



DEIJ DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & JUSTICE Action Fund

A collection of FY23 project learnings and accomplishments

FY23 REPORT

The Nature
Conservancy 

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About the DEIJ Action Fund

© HEATH SMITH/TNC PHOTO CONTEST 2019 *Oregon coast lighthouse*

Our planet faces a triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and rising inequities, which are interconnected in their causes, consequences, and solutions. We know that embedding values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, and incorporating multiple perspectives and approaches, are essential to helping to tackle these global issues. TNC is committed to developing and practicing innovative, collaborative, and nature-based solutions to address the planet's most pressing environmental challenges.

In early 2022, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) took yet another step to strengthen its commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization by creating the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Action Fund. The new internal funding mechanism supports Business Units (BU)'s efforts to embed DEI in their strategy locally, helping to advance TNC's vision and our 2030 Goals by using our DEI Compass as strategic guidance.

Our vision is a world where people and nature thrive. The natural world thrives when all people-of all communities- thrive together.

Equity and justice are essential to TNC's conservation work because addressing poverty and inequality is central to ensuring a more sustainable future. By providing initial support for BUs to enact diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or justice-related efforts, the DEIJ Action Fund sought to ensure that funding limitations did not curb this vital component of our work. Funding was directed to BUs working to improve understanding, awareness, and skillsets around DEIJ in a local context (whether local geographically or to a specific function) and helping to address local cultural systemic issues.

To achieve our ambitious mission and meet our 2023 goals, TNC aims to strengthen and develop our staff's composition, skillsets, and structures and embed DEIJ across all functions of our work. TNC wants to incorporate a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just lens, both in funding that comes into TNC and our investments and spending outside the organization.

We measured the pilot year's success by the ability of awarded BUs to provide critical services and support that met the immediate needs of our staff and the communities with whom we partner, and by the community impact, internal engagement, and increased diverse staff representation in leadership. The one-year pilot and the Action Fund's continuation for additional years depended on the availability of funding and results achieved during the pilot term. We are happy to report that it was a successful first year!



© MARIA JOSÉ HERNÁNDEZ/TNC *Murui muina indigenous grandmother*



TNC has been working on behalf of conservation since 1951, and since then we have delivered many benefits. But in today's context and as an organization that now works in more than 70 countries and territories around the world, we understand that we need to be more intentional in incorporating resources that allow us to deliver concrete, direct, and measurable benefits to people—particularly to those most vulnerable to climate impacts. There isn't successful conservation without people, and to achieve our 2030 Goals, TNC must make people a core element of our conservation work.

To that end, TNC developed the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Compass, an ambitious and needed framework that will ultimately strengthen both our organization and the work we do. Compass is meant to guide our organization as it identifies and seizes opportunities to incorporate DEIJ into all our work. This is a responsibility that belongs to all TNC employees, at the organization and business unit level, making it more sustainable, respectful, and inclusive of the communities with whom we partner.

“ This DEIJ Compass is an ambitious and necessary framework that will strengthen our organization's work and culture. Though implementing this guidance will take time and come with challenges, the Compass helps all TNC teams and individuals understand how to make our work more respectful of each other and the communities we serve.”

—James E. Page Jr., *Chief Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer*

The DEIJ Action Fund's overall goal is to help put our DEIJ organizational strategy (DEIJ Compass) into practice, actively working to embed DEIJ throughout the organization, and to serve as a means of supporting continued implementation of the DEIJ Compass.

The DEIJ Compass has four dimensions — People, Approach, Voice, and Resources, but it is not prescriptive. It is meant to guide staff and BUs as they identify DEIJ needs and the best way to meet them.

PEOPLE

focuses internally on growing and empowering TNC's workplace and global workforce of staff, trustees, and volunteers to leverage our potential, reach our goals, and live our values.

APPROACH

relates to how we work with and learn from people, partners and places throughout our work to be in balance with nature.

VOICE

addresses how we communicate who we are as an organization and how we advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in our broader work and reach.

RESOURCES

applies a diverse, equitable, inclusive and just lens in viewing funding that comes into TNC and how we invest it outside the organization.

THE DEI ACTION FUND'S PILOT YEAR

REQUIREMENTS

DEIJ Action Fund resources were directed to BUs working to improve understanding, awareness, and skillsets around DEIJ in a local context (whether local geographically or to a specific function) and helping to address local cultural and/or systemic issues.

Proposals needed to address projects that intentionally incorporate DEIJ, such as, but not limited to:



Building capacity (internal or external) or capabilities for cultural competency and other DEIJ-related topics.



Working alongside community members and partners on projects that respond to community needs, center equitable conservation practices, and advance TNC's 2030 goals.



Relationship building and/or partnerships with diverse communities or organizations.



Training that raises awareness and builds skillsets around DEIJ topics to enable conditions for achieving TNC's mission and goals.



Structural or systematic improvements that create a more inclusive workforce or work environment.



Supporting recruitment efforts that diversify our workforce.

The DEIJ Action Fund awarded \$400,000 between ten DEIJ-focused projects across the organization to embed DEIJ in our practices, create systematic changes, and/or individual cultural competency development. Considerations were made for equitable distribution of funds to projects across TNC's regions, with priority given to BUs with limited unrestricted funds.

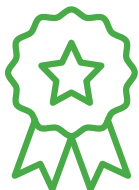
PROPOSALS OVERVIEW



In 2022, the DEIJ Action Fund committee reviewed

47 PROPOSALS SUBMITTED = **\$2,061,781**
TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED (USD)

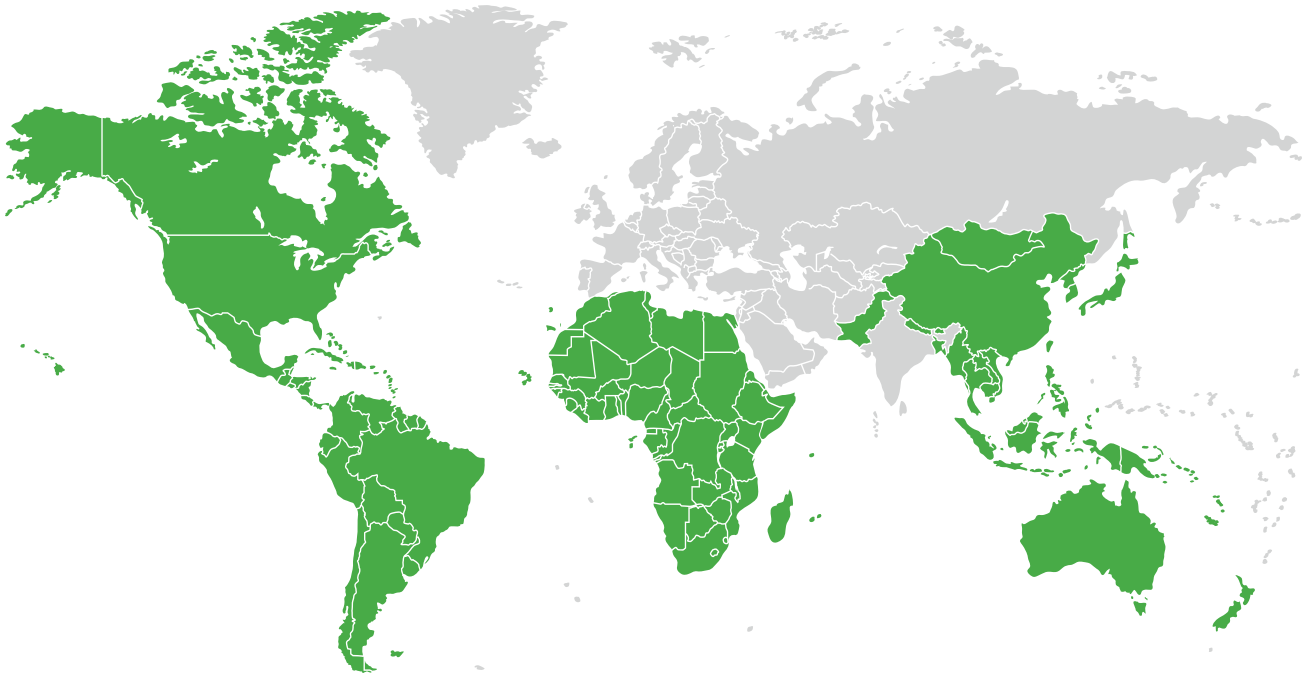
PROPOSAL AMOUNT AVERAGE OF \$43,868 (USD)



The DEIJ Action Fund committee subsequently approved

10 PROPOSALS = **\$400,000 (USD)**

DISTRIBUTION OF PROPOSALS BY REGION



NORTH AMERICA REGION (NAR)

32 Proposals = **\$1,413,116***

4 Approved = **\$154,211**

ASIA PACIFIC REGION

5 Proposals = **\$210,100**

2 Approved = **\$58,522**

LATIN AMERICA REGION (LAR)

3 Proposals = **\$139,625**

1 Approved = **\$27,240**

GLOBAL PROGRAMS

6 Proposals = **\$221,940**

2 Approved = **\$83,027**

AFRICA REGION

1 Proposal = **\$77,000**

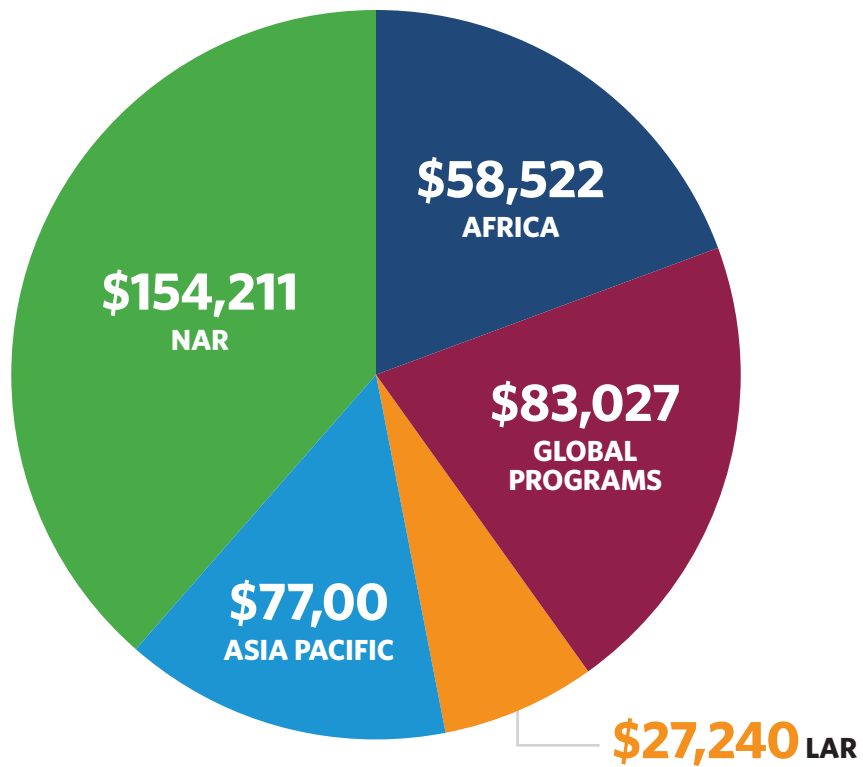
1 Approved = **\$77,000**

**The Caribbean is included in the NAR total*



© GARY GROSSMAN/TNC PHOTO CONTEST 2021 *Cascade Mountains of Central Oregon USA*

APPROVED PROPOSALS TOTALS



PROCESS

The DEIJ Action Fund team knew evaluating applications would be challenging since each proposal represented very real and urgent needs in TNC's geographic locations and functional areas. It was essential to have a selection committee representing distinct roles and functions across regions. We assembled a selection committee with representatives from the North American region, the Caribbean Division, and the China and Brazil Programs representing diverse areas, such as finance and operations, strategic development, and project management.



Jackie Carr
Operations Specialist,
North America Region



Sherry Constantine
Program Director,
Eastern Caribbean



Hou Liping
Senior Strategic Development
Mgr. & Executive Assistant,
Asia Pacific Region



Enaylle Silva
Project Management Specialist,
Latin America Region



Corey Stone-Ortiz
Director of Finance & Operations,
North America Region

The selection committee assessed each of the 47 funding requests on among others, three main criteria:



The level of financial need
(available resources/unrestricted funds)



The impact of the project
(community impact, internal
engagement, and increased diverse
staff representation in leadership)



**Alignment with the direction
of TNC's developing DEIJ
organizational strategy**

Through a collaborative process, the selection committee developed a scoring rubric that assigned weights to various categories, including clear descriptions of projects and their need and alignment between projects' activities, outcomes, DEIJ Compass dimensions and 2030 Goals. Other considerations involved the BUs' commitment to the projects proposed, project management and tracking, and clear presentation of funding needs. In addition to the rubric, the committee considered other variables, including equitable funding distribution across regions.

FUND RECIPIENTS

Of the ten projects chosen, nine were fully funded, and one received partial support. However, TNC committed to helping secure the outstanding amount for the partially funded project, and leaders throughout the organization expressed interest in seeking alternative resources to support efforts in the BUs whose proposals were not selected.



Fiscal Year 2023 Projects

© JOHN BEATTY/TNC PHOTO CONTEST 2019 *Hawk Falls at Hickory Run State Park, Pennsylvania, USA*

The task to advance our DEIJ organizational strategy and embed DEIJ throughout the organization is exciting yet challenging. The DEIJ Action Fund was going to be filling a gap, helping to support increasing capacity, relationship building, equitable community conservation, inclusive workforces, training and educational opportunities, and more to achieve our 2030 goals. As a result, the Executive Leadership and the Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team knew that it was not going to be easy to choose which projects to fund. It would also be setting DEIJ standards for the entire organization and doing so by testing ideas “on the ground.” Thorough planning and selection resulted in these ten projects that were awarded and represent varied ways DEIJ can be embedded at TNC.

AFRICA

Culture and Diversity Project

TNC's Africa BU has experienced planned but rapid staff and budget expansion across its locations in **Gabon, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Seychelles,** and **Botswana**. The staff has grown from 95 in FY21 with a planned 44% increase of 180 in FY23. The data suggest that at the end of FY23, more than 50% of BU staff will have less than two years of tenure.

TNC Africa understood that it needed to engage the entire staff in the challenge and opportunity to define and solidify a common organization in Africa built on TNC's history and values while embracing the region's culture and fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion. The achievement of TNC Africa's 2030 goals is hinged on creating and solidifying a common TNC organization culture that will guide the staff and leadership to speak in one voice, model the same behavior, and support the implementation of the Africa BU strategies that drive the achievement of our goals.

THE PROJECT

TNC Africa hired consultants to conduct a people's survey of staff. Following the survey, the African region leaders met with consultants to discuss survey results and expectations for the all-staff retreat, which would be the first time the entire regional team would be together in almost four years. The retreat was held in May 2023, and resources from the DEI Action Fund helped pay for part of the expenses for getting the entire team to the retreat.

Team culture is intangible, and understanding it as a new person, especially when not able to interact with other staff directly, is extremely difficult. Through group discussions and activities, old and new staff and old and new friends talked about who the African staff are as people in a way that would never happen otherwise. According to staff, the meeting provided a chance for them to understand what TNC and the region are all about on a deeper level and connect with what each team member was trying to achieve and how they wanted to achieve it. They also built long-lasting relationships that will help the team move forward in their goals and personal growth and when having difficult conversations that will inevitably come.

The Africa Program understands that the effort was not a one-off activity, and the next steps are to develop what the regional staff sees as their culture fully. That will be defined through focus group discussions in each country where we work, meeting with regional leaders, and talking to some of TNC's global leaders. Culture champions will be identified and trained for each country.

RESULTS

Over 160 staff *(greater than 80%)* participated in a survey regarding what the **TNC Africa culture** should be

Over 70% *of staff* in all of our countries **participated in focus group discussions** to refine the **culture narrative** for the region

Almost 100% *of all regional staff* **participated in an entire team retreat**, allowing face-to-face interactions and staff to learn who their colleagues are

One-culture narrative **defined** and **ready to roll out** to the region



© **ROSHNI LODHIA** TNC Africa team and Executive Leadership Team members at their regional all staff retreat

LESSONS LEARNED

The first lesson was that the DEIJ Action Fund resources are critical. The Africa BU constantly spoke about cultural issues but had no money to address them. The resources from the DEIJ Action Fund allowed Africa to act on something badly needed, but that might never happen due to lack of funding.

Regarding project management, the Africa Program recommends that the DEIJ Action Fund require future proposals to identify a champion and, following that, assign a project manager. In the case of Africa, assigning someone to handle day-to-day tasks and identifying a champion to assist the project manager could have improved project oversight. In retrospect, the Africa region feels it missed an opportunity.

© **ROSHNI LODHIA** TNC Africa team and Executive Leadership Team members at their regional all staff retreat

LOOKING FORWARD

The project will continue, and the Africa Region will fund it from our conservation program budgets for each person. In the future, the team will identify Culture Champions in each country. These champions will be trained by the consultants and develop a work plan. They will continue to meet regularly to exchange lessons and modify the culture plan. TNC Africa will also continue to engage the consultants as needed to work with the team and help the culture champions.



CARIBBEAN

Development of a Caribbean Division DEIJ Framework

TNC's Caribbean Division is engaged in conservation across 17 countries and territories, with unique cultural and economic factors and various languages, including English, Spanish, and Creole. The Caribbean teams work with local communities, local and national governments, regional governance organizations, development banks, foundations, and private companies to accomplish their work. Although TNC implements work in 17 countries and territories, its offices and staff are based in six Caribbean countries or territories: **The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.**

In its 2021 Strategic Plan, the Caribbean Division committed to developing processes that continually strengthen individual and collective performance on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) in our work.

THE PROJECT

In alignment with TNC's overarching mission, the 2021 Caribbean Strategic Plan reaffirmed the Division's dedication to cultivating processes that enhance individual and collective performance in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) across the Caribbean Division. The Caribbean Division decided it should hear directly from staff and stakeholders in the countries where it works about what is most important and relevant to them in the DEIJ space. Further, the Division decided that data garnered during the scoping exercise should serve as key inputs in developing an addendum to the 2021 Strategic Plan outlining DEIJ principles and a framework across the Caribbean Division.

The goals were to understand regional complexity and the nuances of DEIJ within that diverse region to effectively address historical challenges, address gaps in expertise by recognizing the need for specialized DEIJ expertise, establish guiding principles and a comprehensive DEIJ framework that aligns with the 2021 Caribbean Strategic Plan.

By design, the initial project audience was the Division's internal staff. Establishing a baseline within the organization while enhancing staff expertise in the area was needed to effectively engage with local communities and country partners on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ). TNC selected a consultant to work with the Division and with their help, the Division designed the DEIJ context scoping exercise to gather feedback from staff, partners, and local communities in **The Bahamas, Jamaica, Grenada, the US Virgin Islands, the Dominican Republic, and representatives from our Board of Trustees.** Stakeholders targeted included local community members (e.g., fishers and farmers), partner NGOs, and government officials.

The scoping will involve an anonymous survey of all Division staff, focus groups with staff to complement the survey, and interviews with select stakeholders (e.g., local residents, partners) engaging with the Caribbean Division.

Given the number of countries involved, this process took longer than expected, and the Division anticipates starting the staff survey and partner interviews in the first week of **October 2023.**

RESULTS

In partnership with the Equitable Conservation Team, we offered “Safeguard 101” to Caribbean staff in March, with over 40 staff members participating. This 90-minute workshop introduced standard environmental and social safeguards processes and resources available to all TNC staff. We plan to offer our staff a second DEIJ capacity-building opportunity in the first quarter of 2024 with the support of a consultant.

The DEIJ Working Team has shared a vision and desired framework components with a consultant. Additionally, the consultant is researching diverse frameworks for use as benchmarks in the Caribbean. Our feedback, combined with their research and the results from the staff survey, focus groups, and partner interviews, will be integral to shaping the DEIJ framework.

 **40 staff** participated in the **Environmental Social Safeguards Training 101**

The survey was shared with **81 staff members,** **74 responses** were received (91% response rate)



 **20 staff members** chose to participate in **focus groups** to deep dive into some issues

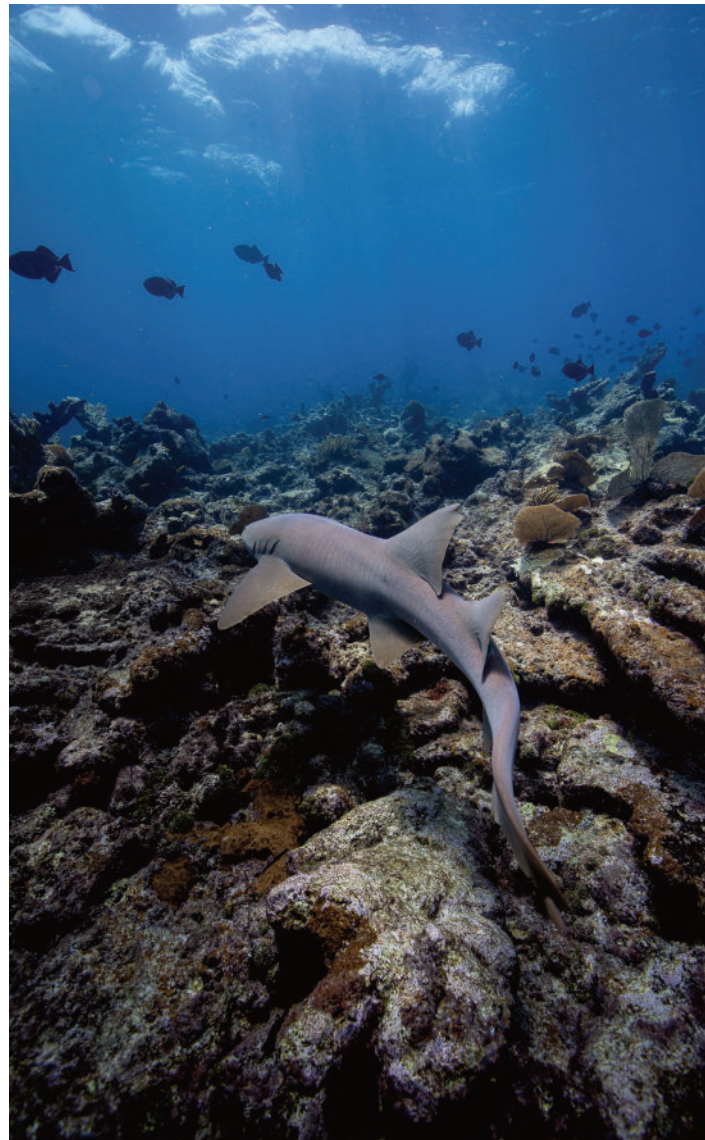
32 external partners were invited to participate and **10 partners** accepted



Caribbean DEIJ Framework was approved by the **Caribbean Executive Director**

LESSONS LEARNED

At the beginning of the project, both co-leads were transitioning to new roles, which caused delays in implementing the Project. To avoid this in future projects, we recommend having at least one established co-lead in their role. The project manager should also dedicate at least 25-30% of their time to the project.



© **TIM CALVER** Nurse Shark swimming over the reef near Southwest Cay, Pedro Bank, Jamaica.

COLOMBIA

Building a Single Voice for the Management and Conservation of the Territory & the First Intercultural Meeting of Solano's Women

For 12 years, TNC Colombia has worked with different local communities and Indigenous Peoples in the municipality of Solano, Caquetá, in the Colombian Amazon. Along the way, the program has built relationships of trust and collaborative agreements for developing different conservation strategies that allow the maintenance of biodiversity and critical ecosystems.

Using a Colombian-specific guide to promote the effective integration of the gender perspective in conservation projects, TNC Colombia implemented the recommendations of the Global Guide for the Integration of Gender Equity in Conservation, Conservation by Design 2.0 (CbD 2.0), and the Voice, Choice, and Action (VCA) Framework, to support Indigenous and local community authority and capacity in natural resource management and decision making.

Working with women from ten Indigenous communities, TNC established a vision that led to the first version of the Solano **Gender Action Plan (GAP)**. Thanks to the support from the DEIJ Action Fund and the gender line financed by MACP (Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies), the Colombia Program was able to design and conduct a **Women's Intercultural Meeting and Fair** in the Solano municipality

The goals were to build capacity and provide a forum for Solano women to exchange visions, needs, and help the TNC Conservation team execute vital projects connecting gender equity, sustainable livelihoods, and conservation.



© **CAMILA PEÑA** *Women from local community attending the Multicultural Fair in Solano, Caquetá*



THE PROJECT

TNC worked with four Indigenous groups that belong to ten communities and five rural Solano municipality hubs to develop the GAP and identified multiple priority needs according to the women that are grouped in categories such as:

- Leadership capacities and use of internal and external territory management tools
- Project Management
- Women networks
- Livelihoods and local economies for women

The Intercultural Meeting and Fair of Solano women resulted from recognizing that exchanging and acquiring knowledge is vital to women, promoting experiences, and facilitating spaces for dialogue and economic opportunities—all closely aligned with TNC’s priority strategies. The meeting would enrich and refine the current GAP by adding other voices, including those of Afro-Colombian women, peasants, and Indigenous groups.

In December 2022, TNC received additional funds for the GAP, and those combined with the DEIJ Action Fund resources provided the financial support to plan for the Solano Women Intercultural Meeting and Fair.

Following several meetings at the end of 2022 with The Proterra Foundation and Tropenbos Colombia, key allies for conservation actions with a gender focus, TNC Colombia signed a contract with Proterra for the Intercultural meeting logistics.

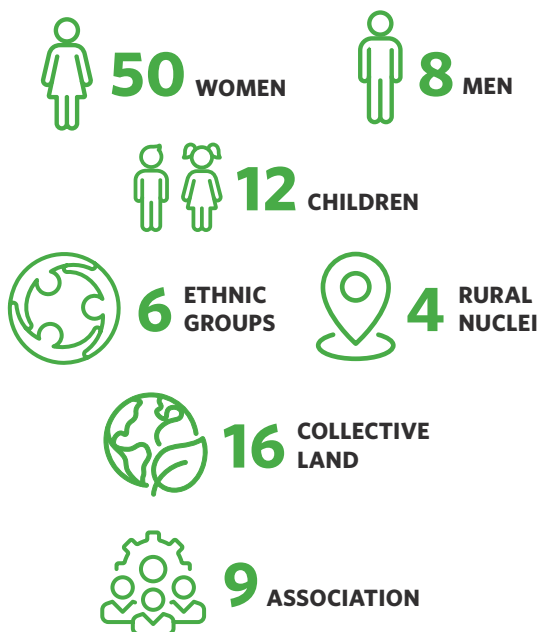
The Intercultural Meeting and Fair of Solano women was held June 7-9 in Florencia, Caquetá, with the call “Uniting our voices for conservation.” Each specific objective of the meeting was connected to a pillar of the VCA framework based on two main factors: Women’s knowledge of their territory and the aspects that need strengthening to continue practicing sustainable nature management.

Fifty women from peasant, Indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities and their children attended the Solano Intercultural meeting. In addition, eight men from Indigenous Peoples also participated. There were four Indigenous Peoples’ groups:

- Murui Muina (*represented by the ASCAINCA association*)
- Koreguaje (*represented by the ASIMC and CRIOMC associations*)
- Makaguaje (*represented by the CATIMAC association*)
- Inga (*represented by the Tandachiridu association*)

Women from the rural hubs Hericha, Las Mercedes, Mononguete, and Peñas Blancas represented the peasant community and the Asomujem, Ainjusoc, and Codecan associations. Finally, Afro-Colombian women representing the Community Council of Sevilla and the Afrosolano association attended.

THE MEETING IN NUMBERS



RESULTS

The women attended **soft skills, computer tools**, and **project management** workshops that combined theoretical and practical skills and worked in groups, encouraging the exchange of experience and knowledge. Expertise sharing and mutual support allowed the workshops to occur leisurely, providing an atmosphere conducive to communication and establishing relationships among participants.

The women discussed and practiced basic project management concepts, strengthened their soft skills, and practiced public speaking and managing their oral and corporal expression. Results were visible, and women who had had difficulty expressing themselves publicly during the workshops and practices were demonstrably more confident later on, speaking more clearly and with greater self-assurance.

One vital aspect of the meeting was providing childcare for the children of participating women, who would not have been able to attend had they not taken their children with them. Knowing there was a safe and reliable space for their children allowed the women to concentrate on their workshops. Offering childcare services should be considered in future gatherings.

During the fair, the women could sell a percentage or all of their products. The baskets, chocolate, chili peppers prepared by Indigenous and local women, necklaces and earrings, and traditional products such as *fariña* and cassava **sold out**. Although some products, such as wood and ceramic handicrafts, did not do as well, that was seen as an opportunity to learn and explore new promotion and marketing strategies and the need to develop a sales pitch for different customers.

Among the many results, the Intercultural Meeting and Fair of Solano women allowed TNC Colombia to identify new women's networks in peasant and Afro-descendant territories where TNC Colombia had not previously worked.

The current GAP includes the voices of women from ten communities and has a purely Indigenous focus. Still, the Solano meeting made room for women's voices belonging to 15 additional communities. It taught us about their expectations, processes, and needs and what rural, Afro-Colombian, and Indigenous women in Solano have in common. There is a need for a more detailed gender study with local, Afro-Colombian, and Indigenous Inga communities and promoting relationships and communication among women. Additionally, TNC Colombia defined criteria that will allow the program to select some processes that should be strengthened, such as:

- Forest management practices with restoration.
- Women's associativity and cohesion.
- Strategic ecosystems conserved.



© TNC Gender workshop with women from Solano, Caquetá

LESSONS LEARNED

- It is crucial to build on workshops' skills and learning in future meetings so that the women can strengthen them and apply the tools in mixed spaces to evaluate the difference in the learning curve and confidence when speaking occurs in spaces where men and women actively participate.
- Avoid having people travel for more than one hour on the road as much as possible.
- Training sessions were successful thanks to the range of different dynamics and accessible language.
- The support and hiring of different women from the municipality highlighted their knowledge and skills.
- The following activities should go beyond deepening the definition of concepts and focus on elaborating possible projects and case studies applied to the participants' territories and organizations. This will allow us to take learning to a more practical and concrete level, promoting the actual application of the knowledge acquired.

LOOKING FORWARD

The meeting made it possible to identify priority actions to continue strengthening the GAP and including new communities. One such action could be using resources from the TNC Colombia Program for contracts and special workshops to continue developing women's skills and techniques for women belonging to 19 communities in Solano. The plan prioritizes issues defined by women in the updated GAP. Finally, designing and developing new intercultural meetings for women at the municipal and international level and supporting their active participation in shaping the municipality's Public Policy for Women.



CONNECTICUT

Planting the Seeds of Inclusion: Improving Access to Nature in Connecticut

The Connecticut Business Unit (TNC CT) project is a comprehensive, sustained strategy to improve access to nature for communities that traditional land protection and management practices have underserved. Support from the DEIJ Action Fund allowed the BU to solidify its recently formed cross-functional Accessibility Implementation Team and gain chapter-wide support for the project.

The DEIJ Action Fund also allowed project managers to allocate meaningful time to the project rather than considering it an “addition to” their current workload. The DEIJ Action Fund also seeded agile pilot projects and provided team capacity to explore and leverage other funding to build a scalable, replicable strategy for equitable preserve management and community engagement across Connecticut.



THE PROJECT

The project has built capacity for DEIJ within TNC CT by appropriately covering staff hours managing the project and time spent on the Accessibility Implementation Team. TNC CT also advanced DEIJ by restructuring its preserve management strategies to integrate the voices and needs of underserved communities into its stewardship practices and policies. Finally, the project advanced DEIJ across all of TNC CT’s work by seeding pilot projects that can transform the chapter—and stewardship—broad partnerships by supporting the building of long-term relationships with communities historically underrepresented in conservation.

© **ELLYNNE REY/TNC PHOTO CONTEST 2019** *Two young foxes were playing around. Connecticut, USA.*



© TNC Spanish Devil's Den Reserve website

RESULTS

TNC CT Staff **tabled at community events** and **piloted tactile and innovative strategies** to encourage attendees to engage in activities and informal conversations with TNC staff about access to nature. At these events, TNC staff had opportunities to collect feedback and responses to different project stages as they progressed. Those **tabling efforts translated into strong relationship-based community partnerships**, including TNC CT's partnership with the Community Placemaking and Engagement Network (CPEN) in the Newhallville Neighborhood of New Haven, Connecticut.

TNC CT also launched a series of initial pilot projects to measure the Project's impact and inform a scalable strategy for improving preserve accessibility. TNC CT invested in providing **multilingual access to information** and developed a long-term strategy for supporting information updates and translation of written preserve materials. Maintaining regular signage and website updates is critical for providing long-term access to information.

During the pilot phase of the translation process, TNC CT translated the Devil's Den Preserve website into Spanish and its digital kiosk's multimedia materials into several languages relevant to our preserves' visitors. Since those initial successful pilots, they have translated several materials for Preserve visitors and volunteers and have an established system. The chapter will be able to measure the impact of the digital materials translated to Spanish in the fall of 2023 by evaluating data documenting their use over time.

They also developed and are piloting **"exploration backpacks"** for children, young adults, and community audiences. Those kits include different-size high-quality backpacks based on community partners' needs. Each backpack contains nature exploration materials (hand lens, compass, writing materials, water bottle, bandana with information about animal tracks, and other variable tools such as ponchos or dry bags). DEIJ Action Fund resources funded a pilot **community photography and arts-based nature learning program** with the West River Watershed Conservation Crew (WRWCC). TNC CT provided photography, print-making equipment, and training to the WRWCC through that program and facilitated **place-based learning** at TNC's Burnham Brook Preserve and the West River.

GLOBAL DIVE BOARD

Dive Training as a Barrier to Equity in Marine Science and Conservation

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC's) Mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Conservation of our freshwater habitats and oceans depends on understanding those ecosystems and often quite literally submerging oneself in the waters we aim to protect. TNC employs many marine biologists, ecologists, and conservation practitioners, among them a significant number of scuba divers.

Because it is a high-risk activity, diving comes with industry standards for safety. For TNC, this means that all employees participating in scientific diving must, at a minimum, meet the standards set by the American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS). The high training standards in a skill already wrought with its own barriers to entry impede diversifying the marine-related workforce.

Not all aspiring marine scientists have the luxury of purchasing their own SCUBA gear, paying for their own Open Water Diver course, or having the time to participate in unpaid or underpaid dive internships, thus being discouraged or outright prevented from becoming field scientists. The lack of diversity in diving is systemic and not unique to TNC or the scientific diving world. Solutions will have to include **systemic** improvements and dedicated funding.

Resources from the DEIJ Action Fund presented a unique opportunity to impact systemic inequity inside and outside the organization. Currently, no funding is allocated to increase diversity in the North American dive program.



© J. GILLETTE Croix participants join TNC staff and partners for a day of diving in the TNC coral nursery and restoration sites.

THE PROJECT

The project provided the funding, infrastructure, and organization to enable aspiring marine scientists and conservationists from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds to earn Open Water SCUBA Diver Certifications. By partnering with Black in Marine Science (BIMS), a non-profit organization that strives to provide underserved communities access to scientific experiences in marine science, Global Dive identified candidates who met the need-based criteria for addressing barriers to entering the field. The program covered travel expenses and scuba certification.

The Project held two courses: one in the US Virgin Islands (St. Croix) and one in The Bahamas in coordination with immersive marine science experiences. TNC staff and TNC project sites exposed the participants to conservation careers and networking for future opportunities. Ultimately, the Project certified 11 Divers who also gained exposure to various marine science and cultural experiences.

The St. Croix program took place May 21-27, 2023, with students jumping right into training dives and open water dives to complete the course. They also joined divers from TNC and the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Natural Resources (DPNR) for a coral nursery maintenance dive where the students worked alongside TNC divers to clean coral nursery structures at TNC's Channel Rock Nursery.

The Bahamas program took place May 28-June 3, 2023, in South Eleuthera, where the Bahamas Coral Innovation Hub is located at the Cape Eleuthera Institute (CEI) at the Island School, a longtime partner of TNC. This cohort also jumped right into the Open Water course upon arrival. Bahamas TNC staff traveled to South Eleuthera to join the cohort for several days of diving and interaction. In the evenings, participants attended lectures from local CEI staff, marine biologists, partners, and TNC staff.



© **A. MUSGROVE** *Bahamas participants explore reefs around South Eleuthera*



© C. GAYNUS (Left) St. Croix participants hear from TNC Aquaculture Technician about the land based coral propagation techniques. (Right) St. Croix participants on the boat between dive sites.

RESULTS

The original proposal aimed to certify eight students; however, through discounts at dive shops and some additional support from the TNC Bahamas program, 11 participants received their Open Water certification through the program. Those 11 participants were exposed to career-building opportunities, including volunteering in the TNC coral nursery, the TNC coral lab, practicing public speaking at community events, learning about island history and culture, and networking with experts in the field.

TNC obtained important data from students answering the pre- and post-program surveys, which included questions about participants' sense of belonging, experiences in marine sciences, and what they hoped to get out of the immersion program. For four participants, the program was their first marine science field-based experience, and about half of them felt their sense of "belonging" in marine sciences increased compared to before.

“What did you gain from the program?”

When asked what they hope to gain from the program, the overwhelming majority mentioned gaining “experience.” “Confidence” was the most common answer to the question.

Dive certification is also mentioned, but the fact that they came to the program to acquire technical skills and walked away with confidence shows that properly mentored programs like that can do much more than build resumes.

The testimonials also highlighted the networking opportunities, especially those that put them in contact with BIPOC scientists and leaders and, for the local participants, scientists from where they are from. For each cohort, there were certain cultural activities included in each program—a historical tour of Frederiksted in St. Croix and presentations on Bahamian culture in The Bahamas—and those received specific praise from participants who were happy to learn and experience a new culture or happy to share their own culture with the rest of the cohort.

LESSONS LEARNED

One obvious outcome of this project was the realization that programs like this one are in demand. BIMS put out a separate call for applications for each cohort. For each program location, they received over 150 applications. We originally planned for eight participants—but after seeing the response, BIMS and TNC worked together to open up a few more slots. The high number of applicants, plus the positive reviews from the participants, indicate that more programs like that are needed and can have a positive impact.

Another notable lesson is that community and human interaction matter. The main goal was to teach SCUBA diving, but what set this program apart was the comradery, support, and relationships built between the cohort, the BIMS mentors, TNC staff, and community members in each location.

Since the programs ended, one St. Croix participant returned to join a TNC Coral Fragging Volunteer event, and another was able to get connected to TNC staff in Jamaica for an upcoming trip there. One of the Bahamas participants has started joining calls about photogrammetry with our Caribbean Science Team. All students will now receive information on jobs and internships through TNC or BIMS.

The relationship between BIMS and TNC is another notable result—TNC and BIMS will continue to work together in the USVI on a federal grant through which BIMS will support outreach work in St. Croix and help support a new outreach coordinator position on the TNC St. Croix team. BIMS has also contacted the TNC Bahamas Program to speak about future opportunities for collaboration.

One challenge worth mentioning was ensuring the representation of BIPOC individuals as dive instructors and TNC staff. BIMS strives to always have people of color or BIPOC dive instructors for these immersion programs.

LOOKING FORWARD

The Diving Immersion Programs were a part of BIMS before TNC became a collaborator. Those programs will continue under BIMS programming and their various funding sources without connection to TNC project sites. TNC has no funding to continue supporting those programs, but we hope to solicit funding for similar programs in the future.

© **A. MUSGROVE** *Bahamas cohort with BIMS mentors during their Open Water Course*



GLOBAL SCIENCE

Nature United: Building Our Knowledge Through Trauma-Informed Approach Training

TNC's Global Science's One Conservancy Science Plan strategy has DEIJ measures at its core. It includes building a cohort of early career and new-to-the-conservancy scientists with a DEIJ worldview and focusing on expanding opportunities for scientists in underserved BUs in North America, Africa, Asia Pacific, and Latin America. The aim is to enhance development and engagement with local institutions, increase their scientists' representation and diversity, foster authentic partnerships with local institutions and experts, and ensure advancement opportunities.

Funding from the DEIJ Action Fund played a pivotal role in enabling Global Science to offer a DEIJ-focused career advancement opportunity to TNC staff BUs that would otherwise face constraints in providing discretionary funding for such initiatives.

In partnership with the Science for Nature and People Partnership (SNAPP), additional support was secured, allowing Global Science to extend the opportunity to include six post-doctoral fellows hosted at universities worldwide who participated in the DEIJ training. Moreover, 25 TNC staff engaged through the Science Capacity Program in Global Science were involved in this endeavor. This will promote equity and inclusion among our staff and provide a strong cross-BU and external-to-TNC peer network, which is crucial in advancing collaboration and science careers.



© TNC Lacy Consulting delivers interactive DEIJ training to TNC science staff and SNAPP postdocs at the Boulder, CO, USA office.



© TNC DEIJ Pilot Training Video represents a deliverable for the One Conservancy Early Career Scientist Professional Development and DEIJ Training, supported by the DEIJ Action Fund.

THE PROJECT

The Global Science team, joined by SNAPP, held a One Conservancy Early Career Scientist Professional Development and a DEIJ Training at TNC offices in Boulder, Colorado, US, at the end of May 2023.

More than 30 scientists from TNC and SNAPP Research Fellows representing six universities around the globe attended the dynamic event, which included a reception and networking activity for our DEIJ trainers and attendees. Participants hailed from around the **United States, Guatemala, Canada, Brazil, China, Mongolia, Indonesia, Australia, United Kingdom, Spain, and Papua New Guinea**. Participants looked at the science of how to effectively listen to communities that have been marginalized, empower local collaborators, and transform the relationship between conservation groups and communities away from the transactional and toward the relational.

The resources secured from the DEIJ Action Fund were used for planning and executing a professional development DEIJ training designed for TNC post-doctoral fellows and early-career scientists. With support from the Action Fund, we successfully trained more than 30 participants, including fellows from SNAPP. Our primary focus was ensuring diverse global representation, particularly from less-resourced Business Units and science staff with less than a two-year tenure at TNC.

A consultant conducted the 8-hour DEIJ training on forming equitable conservation partnerships with local communities, employing the Listen, Empower, and Transform model. This training event took place on May 24, 2023, in Boulder, Colorado, and was followed by a vibrant networking session that brought together international training participants, local TNC science staff, and program leaders and administrators from Global Science.



© TNC Lacy Consulting firm supporting the Global Science's One Conservancy Science in person training

RESULTS

Global Science conducted pre- and post-event surveys with their DEIJ Training participants to assess achieving the learning objectives. On average, participants reported a remarkable

46% increase in their **comprehension of DEIJ principles.**

This data attests to the training's effectiveness in enhancing understanding.

In addition to measuring overall impact, Global Science sought to identify the most effective training components. The responses from participants revealed that a substantial

80% found the examples provided during the instructional sessions **to be the most informative.**

Following a close second were discussions surrounding the DEIJ content, followed by course exercises and interactions with the trainers.

LESSONS LEARNED

Following the team's evaluation of the One Conservancy Early Career Scientist Professional Development and DEIJ Training, we've pinpointed essential areas for enhancing future DEIJ-focused training:



Providing a practical DEIJ framework for immediate application in interactions with internal collaborators and local communities



Extending discussion time and delving deeper into training content



Integrating concrete examples closely related to conservation projects aligning with TNC's portfolio



Offering training materials in multiple languages or providing translation services for non-native English speakers

Global Science encountered several challenges during the project's implementation. Due to administrative delays, the team had to shorten the training from three days to just one, along with other professional development sessions, all squeezed into a week.

The team also faced difficulties obtaining visas for international participants from countries with lengthy processing times. While we were fortunate to welcome and financially support a diverse group in Colorado, the challenges extended beyond visa issues and included the physical demands of grueling 20+ hour travel and the time spent away from participants' families.

To address those equity challenges, Global Science is actively planning to host training sessions in partnership with and near the BUs where DEIJ training is most needed and least supported.

LOOKING FORWARD

Highlighting the significance of fostering international dialogue on DEIJ challenges within the context of conservation, former Latin America Region (LAR) Science Director Edwin Castellanos, a participant in the Colorado DEIJ training, left the program feeling inspired by his colleagues and enthusiastic about collaborating with Global Science to bring a similar opportunity to science staff in his region. After the training, LAR leadership held virtual discussions with the Global Science team to review outcomes from the first round of DEIJ Action Funds and explore funding opportunities for delivering professional development and DEIJ training to conservation teams in Latin America.

Expanding the impact of the successful DEIJ training conducted in Colorado, they are thrilled to continue their work through a partnership with the Colombia BU, which has received second-round DEIJ Action Funds. Together, they aim to offer an extended DEIJ training experience to TNC science staff in Latin America.

This endeavor aligns seamlessly with LAR's 2030 objectives, particularly concerning the conservation of lands and territories inhabited by Indigenous People, local communities, and traditional groups, whether officially recognized or not. Recognizing the paramount importance of engaging with these communities in a culturally sensitive and respectful manner, there exists an urgent need for scientists and conservationists in the region to bolster their DEIJ knowledge.

The Science Capacity team within the Global Science Business Unit, which hosts experienced staff adept at leveraging DEIJ Action Funds to organize training for TNC science staff, is excited to continue the impactful work made possible by the first round of the DEIJ Action Fund.



© TNC Global Science's One Conservancy Science training participants

INDONESIA

Assessing the Role of Women in Small-Scale Fishery Households in Eastern Indonesia

THE PROJECT

Since the start of the Indonesia fisheries program in 2015, fisher-based approaches have been central to the program. TNC's Indonesia Business Unit (The Nusantara Nature Conservation Foundation, YKAN)* developed a method to directly involve fishers in detailed stock assessment based on accurate data collected by the fishers themselves. It supported developing transparent governance systems to involve fishers and fishing companies in policymaking (the Fishery Management Area Institutions Consultative Panel).

Over time, YKAN learned that women significantly influence fishing operations in some households. They may manage operational expenses, help procure supplies, and are often involved in marketing and processing. They may also help their husbands decide on new investments and co-decide on operational aspects, such as whether a vessel should go out or if switching to another fishery would be advisable.

The Project had a few hypotheses:

- 1 Even though they rarely fish themselves, women play an essential role in fishing households: Marketing, processing, fishing operational management (obtaining supplies and such), financial management, and making strategic decisions on fishing during the fishing season.**
- 2 Fishers supported by their wives are more successful than those who are not.**
- 3 Since women play an essential role in fishing operations, they must be involved when resource managers plan to intervene.**
- 4 The increased participation of women in deciding on harvest strategies will lead to increased stewardship and support for adopting local-level fisheries regulation.**

The Project aimed at getting a more quantified overview of the role of women in fishing households and learning if and how women's involvement in the BU's work would help them achieve sustainability of Indonesia's capture fisheries. Since the proposed activities were specific to the fisheries Program, freeing up BU discretionary funds was not a straightforward possibility.

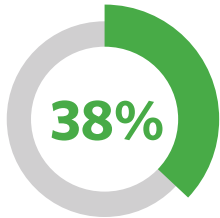
The Project also aimed at reaching out to women not as an objective in and of itself but rather to support the main objective of the fisheries program: Work with partners to put mechanisms in place that ensure sustainable fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems.

The fishing households of about 200 fishers YKAN has been working with since 2015, especially the wives, were the targeted group. The survey results can benefit millions of coastal people in Indonesia through improved fishery and conservation management through YKAN or our partners.

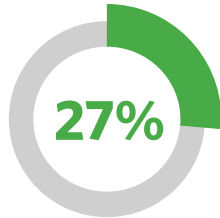
**After working in Indonesia for almost 30 years, in 2020 TNC decided to close its operations in Indonesia. As of March 2020, TNC no longer operates in Indonesia and all program implementation is continued by YKAN as the main partner.*

RESULTS

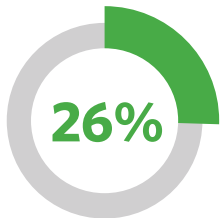
Women's role in small-scale fishery:



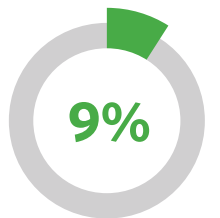
Participate in pre-fishing operations



Manage household finance

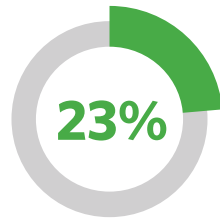


Assist in sales and marketing of catch

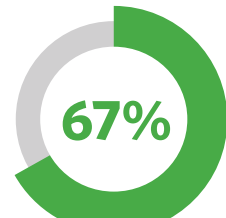


Process the catch

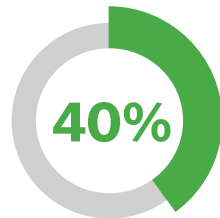
Women's involvement in fishing operations:



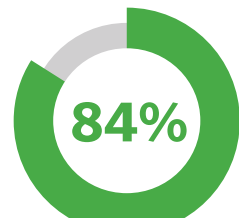
West Sumatera



West Nusa Tenggara



South Sulawesi



Bali

472 TOTAL RESPONDENTS

Women's involvement in fishing operations corresponds to higher fisher incomes, indicating a potential positive relationship between women's involvement and fishing profitability. Organization led by women in the fishery sector serve as a platform for:



Improving self-capacity in catch processing and household financial management



Addressing community and household life aspirations



Increasing income

PROVINCE	AVERAGE SCORE ROLE	AVERAGE INCOME (RP)
South Sulawesi	13	4,175,320
West Nusa Tenggara	14	5,986,013
West Sumatera	8	4,339,771

LESSONS LEARNED

Women's crucial role in small-scale fisheries contributes significantly to fishery households and their challenges and deserves more attention. YKAN's Project seeks to address those challenges and improve women's livelihoods in fisheries and their families.

Eastern Indonesia is home to many small-scale fishery households that rely on that activity for their income and food. Women actively participate in fishing activities, processing and selling fish, and managing household finances. Despite their valuable contributions, women often face discrimination and limited opportunities for growth and development.

Women also face discrimination in decision-making processes and have limited opportunities to participate in community activities. These challenges have resulted in a gender gap that impacts household income and decision-making power.

Despite the importance of small-scale fishery households, they face numerous challenges, such as overfishing, climate change, and market competition. Those challenges have resulted in declining fish stocks, reduced incomes, and increased poverty. Women, in particular, are affected by those issues as they often bear the burden of household responsibilities and have limited opportunities to diversify their income sources.

1 Women's crucial roles in fishery households:

Despite rarely engaging in fishing themselves, women in fishery households play pivotal roles in marketing, processing, operational management of fishing (including obtaining supplies), financial management, and making strategic decisions for the fishing season. This highlights the multi-faceted contributions of women in supporting fishing operations.

2 Impact of women's support on fishery success:

Fishers who receive support from women tend to be more successful regarding profitability, total annual catch, and resilience to misfortunes and setbacks in their fishing operations.

3 Empowering women to improve their livelihoods:

Empowering women in small-scale fishery households in Eastern Indonesia by supporting their acquiring skills, knowledge, and resources needed to improve their livelihoods and soft skills or training for groups of women involved in fishery, YKAN hopes to reduce the gender gap in income and decision-making power within their households.

4 Importance of women's involvement in policy and decision-making:

Women's participation in decision-making regarding harvest strategies and local fisheries regulation is expected to increase stewardship and support for regulations. Involving both fishers and women in policymaking can enhance the effectiveness of government programs and regulation enforcement. Additionally, promoting gender equality and equity through skill development, education, and empowerment is emphasized.



© TNC Bali; A women selling fish at local market

LOOKING FORWARD

Currently, there is no funding available for YKAN to continue the Project. Nevertheless, the organization achieved the primary goal successfully and identified women's important role in their households, especially in the fishery sector. YKAN also identified women's challenges and is approaching other potential donors to follow up with the initial work. YKAN hopes to have confirmation by 2024.



© TNC Haja, Fish drying, Bugis Village, Sape Sub-district, West Nusa Tenggara

NEW ZEALAND

Building TNC Aotearoa New Zealand's Cultural Competency

Supporting Indigenous People to be at the center of conservation efforts is critical to TNC Aotearoa New Zealand success in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises. This is why one of the BU's strategic focuses is to work more effectively with Māori, understanding their worldview, aspirations, and challenges and supporting their leadership in conservation.

To do that, TNC Aotearoa New Zealand must build its team's cultural competency. The team has mixed-level experience, familiarity with Te Reo (Māori language), and an understanding of the critical concepts in Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview). The project allowed TNC Aotearoa New Zealand to accelerate its journey to build the team's cultural competency.



© **MICHAEL YAMASHITA** *An aerial view of Fiordland National Park in the southwest of New Zealand's South Island. March 2018. The park is known for the glacier-carved fjords of Doubtful and Milford sounds and is a World Heritage Site. Taken from a helicopter during a TNC Asia Pacific trip to New Zealand.*



© **MICHAEL YAMASHITA** *An aerial view of trees in a thickly forested area in Fiordland National Park in the southwest of New Zealand's South Island. March 2018. The park is known for the glacier-carved fjords of Doubtful and Milford sounds and is a World Heritage Site. Taken from a helicopter during a TNC Asia Pacific trip to New Zealand.*

THE PROJECT

The project consisted of designing and carrying out a two-day wānanga (workshop) as a way to accelerate TNC Aotearoa New Zealand's journey to build the team's core skills and knowledge to engage effectively with Māori, better integrate mātāuranga Māori (traditional knowledge) and western science in our work and direct our funding to support building Māori capacity to engage in conservation work.

Staff are at different points in their journey to learn Te Reo and broader Māori practices and concepts. TNC Aotearoa New Zealand designed the program to ensure it was conducted in a culturally safe way, catering to the differences on the team.

TNC Aotearoa New Zealand believes the work may serve as an example to help other BUs explore approaches to improve their engagement with Indigenous Peoples, and they will happily share their experiences. They hope to have the opportunity to do the same with organizations with which they partner in New Zealand.




Improving TNC's cultural competency as an organization will also strengthen our case to receive donor support. It is becoming increasingly important, particularly with (but not limited to) trusts and foundations in New Zealand that organizations can demonstrate commitment to working effectively with Māori.

Before the DEIJ Action Fund support, TNC Aotearoa New Zealand staff worked on building their cultural capability individually, and the work varied widely across staff members. The team had begun to build a framework to guide their cultural capability-building. The critical milestone with the support from the DEIJ Action Fund was the planning and conducting of a two-day cultural competency workshop for the team run by independent facilitators.

RESULTS

TNC Aotearoa New Zealand has developed a Pou Tama concept to describe the key competencies the Program wants to achieve as a team. That needs further development to capture more accurately what ‘good’ looks like for each stage when the team comes together. Individual staff members have committed to discussing with their managers their cultural competency goals for them to be part of their Performance Partnership process.

Concept of the vital cultural competencies for staff at TNC Aotearoa New Zealand:

ACTIVITY	POU TUATAHI	POU TUARUA	POU TUATORU	POU TUAWHA
INTENDED LEVELS	🌱	🌱🌱	🌱🌱🌱	🌱🌱🌱🌱
 Te Ao Māori	Worldview/Māori Creation Story with self-directed learning and a Marae visit as part of cultural immersion	The colonization of Aotearoa New Zealand and its implications today and beyond	The New World/He Ao Hou	Te Ara Reo Māori (He Pīka Pao) Fluent speakers
 Te Reo Māori	Basic Pepeha - Karakia Opening and closing without assistance <hr/> Waiata Learn three by heart, correct pronunciation	Te Ara Reo Māori (He Pīka Pao) Learn the basics	Te Ara Reo Māori (He Pīka Pao) Learn intermediate	
 Pathway & Resources	Pronunciation Matua Whetu course, Maori Language Dictionary <hr/> Waiata Practice 1 in each team meeting - create a roster <hr/> Karakia Rotate responsibility for open & close in each team meeting - create a roster	Te Waananga o Aotearoa (Twoa) Education or similar		

LESSONS LEARNED

TNC Aotearoa New Zealand staff met for the two-day wānanga in July to learn about basic Te Reo Māori (the Māori language), Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview), Tikanga (customs), and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (about the Treaty of Waitangi, Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document). It was a space where staff with varying levels of cultural competency could come together as a team to participate and grow. This is a work in progress for the organization to shape and improve best practices over time. All staff will continue working on their individual professional growth.

LOOKING FORWARD

The organization is committed to becoming one of the best in partnering and supporting Māori aspirations in TNC Aotearoa New Zealand. As part of this commitment, the BU recruited a Te Ao Māori advisor to help TNC Aotearoa New Zealand improve its cultural competency and project leadership with Iwi (largest social units in New Zealand Māori society) partners.

Staff will continue to develop their cultural competency individually and, simultaneously, enhance TNC Aotearoa NZ's strategy and work program with the guidance and support of the Te Ao Māori advisor to continue shaping and improving competencies over time.

© **MICHAEL YAMASHITA** *An aerial view of Fiordland National Park in the southwest of New Zealand's South Island. March 2018. The park is known for the glacier-carved fjords of Doubtful and Milford sounds and is a World Heritage Site. Taken from a helicopter during a TNC Asia Pacific trip to New Zealand.*



OREGON

Connecting Canopies: Equitable & Just Canopy Cover in Portland, Oregon

Despite Portland's achievements in urban planning and parks, the city has among the highest urban heat disparities in the nation. A 2019 study found an 18-degree temperature difference between wealthy tree-lined neighborhoods and lower-income, racially diverse neighborhoods with more pavement and fewer trees.

TNC Oregon (ORBU) designed a new model for managing its urban forestry efforts aiming at environmental justice through more equitably distributed green spaces and a more diverse green movement and workforce sector.



© **DEVAN KING/TNC** *Forest located on the Conservancy's Cascade Head Preserve, north of Lincoln City, Oregon.*



© **DERRON COLES** Cohort meeting supported by DEIJ Action Fund

THE PROJECT

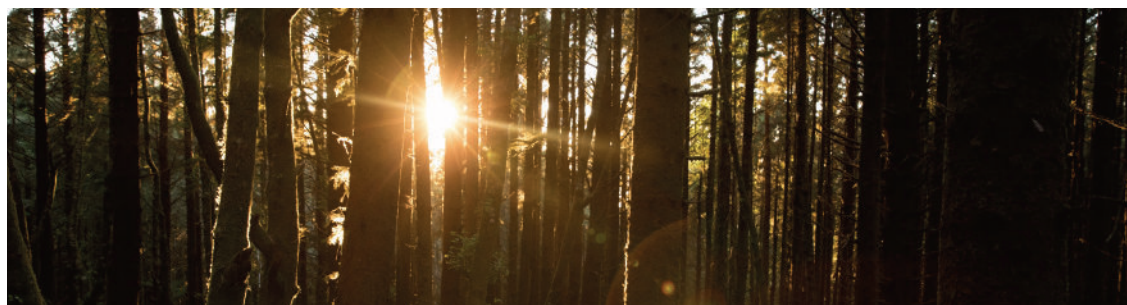
Connecting Canopies is based on a community-centered approach to inclusively address community needs within urban forestry and engagement to build its implementation plan. The Blueprint Foundation and The Intertwine Alliance have formed a sustainable long-term regional public-private partnership that provides mentorship and job training that can lead to green jobs for Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color (BIPOC youths).

With federal funding until 2027, Connecting Canopies will share knowledge and resources and co-create action plans with committed organizations, including those in regional municipalities, BIPOC community-based organizations, and other health and nature-focused non-governmental and municipal agencies. DEIJ Action Fund resources have allowed TNC ORBU to support local partners within Connecting Canopies.

The coalition uses partners' technical, cultural, and policy knowledge to link strategic tree planting and maintenance efforts to workforce curriculum development, existing and emerging business support programming, and community-driven stewardship of green spaces. The DEIJ Action Fund has helped support the Pre-Apprenticeship (Workforce Development) Program, symposiums (community-organizing events), messaging, and marketing.

Their goal is for the Portland metro region to be on track to achieve and maintain at least a 40 percent cover of healthy tree canopy by 2030 and foster tree stewardship in low-canopy neighborhoods.

The DEIJ Action Fund has also helped ORBU support community symposiums that bring together different neighborhoods to learn and understand the relationships, benefits, and burdens of trees within different communities. The program held an all-Black affinity space gathering in November 2022 and an all-Latinx gathering in April 2023. These gatherings have helped participants understand the relationships with trees through different neighborhood-based lenses and the needed resources to help maintain a lush canopy. The DEIJ Action Fund has also helped support the monthly task-force efforts that have helped coordinate the coalition's engagement work.



© **JENNIFER EMERLING** Golden, evening light peeks through mossy Sitka spruce and western hemlock trees, ferns, and scenery found in the lush temperate rainforest along the Nature Conservancy's Upper Trail at the Cascade Head Preserve, Oregon.

RESULTS

The Project launched the Connecting Canopies Workforce Development Cohort 1+2, whose focus was to offer paid opportunities and resources to low-income and BIPOC individuals to enter the urban forestry sector to promote more direct change within communities that lack green infrastructure, healthy air, and lush canopy.

A different community partner nonprofit organization leads each Training, and the curriculum depends on the partner's expertise. Community partners leading the curriculum include The Blueprint Foundation, Friends of Trees, the Portland Fruit Tree Project, Verde, Portland Parks & Recreation, Ash Creek Forestry, Meadowsweet Landscape Design, and Sauvie Island Center. The training takes place across the Portland metro region.

Of the 12 participants of Cohort 1, one left the program early for a job at a training organization—Portland Parks and Recreation. Two others are poised to join another training organization—the Portland Fruit Tree Project. Ten out of 12 participants from Cohort 1 accepted jobs or internships in the green sector. Employers include Portland Parks & Recreation, the Portland Fruit Tree Project, Multnomah County, and others. Those results offer great early proof of concept. Cohort 2 began in July 2023 and will run through March 2024.

The Connecting Canopies coalition held monthly gatherings covering policy, data, workforce development, and community engagement to help coordinate, organize, and recruit for the work happening in Connecting Canopies. The program held over 12 task force meetings between October 2022 and July 2023.

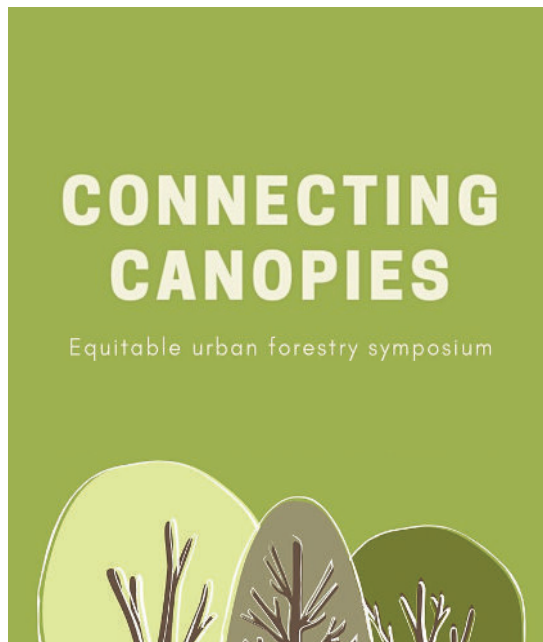
Once Connecting Canopies was implemented, the need for external communication became apparent. Connecting Canopies provided funds to help support video production to promote the project and goals to external audiences. The video includes interviews with two participants from Cohort 1, the Executive Director from The Blueprint Foundation, the Co-Director from the Intertwine Alliance, and TNC's Sergio Lopez. Due to a health emergency, the videographer could not complete the video before the end of the DEIJ Action Fund Pilot. The video will be live on the Connecting Canopies website.

LESSONS LEARNED

The DEIJ Action Fund was meant as match funding to help support the existing Connecting Canopies Program currently funded by the US Forest Service (USFS). ORBU's current federal award is being directly allocated to TNC's community partners, and the DEIJ Action Fund helped support their partners' efforts by covering TNC's personnel time. Given the 20 percent limit for TNC personnel time, ORBU had challenges using the funding within the USFS scope of work.

LOOKING FORWARD

USFS will directly support Connecting Canopies until 2027. The DEIJ Action Fund helped cover match funding. ORBU will continue to seek funding and resources to meet the match requirement and expand the work beyond its original scope via the USFS.



© TNC *Connecting Canopies project logo*



© AARON HUEY *An abandoned truck outside Wallowa, Oregon.*

PENNSYLVANIA & DELAWARE

Getting to Where We Want to Go by Learning Where We're Beginning: Cultural Assessment & Baseline Training

The TNC Pennsylvania/Delaware (PA/DE BU) is deeply committed to creating an inclusive and equitable work culture and upholding our values through conservation and partnerships. This commitment can be seen through support from the Executive Director and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) committee in TNC PA/DE BU. Nearly 20 percent of the current full-time staff are members with engagement across all departments and varying levels of leadership.

During 2021, the TNC PA/DE BU completed a strategic planning process and established eight objectives to help the BU achieve this important vision: fostering a culture in which Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice permeate policies, procedures, personal interactions, and meaningful collaborative conservation actions with partners and communities.

Both barriers were impacted by the rapid growth of the TNC PA/DE BU, where just over 45% of the current full-time staff were hired in the last two years, and the chapter continues to hire additional staff. Therefore, an audit of TNC PA/DE BU's culture policies, processes, and programming was needed to identify internal and external growth areas in our conservation practices.



© **HAROLD E. MALDE** *Meadow wetland in Thomas Darling Preserve at Two Mile Run in Pennsylvania. Located in the Northeast Pennsylvania Mountains, the Pocono Plateau Landscape hosts an extensive mosaic of glacial wetlands. The Conservancy has managed this largely wooded and undeveloped landscape with the help over numerous partners.*

THE PROJECT

The question of “How can we get to where we want to go if we don’t know where we are beginning?” was top of mind for the DEIJ Committee as two initial barriers to implementing the TNC PA/DE BU’s strategic plan continued to surface:

- 1 The absence of a clear assessment of the internal culture as it pertains to creating a more diverse and inclusive environment.**
- 2 Staff lack a shared understanding of the historical inequities in conservation work and beyond.**

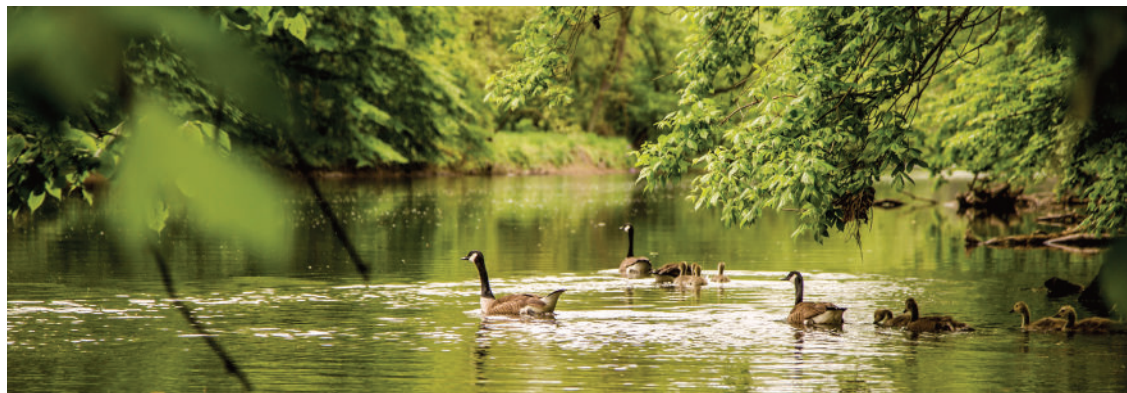
In November 2022, the BU contracted with a consulting firm to implement a nine-month-long organizational change strategy around diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. This process included three engagement phases: DEIJ Assessment, Strategic Thought Partnership, and Educational Programming.

The DEIJ assessments aimed to understand the organizational gaps and needs related to DEIJ. Working with the TNC PA/DE BU, The Inclusion Firm conducted a staff survey, focus groups, individual interviews, and an organizational self-assessment to provide the BU with data analysis, policies, and other materials. The work took three months to complete and included two presentations of the assessment results, one to the Leadership Team and the DEIJ Committee, and one to the entire staff.

The Strategic Thought Partnership was designed to support the diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice work between the TNC PA/DE BU team and a dedicated consulting firm. This process included consultation, recommendations, and strategies based on the DEIJ assessment results. Once the assessment was presented to the entire staff, the consultant worked closely with the BU to develop a structure for the DEIJ Committee and action items for the PA/DE strategic plan’s DEIJ pillar. The process lasted approximately four months.

The consulting firm and the DEIJ Committee helped the BU select workshops to be presented to the entire TNC PA/DE BU staff. Those were based on recommendations received through the assessment results. The interactive workshops were tailored to help the team achieve personal and individual learning and growth. The two 90-minute workshops included Implicit Bias and Microaggressions, and Cultural Competence to Cultural Humility and occurred during the last three months of the partnership with The Inclusion Firm.

The project’s audience was the Pennsylvania and Delaware BU staff. While the project started with the TNC PA/DE BU staff, the DEIJ Committee acknowledges that as the staff continues to develop their knowledge, language, and application of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, individuals who work with the TNC PA/DE BU, including but not limited to, partners, volunteers, and community members can contribute to and be impacted by the work.



© **DEVAN KING/TNC** Scenic view of geese in Brandywine Creek during the First State National Park's Bioblitz, outside Wilmington, Delaware. Brandywine Creek is a tributary of the Christina River in southeastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware in the United States.

RESULTS



Completed assessment of TNC PA/DE BU's policies, processes, and programming related to DEIJ to **identify internal growth in our conservation practices.**

- The assessment found **six areas** in which the TNC PA/DE BU staff were struggling the most (*DEIJ Terminology, Recruiting Diverse Talent, Psychological safety, Understanding TNC's DEIJ Efforts, Leadership's DEIJ Goals and Objectives, and Bystander*).
- The assessment **provided recommendations** in the areas of people, BU culture, and DEIJ skill development.



Baseline training on **Implicit Bias and Microaggressions and Cultural Competence to Cultural Humility.**

- **Over 70% of full-time staff** attended both workshops.
- **Four additional recommendations** for continued learning for the TNC PA/DE BU



Each TNC PA/DE BU staff member will have a **DEIJ work objective** for FY24.



DEIJ is embedded into the employee lifecycle to **create a culture of engagement and belonging** with the TNC PA/DE BU staff members.



The DEIJ vision statement for the TNC PA/DE BU has been updated, which can be used as a **resource for working with our communities, partners, and funders.**



The assessment provided **additional employee demographics** beyond the five demographics collected by TNC, which allows the TNC PA/DE BU to have a deeper understanding of the diversity of the staff.

LESSONS LEARNED



The need for continuous communication regarding the project, even when the work's progress was small and incremental.



Scheduling the educational workshops was challenging, and approximately 30% of the staff could not attend at least one or both workshops.

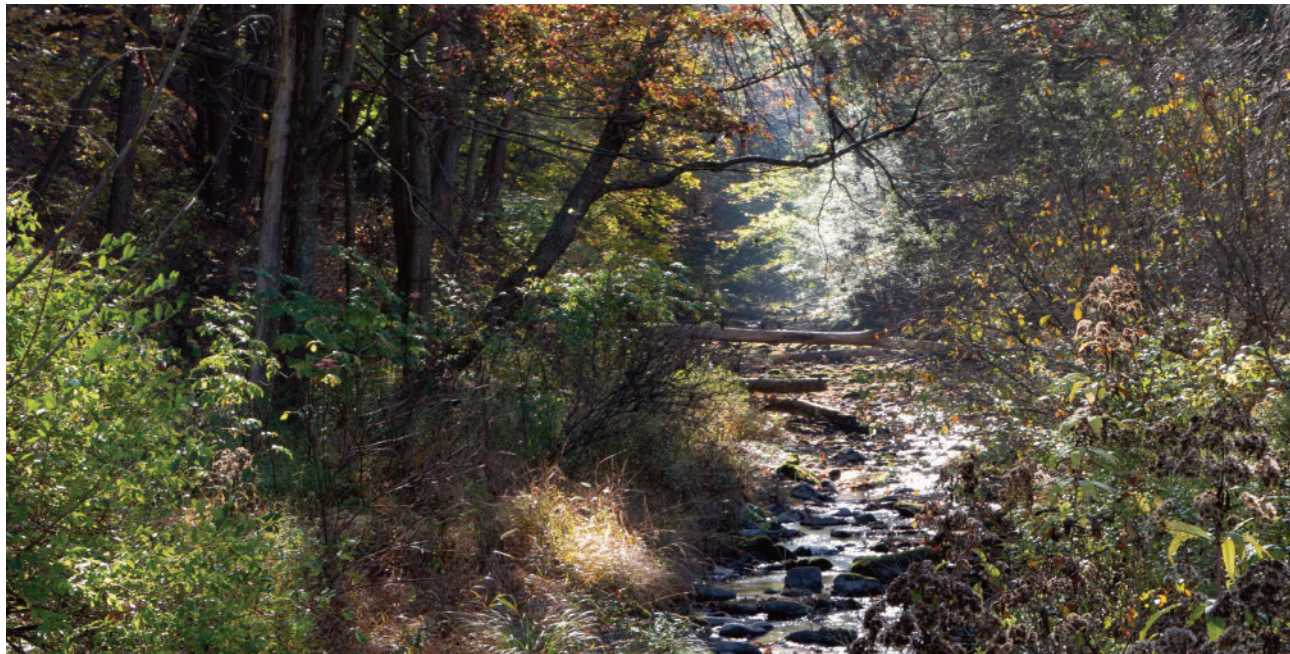


Ensuring that staff members could speak freely during the focus groups was also challenging for at least one focus group whose supervisor was in a group with staff they supervised.

LOOKING FORWARD

The work of the DEIJ Action Fund for the TNC PA/DE BU will continue through the implementation of the DEIJ pillar's action steps through the work of the DEIJ Committee, departments, and individuals. In addition, the DEIJ Committee will work toward continued knowledge sharing and development with the staff members as everyone continues on their DEIJ learning journey as this work is ongoing.

The recommendations provided through the assessment will be used as a tool to integrate DEIJ into daily operations, organization culture, and the employee life cycle process. As a commitment to DEIJ for the TNC PA/DE BU, funding for educational opportunities, staff development, and staff time has been provided through the BU budget. And our fundraisers will seek out new opportunities to fund this vital work through current and new relationships.



© **MELISSA FARLOW** *Morning fog and mist burns off at Keller Reservoir and the surrounding woodlands for in Pennsylvania. TNC has helped the Lock Haven City Authority protect Keller Reservoir by putting the surrounding forest under easement. TNC's Working Woodlands program.*

DEIJ Action Fund FY2024



© **CARTOLA FILMS** TNC staff representing various programs and regions during the first Global Staff Enrichment in Brazil

As shown in the stories of the individual projects from FY2023, the DEIJ Action Fund's pilot year proved to be successful. TNC remains committed to embedding DEIJ values in all that we do and to making it possible for BUs to advance DEIJ throughout their locations. We are excited to share that the DEIJ Action Fund is continuing for our fiscal year 2024 and we are seeking ways to expand funding that can be provided across TNC.

AWARDED PROJECTS FOR FY2024

TEXAS *Texas Organizational Excellence*

The project aims to equip the team with knowledge and skills around DEI, embedding equity and inclusion into their culture, operations, work plans, and conservation strategies.

LATIN AMERICA REGION (LAR)

DEI Assessment Strategy for LAR

A study to understand the current situation in each LAR region country will be conducted, identifying indicators related to region-bound DEI strategy, resonating locally and globally.

NORTH AMERICA FIRE *Building a Diverse and Inclusive Fire Workforce and Workplace*

This initiative champions DEI in fire management, primarily by empowering women both within and beyond TNC fostering a diverse and inclusive fire workforce.

KENYA *Improving Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Through Agriculture*

In Kenya's Central Highlands, Indigenous communities, women, youth, and disabled individuals have been excluded from agricultural prosperity due to structural barriers. This project aims to develop solutions and metrics to monitor DEI in Kenya, fostering collaboration and inclusion.

PROVIDE FOOD AND WATER

Developing for More Diverse and Inclusive Shellfish Aquaculture and Restoration in the United States

A new and critical element of the program will be to establish a DEI initiative that will support projects that increase diversity within the industry and co-create opportunities for individuals without access or exposure to restoration and shellfish aquaculture.

ECUADOR *Integrating an Effective Gender Approach in the Community Fluvial Reserve in the Nushiño-Curaray-Villano Project*

The Ecuador team will implement the Durable Freshwater Protection Framework through technical assistance to support Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon establishing the first Community Fluvial Reserve in the LAR Region.

PUERTO RICO *Promote Diversity and Inclusion in Sustainable Coastal Management of Puerto Rico Northeast Communities*

The project will provide paid fellowships to two representatives of local communities interested in marine and coastal conservation and management, allowing professional development and community engagement.

INDIA *Toward a More Diverse and Inclusive Landscape: Recognizing the Conservation Efforts of the Dalit Bahujan and Adivasi Communities in India*

Their project focuses on nurturing empowering TNC's workforce, raising awareness among team members about the challenges and solutions through stories and case studies from underrepresented communities.

COLOMBIA *Regional DEI Learning for Latin American Scientists*

The project will support a collaboration between the Colombia BU and Global Science teams to offer Latin America scientists DEI trainings to transform the relationship between conservation groups and communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funds for the DEIJ Action Fund Pilot Year were made possible by TNC's Executive Leadership Team. We extend our gratitude to all individuals at TNC who believed in this initiative and how it can play a pivotal role in advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice within the organization. A special acknowledgment goes to members of the FY23 and FY24 review committee for their insightful contributions. We also express appreciation to the project managers and business units who submitted remarkable projects, showcasing their dedication to fostering a more diverse and inclusive organizational culture. Thank you for your invaluable contributions to the success of this initiative.

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**WANT TO SUPPORT
TNC'S DEIJ WORK,
OR HAVE FEEDBACK,
COMMENTS, OR QUESTIONS?**

Please reach out at DEIJActionFund@TNC.ORG