



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Meeting Minutes

10 am – 12 pm, Tuesday, February 14, 2023

Minutes keeper: Mary Logalbo

Attendees: Mary Logalbo, Scott Gall, Lynn Barlow, Martina Avendano, Shahbaz Khan, Renee Magyar

10:00 am – Welcome/check-in/announcements – All

- Lynn has scheduled a debrief later this week on the hiring process for the Budget and Fiscal Manager position. This meeting will be held on February 16th and will discuss the process and lessons learned. Lynn also shared that the selected hire has signed their paperwork and is slated to start work part-time on April 3rd. Michele Levis has graciously agreed to staying on to onboard this person, and fill the gap until they are able to join our staff.
- Mary contacted Vo Vo and is hoping to schedule a training in Trauma Informed De-escalation, but we are still waiting to hear back from them. Mary purchased their book when she attended a training they delivered at the Portland Parks Foundation Summit and would be happy to share this book with others if they are interested. We are hoping to have the training delivered in May or June after the interns are hired on and before the end of the fiscal year.
- We received 65 GIS & Field Intern applications and a selection team has applied a rubric to those applications and whittled them down to those we will interview. April 3rd will be the hopeful starting date for the new interns.

10:15 am – Review minutes from last meeting – All

- The minutes were accepted as presented with no changes.

10:20 am – Clarify meaning of a phrase in our land acknowledgement – Laura

- This agenda item was shifted to the top of the agenda since Renee was hoping to attend for solely this item.
- Laura brought this item to the committee's attention, but wasn't present to discuss it due to a Jury Duty summons. Laura did share some of her thoughts on this in the DEI meeting packet. Laura was interested in clarifying what was meant by "Authentic Cultural Narratives."
- There was a goal of clarifying this for our own understanding and perhaps editing for clarity by future users and readers. We agreed with Laura's written insights on the meaning, but thought

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we might even strengthen the language a bit more in regards to centering on Indigenous voices and stories. We discussed how we might define the narrative a bit more. We thought that since this verbiage was unclear to some of our staff, it's likely not clear to others and would benefit from editing. We discussed that it would be good to work on editing this outside of our meeting and ideally have Gabe Sheoships and/or others review this. Gabe helped vet and inform our original statement, which stemmed from one he'd put together with an advisory board. Having Gabe's input again will help ensure we don't lose any important meanings in our re-wording.

- Concerns brought up by some, including some in Indigenous communities, regarding how this can feel performative and disingenuous was raised. Discussion around how this may be the case for some, though it certainly hasn't been the case from many others we've heard from, but we still want to take this concern seriously and think about how we move beyond a statement to a commitment.
- Mary shared how she has given various land acknowledgements that are tailored to the group and tries to always end and center on actions that we've done or will do to better center on the commitment and move beyond the statement. The need to "read the room" regarding what's most appropriate to speak to and about given the audience was further discussed.
- We discussed the importance of further developing partnerships and responding to what we've heard and learned thus far from Indigenous community members and leaders. Mary shared about how the Confluence Field School group is moving forward in developing a plan to hear from Indigenous community members and leaders in regards to how the land care agencies represented might better practice allyship with Indigenous partners, increase Indigenous access to land for care and harvesting, and learn from Traditional Ecological Knowledge ways we might better care for the land. Mary will be asking for some of next year's DEI budget to support this work.
- The group discussed how it would like to further talk about this statement in general in regards to how we have and will honor this commitment.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** The committee agrees to make space in a separate stand-alone meeting to talk about the flagged wording along with this overall statement, how it's followed with action, and how it can be meaningful and not just performative. How to ensure this is a commitment and not just an acknowledgement will be discussed. How might we tailor the event to make sure this is appropriate to the audience will also be discussed. Proposed edits will be done ahead of time on a shared document so that we can react to proposals at this meeting.

10:40 am – DEI Committee Leadership update – Laura/Scott

- Laura would like to step off the committee due to capacity concerns.
- The original model was to have co-chairs circle on and off with some overlap with each co-chair serving ~2 years. Scott has been co-chair for 3 years.
- This has prompted the committee co-chairs to want to discuss the committee's intent overall and its general format (listed below).
- The group discussed how it's members might share the current tasks of the co-chairs and practice shared leadership abandoning the need for just two individuals leading the committee's



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work. In response to this the group discussed what roles the co-chairs currently play and how they might be divided up more equally amongst members to share the workload. Co-chairs currently help develop meeting packets and track progress – these tasks can be shared further to make sure things don't get dropped. Laura developed a spreadsheet that can be used to further track these items.

- **ACTION ITEM:** A plan for moving forward with a shared leadership model and tracking mechanisms needs to be solidified.

10:45 am – Visioning the future purpose and format of the DEI Committee – Laura/Scott

- Scott explained how the DEI Committee's work has evolved over time. Initially, the DEI Committee was very busy laying the groundwork for our organization with tasks like creating our racial equity statement and equity lens. After this groundwork had been laid, the committee has become more of a vetting body. Now we seem to be at more of an implementation or operationalizing phase. Scott is feeling like we are in a philosophical moment where we need to ask how to move the work forward and have leadership or accountability moving forward.
- Some staff discussed how they don't feel they carve out enough time out of their workplan to get related tasks done, but instead try to "smoosh in time needed." We discussed how we now have all been encouraged to make some time for this in our workplan and rated on our performance in this realm in our employee evaluations, but staff still felt too pressured to continue delivery of all their other programmatic tasks along with DEI work without being encouraged to carve out extra space to do so. We also discussed how EMSWCD asks their staff to dedicate at least 5% of their time toward DEI related efforts and how this is a much higher general bar than what we've set.
- Shahbaz shared how he feels it makes sense that this work has been evolving. We now have a lens and process where much of the work has already been done. He mentioned we might still consider having a lead person that can be contacted to bounce ideas around, but also perhaps that can simply be done within this group. He shared that currently it feels like we are at a phase of maintenance.
- We discussed if we still will proceed with bi-monthly meetings? We also discussed it seems that we still fill our DEI agendas with topics that need discussion, so this frequency seems likely to be continually needed. We also discussed how its advantageous to not have too much time between meetings so that progress can be tracked and responded to while things are still somewhat fresh.

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- Lynn was sharing how she was drawn to this organization due to its DEI focus. She's heard from everyone during their performance reviews that they're at capacity. It seems like we need to be focused on operationalizing DEI. One thought or proposal from Lynn might be retaining the committee and meeting at whatever frequency that feels right and focusing on how we are implementing and ingraining DEI in our programs. These meeting might address how we sync things and what do we do when we see one program taking more on?
- Shahbaz raised a concern that there could be a mismatching of staff that aren't in the know about certain programs or cannot impact this due to their roles? Scott reiterated that how we are responding to DEI initiatives seems to fall into some very specific program buckets, so there's a broader question about how this should or could apply to our other program areas? For example, in the LRBP process, land access and education came up a lot. Lynn shared how she felt bringing multiple perspectives to each program's DEI operationalization could be beneficial.
- Scott shared how much of our DEI work currently feels very outwardly focused ranging from partner funding response to disparities analysis, but how we will never really truly be done evolving and growing as an agency with continued need for trainings and growing.
- The Progress, Plans, and Problems ("PPP") format we now use for supervisor check-ins is neat at keeping things on track...perhaps this could be a layout for future DEI meetings?
- We do have plans for a DEI Interns that will be focused on DEI topics next year and it will be important to have this committee to help respond to their work.
- A conversation on our partners and related partner funding sprang up as part of this conversation. Questions around if we could do more collaboration on the equity front and learn from one another was raised. Mary explained how we do collaborate on this front to some degree, but there's likely more opportunity to do so, especially as a collective. We discussed how and why we are responding to community member and community leads recommendations to support additional community and culturally-specific partner efforts in the realm of land-based education (vs coming up with our own programming). We were strongly encouraged to not create new programming where partners were already delivering community informed programming with established community relations where we are lacking, but to instead support these community partners. We further discussed how some of these partners have invited further collaboration while others simply are seeking support to deliver their programs.
- Are there other ways to share the workload including events and tasks? Martina brought up ideas about different events and integrating tasks/workload with a shared calendar, teams, and/or another tool? We discussed how in teams we can attach files. We could look at winnowing down the number of channels in teams to make it more user friendly. What are the expectations around checking the channels?
 - **ACTION ITEM:** This topic was left open ended regarding the best tool to share workload through and merits further conversation.
- The group was in agreement that we still want to have a committee. We discussed that like our conservation work, the need to center on equity and inclusion will never be done and that we



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will always want to make space for this. As we move forward Lynn asked us to think about how we can layer and imbed this work?

- **ACTION ITEM:** Although the committee agreed to continue to meet, the process for forming an agenda and/or bringing program areas up for review needs to be firmed up.

11:40 am – DEI Committee Workplan for FY 2023-24 – Scott, Laura/All

- Not much time was left for this review of this topic, so Scott offered to share a document that can be marked up remotely by staff in a shared document prior to the March board presentations.
- The voluntary discussion item (#16 on the workplan draft) was flagged for potential removal or review as this was something that was started during the pandemic when we were no longer able to discuss relevant events at each other's cubicles. These were somewhat work intensive on the organizers (typically the co-chairs) and not well attended. Alternative models suggested included prompting discussions with readings and having "brown-bag" lunch sessions to casually discuss topics.
- The "Whose Land" speaker series was discussed. We talked about leaving this and other items that might gain traction given opportunity. We also discussed the need to flag those items that are priority for moving forward this coming year. Adding a section to track progress was also mentioned.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Committee members are asked to go into the workplan document and provide edits and comments.

11:50 am – DEI Internship Update – Scott/Mary

- Mary is meeting with PSU contacts on February 24th and will report back to the group on opportunities to collaborate with our DEI Data Analyst position.
- The group discussed winter as the ideal time for bringing an intern on for this work given the slight lull in field work during the winter season and the need to make space for recruitment and interviewing in the fall. The timing will also need to be somewhat responsive to any partnering PSU programs we learn might be a good fit in helping us with the analyst and data justice mentorship we're searching for support of.
- Budget wise we'll need money for the intern as well as some potential funding for a community-based partner such as Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) to help vet data justice issues and presentation of findings. PSU might be able to help provide some of this review.

12:05 am – Action item review – Mary/All

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12:06 pm – Adjourn - Next meeting April 11, 2023 – Time 10 AM. Next Minutes keeper: Shahbaz