

**DRAFT - WMSWCD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Meeting Summary**  
**June 14, 2022 10:00am to 12:00pm, WMSWCD Zoom meeting**

**Attending:** Scott Gall & Laura Taylor (Co-Chairs); Ari DeMarco, Shahbaz Khan, Mary Logalbo, Terri Preeg Riggsby, Randi Razalenti

**Welcome/Check-In/Announcements** – Mary shared that Shahbaz will be working with the District and PCC on a demographic data mapping project. Randi Shared that this meeting will be the last DEI Committee meeting she will be attending for the foreseeable future due to time constraints with the District move but will still be assisting the Committee on matters as needed.

**Approval of April 12, 2022 Meeting Summary** – Approved as written.

**Rotating minute taker for DEI Committee meetings:** As Randi is taking time off from the DEI Committee to work on other time sensitive work for the District, the rest of the team that are staff will take turns taking minutes. The Co-Chairs will only take minutes when they are not charged chairing the meeting.

**Action item:** Randi to put together a checklist for the staff to use for taking minutes.

**DEI track coverage at CONNECT:** Laura and Scott will be presenting at the CONNECT conference. Mary shared that Indi Namkoong will be presenting on the *Whose Land is Our Land?* report.

**Education Niche Finding Report:** Mary highlighted key portions of the report, starting with page 6 of the report that contains broad recommendation areas. The first five points listed were discussed as to how we as an organization can work on these recommendations.

Also highlighted was Appendix A which contained providers that provide culturally specific programming. Appendix B (page 67) is a list of what we learned from community members and leaders.

This is a niche finding exercise focused on what kind of education the District can provide very specifically to BIPOC communities with the mindset that these folks have been historically marginalized and the District wants to proactively serve those communities better. This was all included within our Long Range Business Plan (LRBP).

Mary is helping the school gardens that we have formerly funded to find other sources of funding. The recommendations highlighted where there were gaps, and we want to help those that have formerly been funded by the District in the past to get to other funding that are out there to be more self-sufficient. The District wants to better direct funding to those that have not benefited from District funding in the past.

The challenges that these marginalized communities are facing are very big systemic challenges. We've thought of some ways to help facilitate access to land, but it is a very large undertaking. Appendix B will be very helpful to the staff for understanding who to connect with. Conservation programs at the District should be thinking about how to incorporate this work into their programs and relationship building with these communities. Access to fresh food is really important to African communities that Terri works with – not just gardens but also fishing. It would be good if we can somehow find ways to increase access to fishing to communities that need this. This relates to the District's work since the water quality in our District is a concern for fishing in the area. Clean air is also another large concern for communities that Terri works with. Messaging and engaging communities could be centered around these concerns that these communities have raised. In the Slavic community we also heard a lot about toxicity in fish. There are partners that are working on this that we can think about working with on cross-messaging.

The District is currently working on creating new partnerships, creating diversity on our staff and board, and looking at ways that we can provide access to land. The City's Parks and Recreation community garden program were unable to make culturally specific community gardens due to exclusion that would occur by only limiting access to certain parties. There are opportunities for the District to work with urban gardening programs that would help enable us to work with underserved communities that we

haven't worked with before. This is something that Terri is already working on. The District recently helped to install a community garden at a houseless shelter as well. Terri has a tool call a Goals Grid, which refers to what you want to achieve, add, reserve, and eliminate that could be helpful for staff to go through and brainstorm in conjunction with the niche finding report.

Staff want to better track landowners that are open to provide space for learning opportunities to the community, and it would be great to incorporate into our database. It would also be good to have a framework to engage landowners and ask about this. Spending the time to read through the whole report would be helpful ahead of whenever we have the brainstorming session.

**Action item:** Terri will email the tool to the DEI Committee members. The staff to continue brainstorming the work to be done out of the recommendations from the report.

**Discuss how to carry forward learnings from white supremacy culture training:** The staff recently engaged in a white supremacy culture training. White supremacy culture can also be referred to as dominant culture. General discussion occurred on how we could take learnings from this training into actionable items or what we may want to emphasize to the staff and/or board.

Mary noted that she and several staff want to better incorporate traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) into their current model of restoration work. How to slow down and not take on more than we can manage all came up in conversations amongst staff regarding this training. As we think about other skillsets that we need at the Board level, this is another area that we could benefit finding on our Board.

Ari wondered if we could incorporate some of the lessons learned into our equity lens and could potentially relate to how we use the equity lens. Or even a reminder within the lens to help remember some of the information from this training. Randi suggested that we could have a pre-exercise for equity lens trainings of going through the heart of very specific pieces of what dominant culture perpetuates and what we want to avoid.

Randi also suggested that staff use the term dominant culture so that people can help see themselves in it instead of such extreme wording that can be hard for someone to see themselves in, as white supremacy is distracting and can make people think of only extreme violence from white supremacist groups.

Scott found that there were pieces from the reading that we could incorporate into our onboarding and looking at characteristics at times to understand how we can modify programs and work.

The antidotes in the reading were helpful to understand how to move outside of the dominant culture. In the ecology community we have examples of natural systems that have taught people alternative ways of thinking, such as how there isn't either/or thinking, as nature is a diverse and complicated system.

We can try to incorporate the training exercises into staff and tech staff meetings during sections devoted to our equity work. Shahbaz also mentioned the resource that was given at the training that we consider incorporating into staff use: <https://cyndisuarez.com/my-book>, and that there may be other activities that we can do that staff can do exercises on their own as well.

**Action item:** Randi to find out if we are free to share materials from the training internally with staff and externally with partners as needed. Randi to send materials (as permitted) to Terri to share with the Board to read through as they are able. Staff members think about and experiment ways that we can incorporate the training learnings into equity lens use.

## **Action Items Review**

See above

**Next Meeting:** August 9, 10a-noon

Notes taken by Randi Razalenti