



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee

12 pm – 2 pm, Wednesday, September 25th, 2019

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District Office, Conference Room
2701 NW Vaughn Street – Suite 450, Portland, Oregon 97210

AGENDA

12 pm – Welcome/check-in/announcements – Susan/All

12:10 pm – Approval of August 14th meeting summary – Susan/All

12:15 pm – Review Organizational DEI Goals and provide recommendation to the Board – Scott

12:35 pm – Discuss “Literature Review: Historical Barriers/Issues around Landownership & SWCDs” – Indi Keith/Mary

1:00 pm – Present updated WMSWCD Equity Lens – Susan/Jim

1:10 pm – Equity Lens Exercise - hiring practices: value of lived as well as professional DEI experience when evaluating candidates – Laura/Scott

1:35 pm – Long-Range Business Plan – Update on Community Engagement Plan and Placement of Equity Pauses – Mary

1:50 pm – Action items review (*including upcoming meeting times*) – Scott/All

2 pm – Adjourn

DRAFT -- WMSWCD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Meeting Summary – DRAFT
Long Range Business Plan (LRBP) Update
August 14, 2019 Noon to 2:00 pm, WMSWCD Office

Attending: Scott Gall, Susan Weedall (Co-Chairs); Jim Cathcart, Michele Levis, Mary Logalbo, Renée Magyar, Terri Preeg Riggsby, Randi Razalenti, Laura Taylor.

Welcome/Check-In/Equity Shares -- The following announcements were shared.

- Terri – Provided the Committee an update on the Soil and Water Conservation Commission process to review eligibility requirements for running for a Soil and Water Conservation District Zone Director position in wake of the controversy created when an East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District candidate, who is a person of color, was ruled ineligible by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Unfortunately, the process being laid out by the Commission is not being inclusive of bringing in new voices to the process.
- Renée – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion summary statement review for Annual Report. There is a need to have a summary statement of the District's diversity, equity and inclusion initiative for the Annual Report to make the statement more readable and accessible than relying on the explicit language of the District's Racial Equity Statement. The current version of the summary statement has been vetted by the Leadership Team but has not gained the perspective of all Committee members. **Action:** *Renée to distribute for review a draft of the summary statement to All Staff with a cc: to Susan and Terri as the Board members on the Committee.*

Approval of the July 17, 2019 Meeting Summary – The original version was updated to reflect Susan's additional comment submitted on July 27th reflecting Susan's report out to the group that Susan would be attending a Physical Therapy Association presentation redefining the term Cultural Competence. This version was reviewed and accepted with one additional correction to the date referenced in the header of the meeting summary.

Input on the Updated Work Plan & Community Engagement for LRBP – Mary briefed the Committee on Mary and Renée's meeting with Ping Khaw (PKS International) about the plan's approach to community engagement. One idea discussed was the formation of a diverse community liaison LRBP advisory group and should the focus and make-up of this advisory group be on underserved and historically marginalized communities, or in addition to these groups, should the group also be representative of our traditionally served communities such as landowners and conservation-focused partners.

Mary opened a discussion on how Committee members felt about the plan for updating the LRBP. Terri confirmed that the Board members invited to serve on the Conservation Team, Financial Sustainability Team and the Organizational Development Team have confirmed. The purpose of these teams is to be responsible for organizing, facilitating and debriefing on larger group discussions addressing their respective topics.

The Committee went through an exercise where members could post their views with respect to questions, concerns and feedback on the plan. Committee members could also provide their views on how diversity, equity and inclusion is being addressed as well as with respect to the planned use of the equity lens throughout the process. A lot of the questions focused on the make-up of a community liaison advisory group and what groups could be sourced through Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) provided by PKS International. Also, to what extent should partners and more traditional constituents serve on the advisory group or should this input rely on other processes so that the use of CELs on an advisory group is focused on those underrepresented or marginalized communities we have not been traditionally engaged with.

Determine When to Utilize Equity Lens & Pauses During LRBP Process – Discussion centered on the worthwhileness of updating the equity lens based on Cliff Jones' (Capacity Building Partnerships) recommendations to do so after the District's Board Equity Lens training conducted in January 2019. The recommendations centered on streamlining the lens so that it could be applied to a topic within an hour. This recommendation is consistent with the "lite" version of equity lens developed by Mary for application in one of Mary's courses for the Executive Master of Public Administration program. The Committee felt it was probably best to use the current version of the March 30, 2018 version of the lens and then make decisions on streamlining the questions to focus on based on the topic that the lens is being applied to. The Committee provided feedback on when to apply the lens in the process to be used for updating the LRBP. Other discussion focused on the benefits of hiring an outside facilitator to guide the use of the equity lens in this process. **Action:** *Susan and Jim will work on developing an updated version of the equity lens based on their experience using the lens to date and based on the feedback provided by Cliff Jones of Capacity Building Partnerships. Susan and Jim will get an updated version out to the Committee for review and comment prior to the September 25, 2019 Committee meeting.*

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Examples were given as to when the lens would be applied by different groups in this process such as pausing to evaluate the make-up of the invitees to each of the conversations planned for each of the themes: conservation scope, financial sustainability and organizational development, or to apply the lens for evaluating the framework questions that will guide the conversations. Another example is applying the lens to the assessment and debriefing outcomes from each of these conversations. **Action:** Mary to work with other Core Team members to develop a specific schedule in the LRBP update process.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Goals – Scott led a discussion about the goals we have set for diversity, equity and inclusion. There are overarching goals and those that are specific to the District Racial Equity Statement. What is also needed are clearly stated goals that are understandable and measurable to track our progress towards achieving our goals and to ensure organizational accountability to the goals. The Annual Work Plan is the document that contains the more measurable goals. There is still a lack of awareness about these goals and the purpose of the goals. For example, are they Committee goals or organizational goals? **Action:** Further discussion to be scheduled for the September 25th Committee meeting.

Next Meeting: Next regular meeting is Wednesday, September 25th. October meeting is October 23rd. November meeting is November 27th (day before the Thanksgiving Holiday). The December meeting date conflicts with the December 25th Christmas Holiday. The December meeting is rescheduled to December 18th.

Initial compilation by Jim Cathcart, August 14, 2019. Review and comments posted by Committee members through August 19, 2019. Those were addressed by Jim Cathcart in a second draft released August 19, 2019.



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

WMSWCD Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Goals, Strategies & Objectives Explained:

The following includes overarching District goals for diversity, equity and inclusion as well as goals specific for our current race-centered initiative. These goals, strategies and objectives are intended to provide clarity, commitment and accountability to the District and the communities it serves. Details on how these strategies will be implemented and how objectives will be measured can be found in the DEI annual workplans.

Why Center on Race?

Our District has taken the initiative to review the history of racial disparity in Oregon, and how this history persists in the form of unconscious biases and cultural barriers that contribute to disparities in how we work, whom we work with and whom we serve. We recognize that gaining the perspectives of, and working with, communities of color will increase our organization's overall strength. The District acknowledges that racism requires attention and focus for long term change to take place. We understand that as we deepen our ability to understand and eliminate racial inequity, we are better equipped to transform individual actions, systems and institutions to enhance equity outcomes for all. While the District leads with race, we recognize that many other forms of oppression are perpetuated by the interactions of institutions, individuals, and culture operating amidst their historic contexts. Although we must prioritize our strategies, we maintain an approach that recognizes that all oppressions are inter-connected and, that by addressing some of the most glaring disparities, others oppressed may benefit. The District supports and encourages actions that lead to increased diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes for all.

Overarching WMSWCD Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Goals

1. Inclusivity: The WMSWCD is an inclusive organization that welcomes and engages all people in all facets of our organization, activities and programs.
2. Diversity: The Board and staff of the District, the contractors we hire and the people who benefit from our work reflects the demographics of our service area.
3. Equitable Engagement: The District meaningfully engages historically marginalized communities.
4. Equity Accountability: The District works proactively and deliberately to understand and advance equity outcomes.

Racial WMSWCD Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiative Goals

Underlined phrases are provided a definition at the end.

- a) Inclusivity: The WMSWCD is a culturally inclusive organization that welcomes and engages people of color in all facets of our organization, activities and programs.
- b) Diversity: The Board and staff of the District, the contractors we hire and the people who benefit from our work reflects the demographics of our service area.
- c) Equitable Engagement: The District meaningfully engages communities of color (to shape decision making, programs, and policy).
- d) Equity Accountability: The District works proactively and deliberately to understand and advance (racial) equity outcomes.

Proposed Strategies & Objectives Overview

Goal 1a: Inclusivity

- **Strategy: Organizational Training (Staff & Board)**
 - **Objective:** On an annual basis all staff and board (including temporary employees) will be current on relevant equity trainings.
- **Strategy: Communications & Outreach**
 - **Objective:** Communications and events will welcome and engage people of color and the equity lens will be utilized when planning and creating events and communications.

Goal 2b: Diversity

- **Strategy: Green Workforce Initiative**
 - **Objective:** Provide opportunities for growth and employment pathways to develop a more diverse workforce in the environmental sector.
- **Strategy: Contracting Policy**
 - **Objective:** The District's "Interim Policy on Woman, Minority and Emerging Small Businesses" policy is successful at ensuring the majority (or at least x %) of contractor resource allocations are distributed to woman, minority and/or emerging small businesses.
- **Strategy: Hiring Practices**
 - **Objective:** The demographics of our staff reflects that of our service area.
 - **Objective:** Recruitment and retention of racially and ethnically diverse staff members.
- **Strategy: Youth Mentoring**
 - **Objective:** Identify and plan for opportunities to best support diverse youth exposure to the environmental field.

Goal 3c: Equitable Engagement

- **Strategy: Partnership Development & Maintenance**
 - **Objective:** Build and strengthen new and lasting-partnerships with racially and ethnically diverse community members, communities and organizations representing these communities that produce value-added outcomes to our partners.
 - **Objective:** Representatives of communities of color are engaged in leadership capacities to shape District decision making, programs, and policy.
 - **Objective:** Recruitment and retention of racially and ethnically diverse board and committee members.

Goal 4d: Equity Accountability

- **Strategy: Equity Lens Implementation**
 - **Objective:** The equity lens is consistently used and reported out on in District decision making, programs, and policy at the staff and board levels.
- **Strategy: Organizational Self-Assessment**
 - **Objective:** The tool rankings move from their current status upward at least one point in 4 years.
- **Strategy: Demographic Data Collection Plan & Assessment**
 - **Objectives:** A baseline of demographic data and related appropriate qualitative data will be consistently collected and regularly evaluated against objective intentions with a written plan and policies to assess progress and inform strategy to better understand the communities we serve.



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Definitions:

Communities of Color: “‘People of color’ is a term primarily used in the United States and Canada to describe any person who is not white. It encompasses all non-white groups and emphasizes the common experiences of systemic racism (<https://www.sapiens.org/column/race/people-of-color/>).” Might consider replacement with racially and ethnically diverse communities.

Culturally Inclusive: A culturally inclusive environment requires mutual respect, effective relationships, clear communication, explicit understandings about expectations and critical self-reflection. In an inclusive environment, people of all cultural orientations can: freely express who they are, their own opinions and points of view. (Sourced from: <https://www.usc.edu.au/connect/work-at-usc/staff/cultural-diversity/cultural-diversity-and-inclusive-practice-toolkit/culturally-inclusive-environment>).

Oppression: “the systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions... Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society.” (Adams M, Bell LA, Griffin P, Eds. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 1997).

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

Executive Summary: Whose Land is Our Land?

Spatial exclusion, racial segregation, and the history of the lands of West
Multnomah County

DRAFT

Indi Keith
Field Conservationist Intern
2019

Introduction

This report examines the ways in which the historical relationships between land and marginalized people in Oregon, Portland, and West Multnomah County are still impacting the District's work and the communities we serve today. As an organization that has committed itself to integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into our work at every level, we face the challenge of serving a region where access to home- and landownership, proximity to green space and healthy landscapes, and exposure to environmental hazards is substantially influenced by one's race. How did we get here? This report will call attention to some of the legal, social, and institutional factors that have determined how land, homes, and natural resources have been made available to white communities by removing them from communities of color over the course of the past 200 years. The histories explored here include those of the indigenous Chinookan people of the Lower Columbia and the tribes that now comprise the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, the Chinese- and Japanese-American agriculturalists who farmed from the Columbia Gorge to Goose Hollow, and the African-American communities who have long lived and worked around the Willamette and Columbia Rivers despite generations of exclusion and displacement. Going further, this report will examine the subsequent state of environmental injustice and inequitable access to landownership these communities in our District are experiencing today. After 200 years of racial exclusion and segregation in West Multnomah County, our communities of color may stand to benefit substantially from participation in District programs but face higher barriers to accessing services and leadership with us than their white counterparts. By better understanding the dynamics of past and present racial injustice in West Multnomah County, and specifically how they impact our work in land and resource management, we as a District will be better prepared to challenge patterns of inequity through our work rather than reinforcing them.

Native Land Loss and the Colonization of the Portland Basin

We are not the first people to live on or look after this land. The Chinook of the Lower Columbia are West Multnomah's first land managers and stewards. They have survived roughly two centuries of a government and society intent on their eradication and the erasure of the traditional lifeways and land use they practiced for millennia on the land we are now attempting to restore. In particular, laws like the Dawes Act of 1887 and the termination of the reservation system in 1954 eroded the ability of Native Americans of western Oregon to own and benefit from the use of contiguous acres of land, instead "checkerboarding" and subdividing properties in ways that prevent most beneficial uses. So much of our work building up the health of our soils, protecting and restoring native plant communities, shielding the last of our prairies and oak savannahs from redevelopment- is an attempt to recover what was razed in the colonization of the Portland Basin. We've benefitted from that colonial project ourselves through our rights to live, work, and recreate on land that was ceded in exploitative treaties in 1857, from Forest Park to Sauvie Island. As beneficiaries who have set out to work for equity and justice, we have a responsibility to include the voices, concerns, and interests of the people who started this work, and to ally our efforts to restore the traditional functions of West Multnomah ecosystems with ongoing efforts to restore the traditional cultural knowledge of the first people of this land.

Alien Land Laws and the Elimination of Asian-American Agriculture

Asian-American farmers and ranchers have been integral to agriculture in our District and our region since the very beginning. From Hood River to Guild's Lake, Chinese and Japanese immigrant communities at the turn of the 20th century turned tiny pieces of land into thriving farms that sustained rich soils, healthy crops, and a living for their families. The Oregon state legislature, encouraged by Governor Pierce (a member of the Ku Klux Klan) and the white farming communities and grange associations threatened by increased competition for land and market share, spent the early part of the 20th century passing increasingly stringent laws governing the right of foreign-born residents to own and work agricultural land. These Alien Land Laws were explicitly designed to take now-desirable land out of the hands of the people who'd made it that way. The internment of Japanese-Americans in Oregon accelerated this process, ushering even those families who'd managed to retain their farms into camps far from home. While some Japanese farmers were able to find neighbors and friends to care for their land while they were interned, more than 85% of Japanese-owned land was leased or sold by the Farm Security Administration (FSA), a federal agency tasked with preserving agricultural productivity on Japanese-owned farms. Anticipating the end of the internment era, the Oregon state legislature passed the strictest Alien Land Law yet, forbidding non-citizens from setting foot on agricultural land altogether. While a coalition of Japanese-American residents won a civil rights case in the Oregon Supreme Court that forced the legislature to repeal the Alien Land Laws in 1949, many remained unable to return to their land. The discounts and financial assistance the FSA offered to white buyers during internment weren't offered to returning Japanese farmers, and thanks to the substantial value these farmers had spent decades building up on their lands, these farms were simply too expensive for most people to buy back. Japanese-American communities were able to win many civil rights victories following World War II; however, Oregon's state government was successful in virtually eliminating the competition white farmers faced from Asian-American agriculturalists, while ensuring that the region's most valuable farmland returned to white ownership.

Redlining, Urban Renewal, and Racial Exclusion in 20th Century Multnomah County

From the New Deal to the present day, black residents of West Multnomah County have faced an onslaught of explicitly and implicitly racist policies that have created tremendous barriers to land- and home-ownership. The Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) spent the post-war era practicing discriminatory lending that created deeply segregated neighborhoods across the country. The FHA facilitated low-interest loans to builders and developers with the condition that homes in their new suburbs would only be sold to white families. HOLC collaborated with the FHA to map and define the riskiness of lending to builders and homeowners in residential neighborhoods; if one black household lived within a neighborhood's borders, or if restrictions on black movement into the neighborhood were on the verge of expiration, HOLC would downgrade the neighborhood's rating and cut off lending to the "redlined" neighborhood. Homeowners and developers in neighborhoods like Palatine Hill, Slavin's Addition, and Sylvan Highlands also installed covenants on property deeds across the city that restricted owners from selling or renting to racial minorities. Major mortgage lenders continued to deny applications in historically redlined districts well into the 90s, forcing black home buyers to take out risky loans or continue renting. While the Fair

Housing Act of 1968 had ostensibly freed non-white households to buy homes in whatever neighborhood they chose, the properties were no longer affordable for families of color who'd been denied the three decades to build wealth and equity as a homeowner that their white counterparts had enjoyed.

The belief that the homes, buildings, and properties in non-white neighborhoods were substandard and undesirable would further devastate black communities in Portland during the urban renewal era of the 1960s and 70s. When the federal government began providing funds to local governments for highway construction and other infrastructure projects, influential planners like Robert Moses encouraged cities and counties to kill two birds with one stone and use these projects as an opportunity to clear areas of "urban blight", by which he meant the segregated and struggling neighborhoods into which black and immigrant families had been relegated for decades. The construction of the I-5/I-405 loop, the Veterans Memorial Coliseum, and the Legacy Emanuel Hospital expansion razed nearly a thousand black-owned homes between them. The owners of these homes were given 90 days of notice and a below-market-rate payment of \$15,000. The devastating economic and social impacts that these policies and programs had on Portland's communities of color were not accidental or coincidental; they were the result of intentional decisions on the part of public officials over the course of the century to devalue, disenfranchise, and disintegrate the wealth and wellbeing of these communities. This interruption of the intergenerational transfer of homeownership, exacerbated by racial income gaps and the housing market crash of the Great Recession, has created a black homeownership rate that has not substantially changed since housing discrimination became illegal in 1968, not to mention average net worths for black and Latinx individuals that barely clear 1/10th of the white average. The belief that black neighborhoods are inherently blighted and less valuable continues to be a self-fulfilling prophecy that prevents black communities from building wealth and accessing services like the ones offered by our district.

Land, Environment, and Justice in the District Today

In exploring the history of land and race in West Multnomah County, we've already seen how federal, state, and local policies have intentionally removed wealth and the beneficial use of land from communities of color and redistributed it to white communities over the course of the last two centuries. The result is a pattern of landownership that not only suppresses the ability of racial minorities to rebuild wealth and reestablish homes within our district, but also disproportionately exposes these communities to environmental hazards while reducing their access to environmental health benefits. Public green space in our district, from community gardens to Forest Park trails, is limited in traditionally redlined neighborhoods and to individuals who rely on public transportation. This makes it more difficult for marginalized communities to access the physical and mental health benefits associated with access to the natural areas our organization works to improve. Further, the industrial sanctuaries in riverfront neighborhoods like Guild's Lake, Linnton, and St. John's are home to many of the polluters responsible for our local Superfund site, which has degraded in-stream and riparian habitat and created a hazard extending up the food chain from the area's resident fish. Households in these areas are also the most exposed to the hazards associated with Portland's growing fossil fuel industry; Zenith Energy, a company that virtually created Portland's export market for hazardous tar sand crude ("dilbit") when they purchased a terminal in the Guild's Lake Industrial Sanctuary in 2017, has successfully dodged regulators and public disclosure requirements as they've shipped over \$71 million

of dilbit per year into the city by rail. Multnomah County's communities of color are disproportionately concentrated in the area exposed to a spill or explosion. Many of the same communities face disproportionate exposure to air toxins from industrial facilities and unfiltered diesel vehicles in a county that already has the dirtiest air in the state. A national study recently showed that air pollution is largely generated by white communities and breathed in by people of color. When communities of color are pushed out of safer and more desirable neighborhoods and onto the margins of industrial areas, and when pollution vectors like freeways are installed in the neighborhoods in which people of color already live, these communities are sentenced to lower life expectancies by virtue of the color of their skin.

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District has resolved to work towards diversity, equity, and inclusion as an integral part of our conservation mission. We face our own barriers in this pursuit: as an organization that primarily works with landowners, we are missing large segments of already underserved communities thanks to centuries of exclusionary policy. As an organization that is overseen by a board primarily composed of people who own land in our district, we are drawing our leadership from a pool that does not represent the diversity of communities in our district. Finally, as a government agency, we have a great deal of trust and accountability to rebuild with communities of color, who have experienced these injustices at the hands of our counterparts in government. As a district, we are already making inroads towards rebuilding access, participation, and power to communities of color in their relationship to the lands of West Multnomah County. However, as we move forward in planning for the future of this organization, the pursuit of environmental justice must be integral to our approach: one's identity should not determine one's degree of protection from environmental hazard or one's ability to participate in the decisions that determine whether the place that one lives, works, or plays will be safe and healthy. By amplifying the voices of communities of color in our programs, our staff, and our leadership, we will not only be helping to restore some of what has been taken from these communities, but we will be ensuring that our conservation and restoration work is better informed, more resilient, and addresses a wider range of needs for the human and ecological needs that have always co-existed on this land.

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

Whose Land is Our Land?

Spatial exclusion, racial segregation, and the history of the lands of West Multnomah County

Draft

Indi Keith
Field Conservationist Intern
2019

Introduction

The state of Oregon, the city of Portland, and Multnomah County are celebrated as hubs of progressivism, tolerance, and environmental consciousness. We're a great place to live, with green transportation options, outdoor recreation, and farmer's markets as far as the eye can see. We're also home to one of the country's largest urban forests,¹ the confluence of two major regional rivers, and a statewide urban growth boundary policy that protects our agricultural and natural lands from the sprawl that has overtaken landscapes across the country.² At the same time, we are the whitest major city in the country (by percentage of the population) and while we're growing more diverse as a city and county, the most desirable neighborhoods are only becoming whiter; census data indicates that Portland's city center lost 10,000 residents of color between 2000 and 2010.³ Why?

Over the last several years, many white Oregonians have been confronted by some jarring answers to this question thanks to the work of scholars and activists like Walidah Imarisha, whose speaking series "Why Aren't There More Black People in Oregon? A Hidden History" was my own first exposure to this subject. Oregon was an explicitly white supremacist state from its inception; even before it gained statehood, the territorial legislature passed the Organic Law of 1844, giving black men two years to leave the State from the time they were freed or turned 18. If they failed, they would be subjected to public whipping every six months. Black women were afforded an additional year to leave before the lashes began.⁴ In 1857, Oregon voters approved a constitution that banned any new black residents and outlawed property ownership, suffrage, and use of the legal system for any black people already living here. In 1866, just 7 years after gaining statehood, Oregon ratified the 14th Amendment, nullifying the exclusion clause in our state constitution. Just one year later, our state legislature repealed the ratification, preserving the exclusion clause until 1926. Racist language in the state constitution was not fully removed until 2002.⁵ Our state capitol in Salem also played host to the largest chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in the West, attacking black residents and expelling their Chinese community entirely. In 1923, Oregon City's only black resident was the victim of an attempted lynching.⁶

As shocking as this history is—as it should be—it stops, for many of us, in the 1920s and in the policies implemented by the state of Oregon during this period. As individuals who call this place home, and as public servants who are tasked with caring for the land, waters and wildlife, we have a responsibility to dig deeper than this. Without a more complex understanding of how we got here, it is inevitable that we will miscalculate as we set our course forward. The West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District has committed itself to integrating diversity, equity, inclusion, and accountability into the work we do and the ways in which we do it. As an organization centered on the stewardship of land and other natural resources, particularly private lands and properties, we must ask this question: what has been happening to the land in our district and the people who live here, and how does the weight of these past and present systems impact our work? This report constitutes an attempt to answer this question by examining how race and ethnicity have determined people's relationships to

¹ (Conservancy, 2019)

² (Christensen, 2018)

³ (Hannah-Jones, In Portland's heart, 2010 Census shows diversity dwindling, 2011)

⁴ (Oregon Historical Society, 2018)

⁵ (Nokes, 2018)

⁶ (Oregon Historical Society, 2018)

the lands of West Multnomah County, and how public and private institutions have shaped these relationships through law, policy, and practice. This report will center on race for two reasons: first, while many systems of oppression and marginalization have impacted people's experiences in our district, racism has been one of the most institutionalized and long-enduring factors creating the disparities in access to land, housing, and civil rights examined here, and second, because by centering race in our work towards diversity, equity, and inclusion, we will create solutions that uplift many other marginalized groups.

Native Land Loss and the Colonization of the Portland Basin

The Portland Basin, sometimes called the Wapato Valley, and the surrounding area of our District was home to at least 20 distinct communities of indigenous Americans when the Lewis and Clark expedition arrived here in 1805, with most of the population concentrated in the fertile lowlands around the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.⁷ Pre-contact artifacts found on Sauvie Island indicate that the Portland Basin was occupied for thousands of years prior to the arrival of European Americans.⁸ Some of the largest and most well-documented sites are also of significance to the District today: Multnomah village, located just south of the Dairy Creek channel on Sauvie Island, and Scappoose village, north of us in Columbia County, were major population centers up to the early 19th century.⁹ The indigenous people who lived here spoke dialects of the Chinookan language that extended from the mouth of the Columbia to the Cascade Rapids, as well as the Chinook Jargon that emerged to facilitate trade between different tribes and foreigners throughout the Lower Columbia Region.¹⁰

Food was plentiful on the Middle Columbia at the turn of the 19th century. The people of the Portland Basin fished spring and fall Chinook salmon runs, caught winter smelt in nets and on rakes, and spearfished for sturgeon, all of which could be dried and stored for winter or trade. Starchy wapato bulbs provided a stable food source year round. When the spring freshet pushed people up from the floodplain, they began gathering camas from the prairies, a harvest that extended well into the summer. In the later summer and early fall, the Multnomah gathered berries, crabapple, and Indian plum to eat at their freshest. At the same time, they gathered hazelnuts and acorns to cure and put up for the winter. In the winter, migratory waterfowl, deer, and elk made their way to the Columbia floodplain and lowlands, providing excellent hunting for locals and visiting groups from elsewhere on the river. While many of the Columbian indigenous people travelled significant distances between summer and winter homes in order to sustain a supply of food, scholarship indicates that the Multnomah were able to remain much closer to home thanks to stable supplies of food year round. While they also rotated from summer to winter lodges, these were usually located just a few hundred meters away, and the move is thought to have more to do with sanitation than with subsistence.¹¹ A caveat must be included here: many of our descriptions of the traditional population, lifeways, and land-use patterns in the Portland Basin come from the notes of the Lewis & Clark expedition and their contemporaries. However, George Vancouver's expedition to map the coastline of the Pacific Northwest made contact with the people of

⁷ (Boyd & Zenk, Portland Basin Chinookan Villages in the early 1800s, 2019)

⁸ (Unknown)

⁹ (Boyd & Zenk, Portland Basin Chinookan Villages in the early 1800s, 2019)

¹⁰ (Zenk, 2018)

¹¹ (Ellis, 1986)

the Lower Columbia in 1792;¹² we have little documentation of precisely what, if anything, may have changed for the people of the area in the intervening 13 years. However, we cannot say for sure that when Lewis and Clark came down the Columbia into what they named the Wapato Valley, the people they met and the activities they observed were representative of what had been present before 1792. Going forward from that point in time, the historical record is more detailed.

Sauvie Island, positioned at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers, prospered as a center of trade and culture for the entire region at the beginning of the 19th century.¹³ The island played host to its usual assortment of traders and hunters from elsewhere in the region, but also to Euro-American fur trappers, missionaries, and explorers.¹⁴ In 1825, the British government helped the Hudson's Bay Company consolidate its control of regional trade in a takeover of its competitors, the Astorian Pacific Fur Company and Montreal's North West Fur Company.¹⁵ The Hudson's Bay Company then shifted operations upriver from its Columbia-region headquarters in Astoria to Fort Vancouver, just across the river from Sauvie Island, in order to take advantage of greater access to the growing region of the Willamette Valley. As a result, the people of Sauvie Island and Scappoose Bay gained even greater wealth and power from their trade relationships with HBC.¹⁶ At the height of this prosperous period, many of the villages in the Portland Basin were coordinated under the leadership of a powerful Multnomah-Wakanasisi chief named Keasno based out of Cathlacumup, close to what is now St. Helens.¹⁷ Keasno, a strong political leader and diplomat with family connections to villages throughout the Lower Columbia and Willamette, grew wealthy by participating in and facilitating Columbian trade, and by 1830 he was the most powerful Native leader between the Pacific Ocean and the Cascades.¹⁸ That year, malaria, then called "ague" or "intermittent fever",¹⁹ appears at Fort Vancouver in both the white and native population. Over the next several years, it wiped out 75%-90% of the native population of the Portland Basin and displaced many of those who survived,²⁰ leaving the area open to virtually unopposed resettlement by Euro-Americans and tribes from north of the Columbia. When the Hudson's Bay Company returned to Multnomah Village in 1839, they found a village occupied only by the dead, and ordered the village burned.²¹ Those who survived were scattered, and after Kiesno's death in 1848, the native residents of the Wapato Valley joined with the confederation of Kalapuyan bands of the Willamette Valley in a bid for survival.²²

As disease ripped through the Chinookan people, "Oregon fever" approached critical mass in the Midwest. Ever since the Lewis and Clark expedition returned from the Northwest, everyone from missionaries to journalists to congressmen had been singing the praises of the Oregon Country as a "new Eden".²³ Facing a depressed economy, a deteriorating agricultural sector, flooding, and disease

¹² (Hajda, Boyd, & Zenk, 2019)

¹³ (Ellis, 1986)

¹⁴ (Hajda, Boyd, & Zenk, 2019)

¹⁵ (Robbins W. G., *The Astorians and the Hudson's Bay Company*, 2002)

¹⁶ (Ellis, 1986)

¹⁷ (Lewis D. , Kiesno (Chief Cassino) (1779?-1848), 2019)

¹⁸ (Lewis D. , Kiesno (Chief Cassino) (1779?-1848), 2019)

¹⁹ (Boyd, *Disease Epidemics among Indians, 1770s-1850s* , n.d.)

²⁰ (Ellis, 1986)

²¹ (Hajda, Boyd, & Zenk, 2019)

²² (Lewis D. , Kiesno (Chief Cassino) (1779?-1848), 2019)

²³ (Robbins W. , 2002)

elsewhere in the country, many white Americans in the late 1830s found the prospect of a 2000-mile journey less daunting than the prospect of staying put. While the Oregon Trail, directly connecting the East to the Oregon Country, had been established nearly a decade prior, the 1840s saw a major upswing of migration along the route, with the Euro-American population ballooning from 1500 in 1843 to 13,294 by 1850.²⁴ As the settlers to Oregon increased in number, so too did their clashes with the Native people who already claimed the land: In Southern Oregon, where gold miners stood to make a fortune off of the minerals underneath tribal lands, Umpqua and Rogue River tribes were hunted by prospectors and farmers on their own unceded lands.²⁵ In the Willamette Valley and the Portland Basin, the tribes were considered inconvenient pests who had wasted the rich soils of the river valley; after forcing them off, the settlers set to work draining the wetlands, plowing up the wapato and camas, planting grain and potatoes, ranching sheep and cattle.²⁶ These settlers not only set out to evict the indigenous people from their ancestral land, but to eliminate the indigenous land use practices and lifeways that had been in place for generations. The war for Oregon land rose to a crescendo when Congress passed the Oregon Donation Land Act in 1850, codifying the territorial practice of gifting 640-acre parcels of “vacant land” to settlers.²⁷ However, the Oregon Territorial Act was already on the books, guaranteeing Native Americans the rights to their lands in the absence of a treaty to the contrary; in theory, Congress would need to strike a deal with the Native residents before they had the right to give it away.²⁸ They chose instead to begin land donations right away, and to send negotiators to secure the right to do so after the fact. In the absence of any agreements, violence reigned.

Anson Dart, the superintendent of Indian Affairs for the territory of Oregon, was charged with conducting these negotiations with the tribes of Western Oregon.²⁹ While the indigenous people of the Willamette Valley and Oregon Coast had been decimated by disease and faced continued violence from settlers trying to stake their claims, they were not readily convinced to cede their homelands. Dart promised the tribes cash payments, sawmills, weapons, teachers, farming implements and more in compensation for the loss of millions of acres and the tribes’ relocation to reservations east of the Cascades.³⁰ This was insufficient, the tribes argued. They held firm that any reservation land must be located on their ancestral lands. In a letter relaying the results of initial negotiations with the Kalapuyan tribes at Champoeg in 1851, Anson Dart himself wrote:

“They urged... that their fathers had lived and were buried in this country; that it was their native land, and that they wished to be buried by the graves of their ancestors; that they were unacquainted with the country east of the Cascade mountains, and were ignorant of the means of procuring a livelihood in any other than the one in which they now live; and that it would be more humane and merciful for the whites to exterminate them at once, than to drive them from this to the country east of the Cascade mountains.”³¹

²⁴ (Robbins W. , 2002)

²⁵ (Robbins W. G., A New Legal Landscape, 2002)

²⁶ (Lewis D. G., 2014)

²⁷ (Cain & Rosman, 2017)

²⁸ (Robbins W. G., A New Legal Landscape, 2002)

²⁹ (Boxberger, 2018)

³⁰ (Cain & Rosman, 2017)

³¹ (Lewis D. G., 2014)

Dart conceded the point and returned to Congress with 19 treaties containing promises to reserve portions of Native homelands for their perpetual residence and use; in return for his failure to deliver the tribes to lands east of the Cascades, the U.S. government stripped him of his treaty-making power and replaced him with a new superintendent, Joel Palmer.³² Palmer picked up where Dart had left off, insisting that the surrender of some Western Oregon lands to their original owners would be the only way to prevent all-out war with the tribes of Oregon. After months of deliberation, word came from Washington: his plan to create the Coast and Grand Ronde reservations was approved.³³ Beginning in the winter of 1857, twenty-seven tribes from across Western Oregon were marched hundreds of miles from their homes and into the Coast Siletz and Grand Ronde reservations.³⁴ The Grand Ronde, located in the Coast Range of Oregon, would play host to not only the Kalapuya of the Willamette Valley, but also to the Molala, the Chasta, the Umpqua, and the Rogue River tribes whose reservations were eliminated due to sustained incursions from violent miners and settlers in the South.³⁵ David Harrelson, a Historic Preservation officer for the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, describes the journey that is known today as Oregon's Trail of Tears:

"It was in February. Imagine walking ... the rough path ran about where I-5 is today then out; once you get to Eugene, to where (Highway) 99 is. The whole way, people followed the Indians and essentially, if they were to break ranks and leave that line, they would be killed."³⁶

The Grande Ronde Reservation, located just 60 miles southwest of Portland along the Yamhill River, consisted of just over 60,000 acres that had been bought back from settlers' donation land claims when it was officially established in 1857.³⁷ While the now-Confederated Tribes had won the right to remain west of the Cascades, they now held the equivalent of less than 1% of their ancestral territories, with no right of return to the lands upon which generations on generations had lived and died.

Just 30 years later, the relative stability established by the treaty system began to crumble. The Dawes Act (also known as the General Allotment Act) of 1887 disintegrated the Grand Ronde's tribal commons and the community that depended on them. The Dawes Act empowered the President to break up reservations, at the time the common property of the tribe as a whole, and redistribute the pieces as small allotments to individual members of the tribe. Land the federal government determined to be "surplus" to the tribe would be sold to non-Native buyers. Responsibility for one's own farm, it was thought, would gradually assimilate Native Americans into the settlers' culture and economy, freeing them from the paternalistic federal support of the BIA and its parent agency, the Department of the Interior.³⁸ The legislators who passed the Dawes Act claimed only the best intentions towards Native Americans and their land; it would provide economic opportunity to allottees and, by holding the allotments in trust for 25 years before officially handing them over, would protect Native land from falling into the wrong hands.³⁹ Unsurprisingly, implementation proved more complicated.

³² (Kentta, n.d.)

³³ (Kentta, n.d.)

³⁴ (Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, n.d.)

³⁵ (Kentta, n.d.)

³⁶ (Cain & Rosman, 2017)

³⁷ (Lewis D. , Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, 2019)

³⁸ (An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations (General Allotment Act or Dawes Act), 1887)

³⁹ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

In theory, the Dawes Act allowed for the possibility that reservation allotments could be selected by their Native recipients;⁴⁰ frequently, however, the BIA superintendent was responsible for assigning out plots. When he did, it was common for the richest agricultural tracts to be marked for surplus, while those allotted to Native Americans were unsuitable for farming; in case of the Grand Ronde, much of the land was hilly and forested, desirable for timber companies but not for small farmers.⁴¹ Moreover, though the purpose of the Dawes Act was ostensibly to encourage Native people to farm, many could not afford the equipment, seeds, and supplies they'd need to have a chance at success;⁴² as a result, many sold their farms as soon as they were able to do so.⁴³ As allotment recipients passed away and the BIA distributed inheritances, passing land from parent to child became challenging. In the 1870s and 80s, the BIA had forcibly removed the majority of Native children to assimilationist boarding schools far from their homes and communities, many of which were funded with proceeds from the sale of surplus reservation land.⁴⁴ If such a child inherited an allotment, they would be unable to farm it or return to it. For these communities in which elders relied on the support of young people to care for their farms and their homes, the loss of their children impacted every generation.⁴⁵ In Oregon, many allotments were divided between ten or more heirs, leaving the beneficiaries with parcels unable to support sustenance farming, let alone turn a profit. Much more frequently, the BIA in Oregon sold the allotment it had held in trust for 25 years and distributed the proceeds to the heirs- the exact removal of Native lands from Native hands that the government in Washington, D.C. had promised that it would prevent.⁴⁶ In the case of the Grand Ronde, 270 allotments and more than 33,000 acres of reservation land were allocated to Native individuals,⁴⁷ and by 1901, another 25,791-acre section (most of the remainder of the reservation) was declared "surplus" and sold by the U.S. government for \$1.10 an acre.⁴⁸

The investigations into tribe members' eligibility for allotment by the Dawes Commission and the BIA also facilitated the entry of the notion of blood quantum into the national imagination. Blood quantum is the concept that the degree to which one is Native or a tribal member is determined by the amount of "Indian blood" one has inherited from one's ancestors, and from what tribes.⁴⁹ The Dawes Act was implemented such that those with less than one-half "Indian blood" or those who married outside their race were ineligible to receive an allotment,⁵⁰ increasing the amount of land that fell into surplus to be sold off. After the Burke Act passed in 1906, the BIA was given the power to determine whether Native owners of allotments were "competent" to manage their own land, or whether it should remain held in the trust of the government.⁵¹ The more white ancestry one had, the greater one's competency in the eyes of the federal government; "white Indians" were thought to be taking

⁴⁰ (An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations (General Allotment Act or Dawes Act), 1887)

⁴¹ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁴² (The National Archives, 2019)

⁴³ (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, 2019)

⁴⁴ (Haag, 2007)

⁴⁵ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁴⁶ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁴⁷ (Ronde, 2014)

⁴⁸ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁴⁹ (Blubaugh, 2017)

⁵⁰ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁵¹ (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, 2018)

advantage of the allotments and benefits that ought to be reserved for full-blooded Native Americans, who were too “primitive and uneducated” to manage their own land and affairs.⁵² If a Native person who had received or inherited an allotment was deemed competent, their parcel of land could be removed from the public trust. This helped funnel more Native lands into homesteaders’ hands in two ways. First, many who had struggle to farm and subsist off their subpar allotments took the opportunity to sell their only valuable asset. Second, when allotment land passed out of the public trust, it became taxable, and the Department of the Interior could remove trust status without consulting or informing the Native owner. Many “competent” Native Americans foreclosed on their lands, which were auctioned off, after accumulating tax debt for years of which they were entirely unaware.⁵³ Not only did the blood quantum standard help to usher more Native land into the hands of white settlers, it was pivotal in shaping the next century’s federal and tribal determinations of who, and how many, would be counted as Native American.

The scale of degradation that allotment intentionally inflicted on the Native American lands, lifeways, and people of our District can be staggering to consider. In 1854, the tribes and bands that now form the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde held about 14 million acres of Western Oregon between them; in 1950, a 600-acre reservation was all that remained.⁵⁴ In the place of this contiguous common land, two new patterns of land use emerged, both of which persist to the present day. The first is checkerboarding, in which small tracts of Native-owned private land, non-Native-owned private land, federal trust lands, and tribal holdings are scrambled together. As a result, beneficial uses like larger-scale farming, ranching, or development by tribes or individuals as well as access to traditional land use and sites are severely impaired.⁵⁵ The second is fractionated ownership, which has been discussed briefly above; if, in the case of an allottees passing, the BIA chose to distribute the rights to their land rather than the proceeds from its sale, the equal subdivision of the land would continue for generations. The exponential growth of the number of owners per plot results in exponentially reduced earnings for each individual owner, not to mention the challenges of gaining majority support from hundreds or thousands of people to use the land at all.⁵⁶ Native scholars and leaders have also highlighted the cultural destruction the practice of allotment represented; by breaking down the reservation the community held together in common, the BIA fragmented the community itself.⁵⁷ Roberta “Bobbie” Conner, the director of the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute and a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, puts it this way:

“The allotment era was not just a land grab. It was also a way to break down our communal structure and teach us to think: This is mine. That’s yours.”⁵⁸

By 1931, only a few hundred people lived on the shrinking Grand Ronde reservation; many spent the better part of the year (if not longer) as migrant farm workers in the Willamette Valley or travelling throughout the West with logging operations. More still had made their way to Portland and

⁵² (Blubaugh, 2017)

⁵³ (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, 2019)

⁵⁴ (Lewis D. G., 2014)

⁵⁵ (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, 2019)

⁵⁶ (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, 2019)

⁵⁷ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁵⁸ (Cain & Rosman, 2017)

its booming industrial sector or joined the military during World War I.⁵⁹ While many of these workers were able to send money home, the BIA and local farmers often practiced wage discrimination that set Native wages at half the level of a white worker in the same job,⁶⁰ severely curtailing the ability of tribal communities on or off the reservation to truly earn a living. Urban Native Americans were still officially banned from living within Portland city limits until the 1920s and were not offered citizenship until 1924.⁶¹ Despite these barriers, the early 20th century saw Native people in Oregon and across the country adapting to and overcoming the challenges of the post-allotment era. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1936, which offered federal subsidies to tribes willing to “reorganize” to self-govern under a constitution and elected leadership, may have had assimilationist roots, but helped many tribes in Oregon parlay their remaining natural resource holdings into sustainable economic ventures.⁶² When World War II broke out, more than 1 in 10 Native Americans volunteered to serve, and many more contributed to the war effort at home by working in Portland’s factories and shipyards.⁶³ However, as the war wound down, the BIA took steps to ensure that the hard-won advancements of Oregon’s tribes would come back to bite them.

A series of hearings and committee meetings held through the mid-1940s solidified two ideas in the minds of federal policymakers: first, that the marginal gains Native Americans had made in the war were an indicator that many were finally capable of self-sufficiency, and second, that the federal government should therefore withdraw support for many tribes as quickly as possible.⁶⁴ While research commissioned by the BIA in fact indicated that the assimilation of tribes and the supposed attending benefits were inconsistent between tribes, the allure of a slashed budget and the opportunity to put millions of acres of resource-rich reservation lands to profitable use won out.⁶⁵ It’s important to note that, while the surface-level justifications for what was about to occur had to do with freeing tribes from federal paternalism, this deeper argument that Native people had let their land and resources go to waste and had therefore surrendered their sovereignty was precisely the same as the justification used to remove them to reservations in the first place. In 1954, Congress passed Public Laws 587 and 588, which removed federal recognition from the tribes of Western Oregon, as well as the Klamaths; this meant the dissolution of the reservations, the repossession of tribal land holdings by the federal government, the loss of fishing and hunting rights, and the removal of virtually all entitlements and supports for tribes and their members.⁶⁶ Termination, as this practice is commonly known, was not common outside of Western Oregon; more than a third of the tribes terminated nationwide were Oregonian, thanks in part to the advocacy of Douglas McKay, a former Oregon governor and Eisenhower’s Secretary of the Interior.⁶⁷ While Native Americans were making gains in many other places in the country, communities here were scattered and set back for decades, denied the health,

⁵⁹ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁶⁰ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁶¹ (Curry-Stevens, Cross-Hemmer, & Coalition of Communities of Color, 2011)

⁶² (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁶³ (Curry-Stevens, Cross-Hemmer, & Coalition of Communities of Color, 2011)

⁶⁴ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁶⁵ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁶⁶ (Cain & Rosman, 2017)

⁶⁷ (Curry-Stevens, Cross-Hemmer, & Coalition of Communities of Color, 2011)

education, and housing programs that were concurrently developed for those tribes that remained federally recognized.⁶⁸

With claims to land, homes, and basic services erased, and with a federal relocation policy encouraging migration to cities, thousands of Native Americans from Grand Ronde and across the state streamed into Portland after termination. Despite low wages, institutional and social discrimination, and cultural alienation, within a decade the Native migrant community in Portland had established several culturally-specific organizations providing community, human services, and advocacy, some of whom the District works with today.⁶⁹ Throughout the 60s and 70s, these organizations and their members fought to improve the condition of urban Native communities and to restore federal recognition to those who had lost it. Seven Oregon tribes secured restoration of their federal status in the late 70s and early 80s, including Grand Ronde, which recovered just over 9000 acres of the original reservation in 1983.⁷⁰

Grand Ronde, and many of the tribes of Western Oregon, have existed in their current form for barely a generation; the project of decolonizing and regaining self-governance, self-sufficiency, and cultural identity is still very much in progress for the Native diaspora here. Oregon's first land managers and stewards survived roughly two centuries of a government and society intent on their eradication and the erasure of the traditional lifeways and land use they practiced for millennia on the land we are now attempting to restore. So much of our work- building up the health of our soils, protecting and restoring native plant communities, shielding the last of our prairies and oak savannahs from redevelopment- is an attempt to recover what was razed in the colonization of the Portland Basin. As beneficiaries of that colonial project ourselves, we have a responsibility to include the voices, concerns, and interests of the people who started this work, to ally our efforts to restore the traditional functions of West Multnomah ecosystems with the ongoing efforts to restore the traditional cultural knowledge of the first people of this land. David Lewis, an anthropologist and historian for the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, puts it this way:

"You've been — [for] ten thousand years — in one place and your culture and your genealogy is a part of that place. You have a better understanding of that place than anybody else. We have learned to live with it — we're a part of it. The forest, the rivers, the coastline, the mountains — we are a part of all that. Our people are from there. And so everything we do in our culture resonates with that, and that's important to say. I mean, not a lot of people except for us has that."⁷¹

Alien Land Laws and the Elimination of Asian-American Agriculture

During the early 1900s, Multnomah County and the Portland Basin played host to a thriving community of Asian-American agriculturalists. Japanese-American farming communities sprung up in Montavilla, Troutdale, Gresham, and Hood River around 1900, and by 1920 Japanese farms were responsible for 90 percent of strawberries, 50 percent of raspberries, and 60 percent of vegetables

⁶⁸ (Cain & Rosman, 2017)

⁶⁹ (Curry-Stevens, Cross-Hemmer, & Coalition of Communities of Color, 2011)

⁷⁰ (Lewis D. G., 2009)

⁷¹ (Cain & Rosman, 2017)

grown in the region.⁷² Guild's Lake, which once lay at the foot of where Montgomery Park stands today, was also home to a small community of Chinese-Americans who gardened and raised hogs in the marshy soils of the lake shore.⁷³ In the footprint of what is now Providence Park, small-scale Chinese vegetable gardens and markets on Tanner Creek covered 20 acres around the turn of the 20th century. Since Chinese Exclusion laws were still in effect at the time, many of these vegetable farmers lived in structures they built on the lands they were farming.⁷⁴

Walter Pierce, Oregon's 17th governor and a card-carrying member of the Ku Klux Klan, signed the Alien Land Law in 1923, which forbade any immigrants from owning land in their own names, targeting the growing community of Japanese and Chinese farmers and ranchers.⁷⁵ After his term as governor, Pierce would later advocate for the deportation of all Americans of Japanese descent and a ban on their residency after the war.⁷⁶ (Portland's longest serving mayor, George Baker, has also been noted for his ties to the KKK)⁷⁷. Many Japanese farmers skirted these laws by listing their American-born children as the property owners, only to be forced to sell or abandon their properties as the Japanese internment policies of WWII were implemented in 1941. While some Japanese farmers were able to find neighbors and friends to care for their land while they were interned, more than 85% of Japanese-owned land was leased or sold by the Farm Security Administration, a federal agency tasked with preserving agricultural productivity on Japanese-owned farms.⁷⁸ In 1945, anticipating the return of interned Japanese agriculturalists and seeking to retain the profitable land they had been forced to give up, the Oregon legislature passed an even stricter Alien Land Law, prohibiting Japanese people not only from purchasing agricultural land, but from leasing, working on, or simply living in a home on such a property. Grange associations around Portland, most notably in Hood River, served as hubs for organizing in favor of alien land laws and the protection of white farmers.⁷⁹

After the war, the Japanese American Citizens League brought a case before the Oregon Supreme Court alleging that the alien land laws violated the 14th Amendment. In 1949, they won their case and the legislature repealed the laws shortly afterwards.⁸⁰ Despite the fact that Japanese-Americans won back many of their rights and legal entitlements after the war, they were largely unable to buy back their farms. Land that was sold at a fraction of the value built by interned Japanese-American families had skyrocketed in value by the time they were freed. Families returning from internment camps were encouraged to leave the Western states entirely, and those that stayed were largely unable to return to their lands.⁸¹ Japanese-American communities were able to win many civil rights victories following World War II; however, Oregon's state government was successful in virtually eliminating the competition white farmers faced from Asian-American agriculturalists, while ensuring that the region's most valuable farmland returned to white ownership.

⁷² (Azuma, 1993)

⁷³ (Tucker, 2005)

⁷⁴ (Reang, 2016)

⁷⁵ (Streckert, 2017)

⁷⁶ (Buck, 1999)

⁷⁷ (Streckert, 2017)

⁷⁸ (Buck, 1999)

⁷⁹ (Buck, 1999)

⁸⁰ (Buck, 1999)

⁸¹ (Buck, 1999)

Redlining, Urban Renewal, and Racial Exclusion in 20th Century Multnomah County

The Public Works Administration, the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), New Deal Agencies tasked with creating housing opportunities and raising homeownership rates, were instrumental in creating the patterns of spatial segregation that persist into the present day. As the PWA built public housing projects, the FHA provided funding to builders and developers for subdivisions and other large housing projects, and HOLC insured mortgages lenders made to prospective homeowners, they operated what scholar Richard Rothstein calls a "state-sponsored system of segregation".⁸² The PWA created racially segregated public housing in neighborhoods that, in many cases, had been integrated prior to their intervention. The FHA worked with banks across the country to make low-interest loans to housing developers, provided that homes in their suburbs not be sold to black families.⁸³ HOLC collaborated with the FHA to map and define the riskiness of lending to builders and homeowners in residential neighborhoods; if one black household lived within a neighborhood's borders, or if restrictions on black movement into the neighborhood were on the verge of expiration, HOLC would downgrade the neighborhood's rating and choke off lending to the area.⁸⁴ The maps these agencies created color-coded neighborhoods by their ratings, and thanks to these mechanisms, households of color could only secure housing in the lowest grade of "redlined" neighborhoods.⁸⁵ The FHA justified its actions by claiming that home values, and therefore the integrity of its loans, in these communities would be threatened with decline if black residents bought homes in and around these neighborhoods. It's important to note that this claim was not based in any study, data, or factual evidence of any kind; in fact, black homebuyers ended up raising property values in their neighborhoods because, with limited choices, they were simply willing to pay more for the same home.⁸⁶ Similar forces have acted on rural black farmers across the country; the USDA implemented discriminatory lending through the 20th century, deteriorating black-owned and -managed farmland from over 40 million acres in 1920⁸⁷ to 4.2 million in 2017⁸⁸. Today in Oregon, only 8450 acres of farmland are managed by a black principal producer⁸⁹.

In Portland, the 1948 Vanport Flood displaced residents of the city's most diverse and integrated community into Albina, Guild's Lake, or out of the city entirely. At this time the Oregon Real Estate Board explicitly prohibited realtors or bankers from lending to black or Asian people who sought to live in white neighborhoods;⁹⁰ since only these neighborhoods were eligible for federally-insured loans in the first place, this was functionally a prohibition on lending to racial minorities at all. In 1950, OREB's code of ethics was amended (as mandated by Supreme Court decision *Shelley v. Kraemer*) to remove the explicitly racist language. However, the code still required realtors to refrain from "introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or use which will clearly be detrimental to property values in that

⁸² (Rothstein, A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America, 2017)

⁸³ (National Public Radio, 2015)

⁸⁴ (Smith, 2018)

⁸⁵ (Robert K. Nelson, 2019)

⁸⁶ (Rothstein, A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America, 2017)

⁸⁷ (Penniman, 2017)

⁸⁸ (US Dept. of Agriculture, Table 62. Selected Farm Characteristics by Race of Principal Producers: 2017, 2017)

⁸⁹ (US Dept. of Agriculture, Table 51. Black or African American Producers: 2017, 2017)

⁹⁰ (Hare, 2018)

neighborhood”,⁹¹ dog-whistling that realtors were still expected to implement discriminatory and segregationist housing practices.

At the same time, homeowners, neighborhood associations, and real estate agents were cooperating to install racially restrictive covenants governing properties across the city. These covenants prohibited land’s sale to or use by racial and ethnic minorities (with the exception of domestic servants) for several decades, and could be applied to entire neighborhoods as well as to individual plots.⁹² Racial covenants have been found in property titles in several neighborhoods in our district, including Palatine Hill, the West/Sylvan Highlands, and Slavin’s Addition in Hillsdale.⁹³ While these covenants proved difficult to enforce in the case of a serious legal challenge, they were nonetheless effective in securing commitments from neighboring landowners to maintain their all-white neighborhoods and communities in the interest of their property values.⁹⁴ In this way, the real estate community created a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts: if the simple presence of a single non-white household in a neighborhood could downgrade the area’s rating and the values of the property around it, and if already prosperous neighborhoods were assisted and encouraged to band together to protect one another’s property values from these “adverse influences”, then the segregation of communities of color into already sub-standard areas of the city was the inevitable result. This served to reinforce the pre-existing belief in Portland’s real estate community that the homes, buildings, and properties in non-white neighborhoods were substandard and undesirable,⁹⁵ a belief that would prove to have repercussions for residents of these neighborhoods for the remainder of the century.

Redlining and predatory lending in historically black neighborhoods continued to impact these communities as the 20th century came to a close. The 1990 Oregonian expose “Blueprint for a Slum” found that major mortgage lenders continued to refuse loans to residents in historically redlined neighborhoods like Albina, forcing would-be homeowners to turn to high-risk lenders.⁹⁶ Dominion Capital, a mortgage lender focusing on North and Northeast Portland, was reprimanded by the state attorney general in 1987 for intentionally deceiving buyers and investors to arrange risky loans on homes for more than the properties were worth; however, by 1990, they’d made another 90 similar deals and faced no further repercussions from the state.⁹⁷ While the Fair Housing Act of 1968 had ostensibly freed non-white households to buy homes in whatever neighborhood they chose, the properties were no longer affordable for families of color who’d been denied the three decades to build wealth and equity as a homeowner that their white counterparts had enjoyed.⁹⁸

After forcing black residents into tightly restricted segments of the city throughout the better half of the 20th century, cities across America proceeded to undertake “urban renewal” projects sited in non-white residential neighborhoods in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, with powerful urban planners like Robert Moses at the helm. Moses, a fixture in New York City government, pioneered a new style of car-centric urban planning for the post-war era, helping to shuttle cars to and from the growing suburbs and

⁹¹ (Boards, 1956)

⁹² (Smith, 2018)

⁹³ (Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability & Smith, 2019)

⁹⁴ (Smith, 2018)

⁹⁵ (Smith, 2018)

⁹⁶ (Hare, 2018)

⁹⁷ (Lane & Mayes, 1990)

⁹⁸ (Rothstein, A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America, 2017)

putting returning soldiers to work on these massive infrastructure projects.⁹⁹ By 1956, the Federal Highway Act was offering to cover 90% of expenses for cities to undertake major highway construction, and city planners found that these funds could also be put to use for “urban renewal” by locating these projects in areas of “blight”: the segregated and struggling neighborhoods into which black and immigrant families had been relegated for decades.¹⁰⁰ Back in 1943, Multnomah County hired Moses to create a roadmap for Portland’s city development. While many of his lofty proposals, such as a \$10 million sewage system and a 24- block civic center downtown, were passed over due to a lack of funding, City and County officials were able to implement his vision for the I-5/405 highway system encircling downtown,¹⁰¹ which eliminated 125 black-owned homes when it was constructed in 1956. The construction of the Veterans Memorial Coliseum, now the Moda Center, claimed another 476.¹⁰² In 1962, the Portland Development Commission ruled that the Albina neighborhood was “a worthless slum”, and in order to protect the surrounding neighborhoods, should be eliminated.¹⁰³ Nearby Legacy Emanuel Hospital was hoping to expand its campus, and the Development Commission saw an opportunity to clear 55 acres of “worthless” black-owned homes and businesses.¹⁰⁴ The City planned the hospital’s expansion for 10 years before they informed homeowners their homes would be demolished, homeowners who were then given 90 days and a flat rate of \$15,000 (well below market value) to vacate the 300 homes that were destroyed.¹⁰⁵ The City held just one public meeting before approving the plans, which proceeded virtually unchanged.¹⁰⁶ The devastating economic and social impacts that these policies and programs had on Portland’s communities of color were not accidental or coincidental; they were the result of intentional decisions on the part of our officials over the course of the century to devalue, disenfranchise, and disintegrate the wealth and wellbeing of these communities. When asked in 1977 about the displacement of poor residents of color caused by a freeway expansion like the ones he’d encouraged across the country, Moses responded,

“Let’s be sensible. How do you visualize the area that we cleared out for the Fordham expansion downtown? They needed the space. Now I ask you, what was that neighborhood? It was a Puerto Rican slum. Do you remember it? Yeah, well I lived there for many years and it was the worst slum in New York. And you want to leave it there?”¹⁰⁷

Land, Environment, and Justice in the District Today

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the last two centuries spent removing land and homes from the hands of people of color, particularly black and indigenous people, has left an indelible mark on patterns of landownership, residence, and wealth in West Multnomah County. The black homeownership rate in the City of Portland has declined 18.5 points (46.9% to 28.4%) since 1970). Black households added in

⁹⁹ (Sarachan, 2013)

¹⁰⁰ (Semuels, 2016)

¹⁰¹ (Perry, 2017)

¹⁰² (Hare, 2018)

¹⁰³ (Hare, 2018)

¹⁰⁴ (Parks, 2012)

¹⁰⁵ (Hare, 2018)

¹⁰⁶ (Parks, 2012)

¹⁰⁷ (Sarachan, 2013)

that time period overwhelmingly rent at a rate of 8.24 to 1.¹⁰⁸ Only Asian households own houses at approximately equal rates to those of white households in Portland since 2000. It's important to recognize here that the aggregation of Asian households into a single statistic hides the disparity between East Asian households and South or Southeast Asian households; only Chinese and Vietnamese households were found to exceed the white homeownership rate in 2010, while South and Southeast Asian households were significantly more likely to rent.¹⁰⁹ While economic pressures have driven down the homeownership rate for everyone in recent years, black and indigenous people of color have seen the fastest decline and remain significantly suppressed.¹¹⁰ The implications of this gap for wealth and equity outcomes now and into the future are concerning. Homeownership is the most common way that Americans build wealth, and whether or not someone's parents owned a home remains a significant predictor of whether that person will own a home themselves.¹¹¹ When this interruption of the intergenerational transfer of homeownership is exacerbated by racial income gaps and the housing market crash of the Great Recession, the result is a black homeownership rate that has not substantially changed since housing discrimination became illegal in 1968,¹¹² not to mention average net worths for black and Latinx individuals that barely clear 1/10th of the white average.¹¹³

Even when renting in our district, West Multnomah residents of color still face substantial (and illegal) racial discrimination in their search for housing to this day. A 2010 audit conducted by the Fair Housing Council and the Portland Housing Bureau found that, in 64% of cases they tested, landlords and leasing agents discriminated against potential black and/or Latinx tenants, asking for higher rent, deposits, and additional fees, and denying access to applications, special offers, or desirable units. Cases in which the PHB identified discrimination were concentrated on the West side, in our district, meaning the rates are most likely even higher here.¹¹⁴

Neighborhoods we frequently work in and whose residents access our services, such as Dunthorpe, Hewett, and Skyline, appear as white-only neighborhoods on redlining maps from 1935-1940. In fact, if you walk just one block west or south of our office here in Montgomery Park, you'd be standing on land that members of "subversive races", as HOLC put it, would not have been permitted to own or reside in.¹¹⁵ According to our own Annual Report for 2018, the District completed just one project on a property where a non-white family could have lived or owned land prior to 1950. Knowing what we know now about how wealth, and therefore the capacity to own property, are transferred within families from generation to generation, it shouldn't be a shock that these patterns in our own work with landowners mirror the patterns of racial segregation that have persisted in this city for the last century. As an organization that has decided to prioritize equity and environmental justice in its work, however, we must consider this as a call to action and start to break this cycle.

¹⁰⁸ (Cusack, 2019)

¹⁰⁹ (Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2015)

¹¹⁰ (Jaquiss, 2019)

¹¹¹ (Choi, Zhu, & Goodman, 2018)

¹¹² (Singletary, 2018)

¹¹³ (Jan, 2017)

¹¹⁴ (Hannah-Jones, Portland housing audit finds discrimination in 64 percent of tests; city has yet to act against landlords, 2011)

¹¹⁵ (Robert K. Nelson, 2019)

The conversation about equity outcomes would be incomplete without a discussion of environmental justice. While equity is the condition in which one's identity cannot predict one's outcomes, environmental justice is achieved when one's identity does not predict one's degree of protection from environmental hazards or one's ability to participate in the decisions that determine whether the places they live, work, and play will be safe and healthy.¹¹⁶ The displacement of communities of color from properties and neighborhoods with good access to green space has tangible and inequitable impacts. Exposure to natural spaces has been shown to improve both mental health and physical well-being; surgery patients whose windows overlook green space have even been shown to recover more quickly. Moreover, these benefits increase as green spaces achieve greater biodiversity.¹¹⁷ Access to agriculture and food gardens is also limited in more urban areas of our district; we have just one community garden in which plots are available to the public between Cornell Rd. and Stadium Freeway.¹¹⁸ Community gardens and urban agriculture have the potential to provide not only an opportunity to reap the benefits of contact with natural spaces, but improved access to nutritious food, fruits and vegetables in particular. When these spaces are distributed inequitably, communities in the urban center have impaired access to these benefits. For an example, let's consider Forest Park, one of the country's largest urban forests: while one can safely walk into the park via multiple trailheads in the upscale neighborhood west of our office, most other park entrances either require a car or heavily favor those who drive. Transit access is nonexistent on Cornell and Skyline Boulevards, and Highway 30 separates transit stops from the park entrances extending north along the river.¹¹⁹ While Forest Park is public to anyone who can get there, our city could be doing more to turn that "anyone" into "everyone".

Throughout the Portland Metro area, but particularly in our district, the place a person lives also determines their exposure to environmental hazards and degradation. Air quality, water quality, and proximity to industrial sites all vary widely from neighborhood to neighborhood here. The industrial sanctuaries that replaced homes from Guild's Lake to Linnton and from Albina to St. John's are also home to many of the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) for pollution so severe that our 10-mile stretch of the Willamette River earned a Superfund site designation in 2000.¹²⁰ These PRPs released a range of toxic pollutants into the Willamette River throughout the 20th century, pollutants that sank into the sediment on the river bottom. Any creature that subsists on resident (non-migratory) fish, from osprey to otters to humans, faces severe health impacts, including a significant increase in the risk of cancer for humans.¹²¹ While fish advisories are posted at sites like Cathedral Park warning against eating resident fish, community members who work closely with houseless residents remain concerned that word hasn't reached people on the margins who rely on the fish for food security.¹²²

These riverfront neighborhoods are also the most exposed to the rapidly growing hazards associated with Portland's fossil fuel industry. While there are many fossil fuel companies currently operating in the Guild's Lake Industrial Sanctuary, most are just receiving and storing fuels like crude oil;

¹¹⁶ (EPA, 2019)

¹¹⁷ (Dearborn & Kark, 2009)

¹¹⁸ (Multnomah County, 2019)

¹¹⁹ (Conservancy, 2019)

¹²⁰ (Profita, 2015)

¹²¹ (Willamette Riverkeeper, 2017)

¹²² (Taylor S. , 2019)

only one, Zenith Energy, is exporting it.¹²³ Zenith purchased the existing terminal and its associated permits from an asphalt and diesel facility in 2017, but quickly pivoted to exporting more profitable Canadian bituminous crude oil.¹²⁴ In doing so, they created the export market for this crude oil (also known as diluted bitumen, or “dilbit”) virtually out of thin air. In 2017, Oregon exported only \$2,523 of dilbit, but in 2018 that figure had risen to over \$71 million.¹²⁵ Zenith has plans to expand their capacity even further, with construction underway on new rail platforms that will effectively quadruple the number of tank cars their facility can receive at a time, dodging a City of Portland ban on new development of fossil fuel terminals by calling it a “modernization” project.¹²⁶ While Zenith denies that its dilbit, which contains other hazardous chemicals like benzene and hydrogen sulfide, poses any significant threat to public health in the neighborhoods through which it travels, the dilbit’s manufacturer agrees with regulators that the substance is exceptionally hazardous due to its flammability and the toxicity of its fumes.¹²⁷

Strong federal protections for interstate commerce by rail make it difficult for city and state officials to regulate oil-by-rail or even gather information about precisely what is coming in and out of facilities like Zenith.¹²⁸ At the state level, security concerns around disclosing the precise movements of hazardous materials have kept records on oil transport through the state heavily shrouded from the public eye.¹²⁹ Zenith Energy has worked hard to keep the details of their activities to themselves; in the summer of 2019, Zenith knowingly passed false information to the Mayor’s office, claiming that they had halted export activities entirely and that no crude oil was being passed through the facility. During an earlier spill response training, they successfully pressured state regulators to allow them to practice with diesel rather than tar sand crude.¹³⁰ As a result, regulators and the public have no way to know what the company’s response would be in a real bituminous crude spill. Zenith’s opacity around what fuels and chemical solvents they are handling prevents regulators and first responders from being prepared for an emergency situation like a spill or train derailment.¹³¹ The same people and communities that were displaced to make way for industrial sanctuaries and riverfront development in the first place- in Guild’s Lake, Linnton, and St. Johns- are also the most exposed to the hazards of a spill or explosion. Moreover, as Zenith is the first major fossil fuel exporter out of Portland, and the first to export bituminous crude on the West Coast, our waterways and riverside communities are now exposed to the new hazard of a bituminous oil spill into our river system. As Zenith expands its capacity, we can expect a similar expansion of risk and exposure for our natural areas and communities throughout the region.

Zenith Energy and its neighboring facilities were built on the dredge that filled in Guild’s Lake, Kittredge Lake, and surrounding marshes beneath Forest Park.¹³² The crude oil that passes through their

¹²³ (Friedman G. , 2019)

¹²⁴ (Friedman G. , 2019)

¹²⁵ (Friedman G. R., Crude oil trains increasingly travel through Portland, alarming regulators, 2019)

¹²⁶ (Schick, Petroleum Terminal Expands To Allow More Oil Trains Into Portland, 2019)

¹²⁷ (Friedman G. R., Crude oil trains increasingly travel through Portland, alarming regulators, 2019)

¹²⁸ (Schick, How Industry Specs And A Federal Loophole Allow Railroads to Avoid Response Planning Oversight, 2014)

¹²⁹ (Segerstrom, 2019)

¹³⁰ (Friedman G. R., Portland oil terminal execs gave mayor’s staff false information, aide’s notes indicate, 2019)

¹³¹ (Friedman G. R., Crude oil trains increasingly travel through Portland, alarming regulators, 2019)

¹³² (Schick, How We Mapped NW Portland's 'Tank Farms', 2015)

gates every day has to travel into the city through some of the neighborhoods that provided homes to the displaced: St. John's, Albina, and Linnton. On their way in and out of Portland, the fuels travel through some of our most critical and vulnerable ecosystems in the Gorge, the Columbia Slough, and the Willamette Valley.¹³³ The very same human and ecological communities that were displaced and disturbed by the "tank farms" are now experiencing the greatest exposure to the associated hazards. These communities were excluded from the decision-making process around fossil fuel transport and storage, and it's difficult for residents to even access information on the hazardous materials they're exposed to every day.

Emissions of air toxins from industrial facilities and unfiltered diesel vehicles into the air also pose risks that weigh disproportionately heavily on West Multnomah's communities of color. While smog and soot are monitored by Oregon DEQ, which will release an advisory to the public should parts per million cross a certain threshold, other air toxins are not regulated in the same way. Diesel pollution alone is thought to be responsible for as many as 460 premature deaths every year in our state,¹³⁴ and as our neighboring states have beat us to regulation of diesel motors, their most hazardous vehicles have been put to work in Multnomah County, leaving us with the dirtiest air in the state.¹³⁵ While the Oregon legislature voted in the 2019 session to phase out older and more hazardous engines for all medium- and heavy-duty diesel vehicles in Washington, Multnomah, and Clackamas counties, as well as to set a minimum of 80% clean equipment for any large state-funded construction projects going forward.¹³⁶ While this is a step in the right direction, the phase-out will not be complete until 2029,¹³⁷ and today, our rates of emission are still climbing. A national study recently showed that air pollution is largely generated by white communities and breathed in by people of color¹³⁸, and it's not hard to imagine why; we've already seen the ways in which communities of color are pushed out of safer and more desirable neighborhoods and onto the margins of industrial areas, and the ways in which pollution sources like freeways are installed in the neighborhoods in which people of color already live. Trees and houseplants can be helpful in filtering air to make it safer for people to breathe, yet another avenue by which access to green space determines health outcomes. Most people would agree that one's street address should not determine one's life expectancy, but for many people in Multnomah County, it still does. Furthermore, communities are hard-pressed to advocate for themselves when so little information is circulated about the hazards they face.

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District has resolved to work towards diversity, equity, and inclusion as an integral part of our conservation mission. We face significant barriers of our own in this pursuit: as an organization that primarily works with landowners, we are missing large segments of already underserved communities thanks to centuries of exclusionary policy. As an organization that is overseen by a board primarily composed of people who own land in our district, we are drawing our leadership from a pool that does not represent the diversity of communities in our district. Finally, as a government agency, we have a great deal of trust and accountability to rebuild with

¹³³ (Lynch, 2016)

¹³⁴ (Snell, 2019)

¹³⁵ (Multnomah County, 2019)

¹³⁶ (Snell, 2019)

¹³⁷ (Snell, 2019)

¹³⁸ (Snell, 2019)

communities of color, who have experienced these injustices at the hands of our counterparts in government.

Similar challenges exist across the environmental sector. In a foundational 2014 study of diversity in the environmental movement, Dr. Dorceta E. Taylor found that while people of color made up 36% of the U.S. population and 29% of the science and engineering workforce, the environmental sector has a “green ceiling”: of the 293 environmental non-profits, government agencies, or foundations surveyed nationwide, not a single one employed people of color at a rate exceeding 16% of their staff.¹³⁹ Other researchers have been trying to get to the root of the environmental sector’s whiteness for decades, but many studies have focused on participation in outdoor activities like camping, hiking, and visiting national parks. These activities skew heavily towards white participants, and these results have repeatedly been interpreted as a sign that racial and ethnic minorities lack the interest and experience in environmental issues that would lead them to seek out and prepare for a profession in this sector- in actuality, Dr. Taylor’s study indicated that people of color support environmental protection at a higher rate than white people.¹⁴⁰ There’s an alternative explanation for this data: that predominantly white environmental organizations and agencies have framed and approached their work in ways that do not effectively address the concerns, experiences, and cultural context that many communities of color have around environmental issues. For example, not only are non-white visitors of many national parks exposed to exhibits and interpreters that primarily showcase the history and heritage of white Americans at the expense of more diverse stories, but they also report widespread hostility and discrimination from white visitors and park staff alike.¹⁴¹ We’ve seen the degree to which race and geography determine one’s access and relationship to green space, environmental hazards, and decision-making power. Given this, is it more likely that people of color just aren’t invested in the effect that environmental issues have on their lives, or that some of the most pressing environmental concerns for these communities are different than those prioritized by white environmentalists, and that tackling those issues looks different as well?

The District now has the opportunity to step up and be a leader in our network for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. We are already taking meaningful steps towards these ideals by building racial equity principles into our policies, partner funding, and collaborations with other organizations. However, as we move forward in planning and envisioning the future of this organization, we have the opportunity to expand the scope of these efforts further towards restoring the access, participation, and power of communities of color in relationship to the lands of West Multnomah County. By recruiting and retaining a diverse community of conservationists, advocates, and environmental leaders, we can help to build a sector that recognizes that social, racial, and environmental justice are intertwined and works more effectively to achieve these goals. By creating space in our coalitions and partnerships for communities experiencing environmental injustice, we can use our position of relative power to open doors for people and priorities that have historically been underserved by organizations like ours. By amplifying the voices of communities of color in our programs, our staff, and our leadership, we will not only be helping to restore some of what has been taken from these communities, but we will be ensuring that our conservation and restoration work is better informed, more resilient, and addresses a wider range of needs for the human and ecological interests that have always co-existed on this land.

¹³⁹ (Taylor D. E., 2014)

¹⁴⁰ (Taylor D. E., 2014)

¹⁴¹ (Scott & Lee, 2018)

This district's communities of color have been denied a seat at the table in deciding how land, water, wildlife, and people will be treated in our state, city, and district for a very long time; an essential step in our equity work must be inviting these communities to have a seat at ours.

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West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

Equity Lens

DRAFT – September 12, 2019 -- DRAFT

When to Use the Equity Lens

- When making key organizational decisions.
- When reviewing or developing organizational policies, programs and practices.
- When identifying and addressing biased behavior toward target groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion and class, among others.

Guiding Principles:

- By working proactively and deliberately to be equitable and inclusive, we will be more successful in our work.
- An inclusive range of voices will produce the richest discussion possible in order to achieve desired results.
- Identify and develop relationships with Partners of diverse backgrounds.
- Listen to understand Partner needs and work toward achieving the goals and outcomes desired by Partners.
- Pause at key points in the decision or program development and use the lens.

Identify Issue:

1. What is the policy, program, practice and/or decision under review?
2. What assumptions are we bringing into this?
3. What are the equity outcomes we are hoping to create?
4. Are there groups experiencing disparities based on social identity that we wish to benefit? Up to this point, have they had a voice?
5. How are we intentionally engaging multiple perspectives? Are we excluding anyone?

Evaluate:

6. Which of our assumptions form barriers or otherwise decrease equity for groups experiencing disparities based on social identity? Which of our assumptions increase equity?
7. What additional data, assessments and tools for analysis might be useful to more deeply understand the policy, program, practice and/or decision from a range of perspectives?
8. Beside those we intend to benefit, what groups experiencing disparities based on social identity are affected by this policy, program, practice and/or decision? Are they at the table? If not, why not?
9. Are there unintended consequences or outcomes, especially those that negatively impact a group experiencing disparities based on social identity

Reassess/Analyze:

10. Based on our evaluation, what is it we need to do differently before moving forward with the policy, program, practice and/or decision under review?
11. Based on our evaluation, what are the needed revisions to the policy, program, practice and/or decision under review so as to ensure equity and inclusion?
12. How are we going to remove unintended negative outcomes?

Confirm:

Based on what we needed to do differently and our incorporation of needed revisions, did we:

13. Ensure that those we hope to benefit had a voice?
14. Get multiple perspectives from diverse audiences by inviting others to be at the table or soliciting their views?
15. Eliminate unintended negative outcomes?

Reflect:

16. With whom did we share results and feedback? Did we ensure communication takes place in an inclusive, culturally sensitive and responsible manner?
17. How will we use our experience and learning with this lens application to raise awareness of groups experiencing disparities based on social identity?

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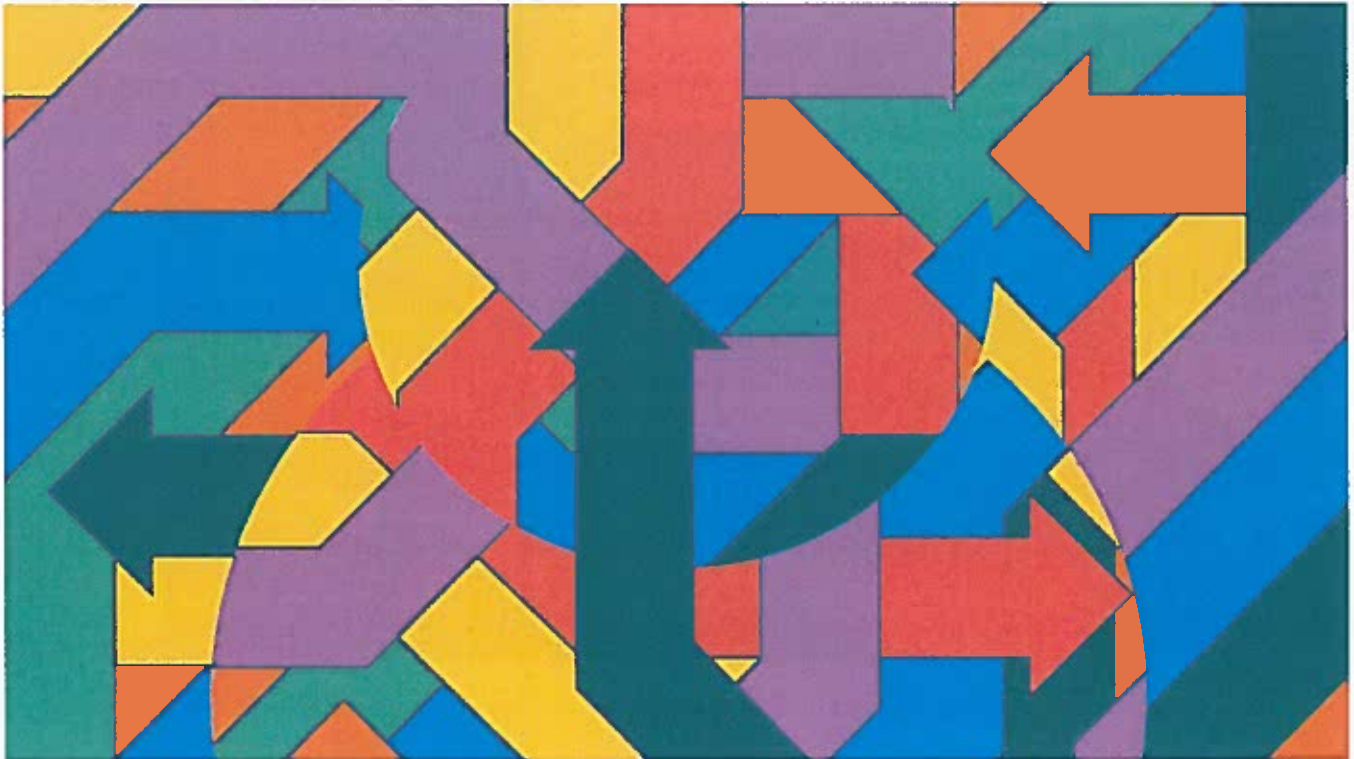
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How focusing on diversity of lived experience can improve organizations

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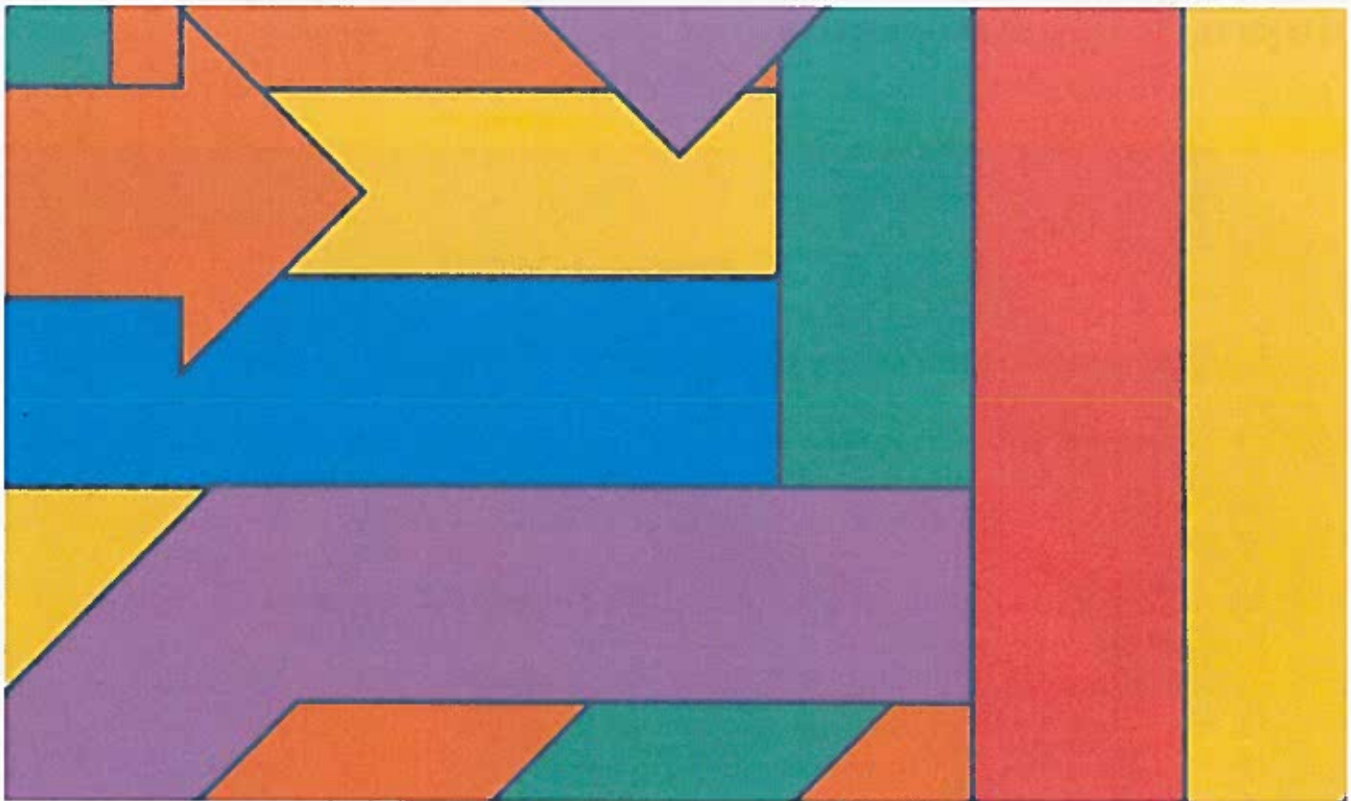
[Photo: Jackie2k/iStock]

BY BOB MCKINNON
5 MINUTE READ

"There is a problem. The tool doesn't seem to be working. Everyone here is getting similar scores. What are you going to do?"

This was the message we received just days before we were set to launch "Your American Dream Score"—a tool designed to get people to reflect on the various factors that influence where we end up on the economic ladder.

The tool calculates an individual's score based on the number of factors they had working for them and the number working against them. The lower the score, the more advantages one had. A higher score meant they had more to overcome.



[Photo: Jackie2k/iStock]

The call came from one of our partners whose employees were testing the tool. Their scores were clustering on the lower end, suggesting a workforce that had a lot more things going for than against them. After checking the algorithm, we confirmed the tool was producing accurate scores. The problem was that the workforce appeared to be lacking diversity in lived experience.

On the surface, no one would accuse this organization of not being diverse. There was obvious diversity in gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. But was there also diversity in class, background, upbringing? Lived experience can be defined in a few ways. The Germanic

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origins of the words translate to having “lived through” something—often associated with suffering. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines it more broadly as any “personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, firsthand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people.”

In other words, the idea of diversity in lived experience tries to recognize the unique set of challenges that each of us face in our lives—and that only we truly know.

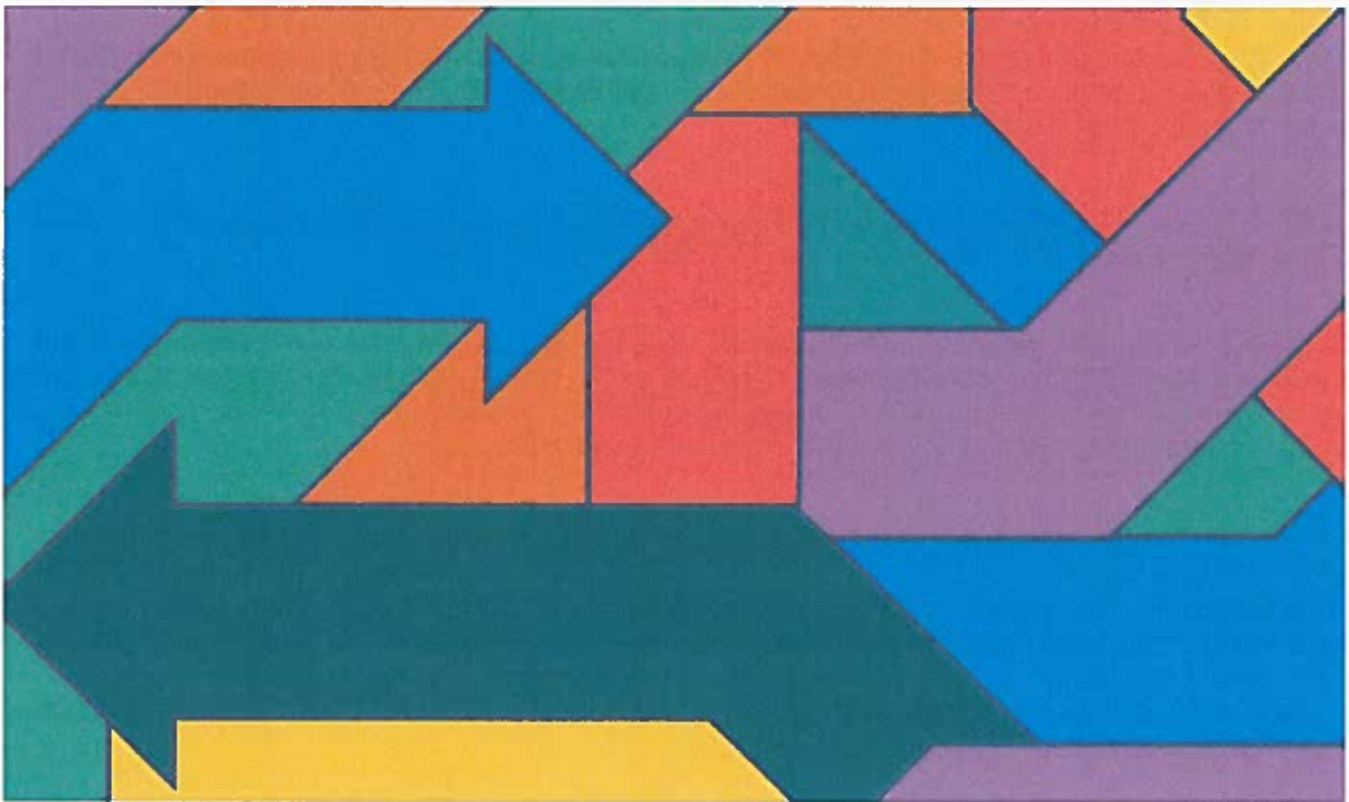
Much of diversity work—whether in hiring or training—asks us to confront our own biases. But these are largely about how we see other people, instead of first starting with how we see ourselves. Or to use a more familiar phrase: Instead of putting ourselves in someone else’s shoes, perhaps we need to first understand and share how we came to stand in our own shoes.

And therein lies the opportunity within any organization. The benefits of diversity and inclusion are well documented and beyond dispute. As is the need to pay particular attention to those groups that have historically been discriminated against, marginalized, or persecuted. But how do we create a environment where every person is able to bring to their work and teams the fullness of their lived experience? One that includes not only gender, race, and sexual orientation but age, geography, class, trauma, upbringing, beliefs, family structure, and the myriad other influences that someone has “lived through” to get to where they are today.

When this happens, it can lead to:

- Deeper appreciation for the value and different perspectives of all involved
- Increased openness, improved teamwork, and more inclusive solutions
- Recruitment, hiring, and training practices where workforces truly embrace diversity

In their article [“Why Most Diversity Programs Fail,”](#) Frank Dobbins and Alexandra Kalev write that researchers reviewing nearly a thousand studies of diversity programs show “[t]he positive effects of diversity training rarely last beyond a day or two, and a number of studies suggest that it can activate bias or spark a backlash. Nonetheless, nearly half of midsize companies use it, as do nearly all the Fortune 500.”



[Photo: Jackie2k/iStock]

One of the issues that Dobbins and Kalev cite for these failures is that by focusing on singular types of diversity, the programs become unintentionally exclusionary and divisive.

Consider, also, hiring practices. The most-common research method for measuring discrimination in hiring is the résumé audit method. In this research, all content on a résumé is held constant—except for one variable that is intended to ferret out potential discrimination. Previous studies have shown bias both when the name indicated a female applicant and more famously when the name suggested the résumé likely belonged to a minority candidate.

Fewer people are familiar with similar research that suggests discrimination based on class. In this study, [the variable that was altered was the applicant's activities or interests](#). For some it signaled wealth (polo, classical music). For others, it suggested a lower class (pick up sports, country music). The upper-class applicants had a call-back rate for interviews that was four times higher than their lower-class counterparts.

There is no doubt that privilege has been unfairly conveyed to people of certain races (e.g., white) and gender (e.g., male) But our privileges and disadvantages are many, not singular. Creating a diverse organization requires us to look both across an organization *and* recognize the diversity within each individual.

This is not to suggest that we don't need to address the individual biases we have toward certain groups. We do. Nor is this suggesting a false equivalency between all aspects of our identity. We know certain groups have historically and continue to bear a heavier burden than others. But we

Phased Timeline (July 2019 – December 2020)

2

		2019					2020										2021			
		Application of Equity Lens (Full Extent TBD) = ●																		
Phase	Activity	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan +
1	1.1 Grounding, Establishing Roles & Direction-Setting			●																
1	1.2 Foundational Assessment, Framing & Launch				●															
2	2.1 Form Theme Groups & Plan Conversations			●			●													
2	2.2 Hold Theme Conversations						●					●								
2	2.3 Focused Research, Assessment & Outreach						●					●								
2	2.4 Consolidate Input & Draft LRBP Outline												●		●					
3	3.1 Draft LRBP Document															●				
3	3.2 Review & Finalize Plan																●		●	
3	3.3 Plan Release, Communication & Outreach																			●
3	3.4 Implimentation Planning & Resources																			●

● Application of Equity Lens: At regular intervals, we will facilitate “step back” reviews of issues, opportunities and direction that are emerging from the Conversation Groups and research, and self-critique on level and effectiveness of DEI engagement and interpretation. These checkpoints will also serve as opportunities to review and reflect on goals and priorities surfacing through Phases 2.2 and 2.3, which will eventually form the primary elements of the final LRBP.

o Pause and/or lens reviews may be placed in between phases, at conversation framing and assessment, at benchmarks, between LRBP outline and drafts, and in outreach planning.

- How to address different views on direction and priority that may emerge should be discussed generally and may be examined more deeply during these pauses.
- Checks and pauses may result in any list of adjustments to approach, research or clarification to ensure the process will deliver on LRBP goals.