partners and new concept of private sector – an area looking at
- Opportunity to layer work related to restoration effort and Gateways and find places where they can be amplified. One of those ways is through Gateways Program, in partnership with Conservancy doing a rebranding effort of program and reposition its branding. Starting some strategic planning for communication and web presence. Look holistically – be relevant and connect to our communities.
- FY20 Financial Assistance for Gateways: 15 of 25 projects have goals with DEIJ connections. Over 20 million dollars for this fiscal year. Examples of projects include:

- Multi-year agreements such as with PA DCNR
- Fund youth corps and create a new program that expands culturally relevant and inclusive outdoor learning.
- Expanding bilingual program in Maryland, as well as in James Island.
- Starting a partnership with Corazon Latino.
- Doing two things to meet intent of Chesapeake Bay Intention(?) Act from 1998.
  - Connecting at a community level – exploring the capacity to serve as community hub for Chesapeake Bay, starting with Annapolis.
  - Strategic, long-term partnerships: a portion of Gateway funds will be distributed through competitive grants process. Plans to engage Diversity Workgroup to build DEI in DNA and how it is managed and functions, instead of just being standalone category.

### **Actions from Our February 13<sup>th</sup> Presentation to the Management Board**

*Francesca King, Diversity Workgroup Staffer*

#### [Presentation](#)

Jim, Francesca, and Tuana [presented](#) to the Chesapeake Bay Program's Management Board on our workgroup's progress, challenges, and future priorities. Francesca will provided an update on the very productive conversation with the Management Board and went over the actions that came out of that meeting.

- Adaptive Management: Review our progress every two years and ask: are we making progress?
- Asks:
  1. Review and discuss the DEI Strategy and establish the process for implementation
  2. Management Board commit to attending DEI trainings
  3. Create space; increase opportunities for underrepresented groups to participate in CBP
  4. Be champions for funding related to DEI:
    - a. Grants (e.g., equitable practices)
    - b. Programmatic (e.g., workforce development)
- In April, we will return to the Management Board to share the final DEI Strategy
- DEI Statement: Aiming to have this as an item at the Executive Council meeting in August
- DEI Trainings – 6 MB members signed up for last Monday training (now postponed)
- Create space – MB members agreed to having portion of meetings and talk about how they are creating space
- Funding champions: MB agreed to compile DEI opportunities for entry pathways into environmental field. Start of this: [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel\\_files/40741/nps\\_internships\\_final\\_02192020\\_2.pdf](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/40741/nps_internships_final_02192020_2.pdf)
- Also revisiting the diversity target, is 15% of leadership still the goal?

### **2019 Diversity Profile**

*Tuana Phillips, Coordinator*

#### [Presentation](#)

Last November we reviewed preliminary results from the 2019 Diversity Profile. Tuana went over the full and final results of the Profile. We also discussed the current target of 15% people of color in leadership by 2025, and whether that is still appropriate given the corrected baseline data.

Discussion:

- The process of building leadership: shifting around who is in workgroups and partnership currently.

- Currently chairs and vice chairs rotate every 2 years in some groups. This is not consistently done, however. It could be worth having conversation with MB to make this more official.
- Discussion about target: Some felt 25% was too big a jump from the current ~10%, and not realistic. Based on the 2016 data, 9% is 1 out of 11 leadership respondents. 25% of that same 11 would be ~3 people. (2.75), others felt this was achievable and appropriate. Previously people have said it should be in line with the population of the watershed (~35%).
- Point about why people want to serve on boards and the pipeline to getting engaged. People have to feel like it is inclusive, and that requires cultivating an environment to invite and include.

### **Our 2020-2021 Workplan**

*Tuana Phillips and Francesca King*

- Tuana and Francesca presented on the workgroup's priority actions and goals for the next two years.
- This portion of the agenda was cut short because we ran out of time. We will be asking for feedback and sharing this information again on a future call.

### **Updates from Members & Attendees**

- MD DNR is hiring two full time seasonal/intern positions – may shift deadline right now but got the funding approved.
- ecoLatinos:
  - Working on strategic planning for ecoLatinos with a contractor.
  - Will be leading Festival del Rio Anacostia this year
  - Received funding from PG County: a grant to work with a community to promote best management practices to mitigate stormwater runoff.
- Mayor's office of DC:
  - Trash block initiative, a number of volunteers are HBCU fraternity/sorority groups. Initiative to take a number of those sororities out to boat trip on Anacostia to connect what they are doing to the impacts on the water.
- COVID-19 response:
  - CBPO most employees are teleworking
  - Many partners are teleworking as well.
- Next up: drafting DEIJ statement, going to the Management Board in April to present strategy.