

AUGUST 2020

Report on Our 2019 Racial Equity Action Plan

A summary

Ecotrust

Since 2017, Ecotrust's Equity Working Group (EWG) has developed and implemented an annual Racial Equity Action Plan to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within our culture, operations, programs, and community partnerships. The Plan drives transformation and increases our capacity to be better partners in racial equity and justice across our region.

The 2019 Racial Equity Action Plan was created to promote four critical goals:

- Center equity in our mission, vision, and strategy
- Build cultural agility, empathy, and learning among staff and board
- Advance equity outcomes across the region
- Engage in meaningful and effective community partnerships

Below is a summary of our progress towards the vision and goals in the 2019 Racial Equity Action Plan. We invite engagement in this work and encourage those interested to view the [Equity at Ecotrust](#) page on our website.

2019 Racial Equity Action Plan major accomplishments:

- Working with leadership and a broad coalition of allies across the organization, the EWG, and the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) Affinity Group successfully secured \$170,000 in direct investments in internal organizational racial equity for 2020. This represents funding for a new part-time Director of Equity, BIPOC staff representation on the leadership team, support for BIPOC staff to develop relationships with communities of color, and sustained funding for the EWG.
- We completed an audit of recruitment and hiring policies and finalized a new, equitable policy on hiring for all staff, fellows, and interns. Staff recruitment and hiring processes have resulted in a marked increase in racial diversity among candidates and staff. The majority of staff hired in 2019 self-identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color.
- The EWG, in partnership with the BIPOC Affinity Group, developed an Ecotrust Leadership Team transformation proposal that was partly adopted and resulted in the addition of three new BIPOC leadership team members. Our executive director also formed an Executive Director's Committee, which includes two BIPOC staff.
- The Ecotrust board established its own Equity Working Group to drive forward equity efforts in the board. Members of the board met with the EWG in 2019, and the board has made a commitment to appoint at least two qualified BIPOC members in the first half of 2020.
- Ecotrust provided three sponsorships to BIPOC-led organizations: Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development

Corporation, Coalition of Communities of Color, and Causa. The EWG funded four staff to develop, build, and actively maintain partnerships with culturally specific organizations whose work intersects with ours.

Primary Activities and Outcomes:

Goal 1: Center equity in our mission, vision, and strategy.

Leadership Team Diversity Plan: The EWG, in partnership with the BIPOC Affinity Group, developed a Leadership Team transformation plan to change the composition of the Leadership Team; appoint term-limited members; and develop a pipeline of diverse talent and leaders. It received broad staff support.

Ultimately, the Leadership Team transformation plan was not approved or funded as proposed, but some of the plan elements were adopted. The original plan would have resulted in close to 50% BIPOC representation at the leadership level. With the new leadership structure, we have 33% BIPOC representation at the leadership level in 2020. Our executive director also created an Executive Director's Committee, which includes two BIPOC staff.

Board Engagement: In 2019, the Ecotrust Board participated in training and articulated a board-level EDI plan, with collaboration from the EWG. In addition, the EWG worked with our Executive Director and our Executive Administer and Board Liaison to develop a racially diverse board recruitment pipeline. Approximately ten BIPOC leaders were recommended to Ecotrust's board pipeline and the Board committed to appoint at least two qualified BIPOC members in the first half of 2020. As part of its EDI session with trainers Doug Stamm and Cliff Jones—the first in what will be a year-long engagement—the board created its own Equity Working Group to drive this work forward.

Hiring, Retention, and Promotion: Working in partnership, the People and Culture team and the EWG completed an audit of recruitment and hiring policies and finalized a new, equitable policy on hiring for all staff, fellows, and interns. Staff recruitment and hiring processes have shown a marked increase in racial diversity among candidates and staff; the majority of staff hired in 2019 self-identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color. Half of Ecotrust's staff members have been trained on implicit bias in hiring, and a similar training for all staff is being developed for 2020.

Shared Agreements: Equity consultant Derron Coles facilitated an all-staff equity training in Q2 of 2019, resulting in a staff-led process to complete Shared Agreements for how we interact.

Goal 2: Build cultural agility, empathy, and learning among staff and board.

Courageous Conversations: Courageous Conversations were consistently held throughout 2019 and were well attended (10-18 staff at each meeting). Over the last three years, Courageous Conversations have helped catalyze, shift, and normalize conversations at Ecotrust around race. However, in 2019, some BIPOC staff noted that Courageous Conversations were primarily serving the needs of staff with white privilege and not particularly resonant or beneficial for BIPOC staff. Based on this feedback and consensus, many staff supported the idea to form an Anti-Racism Learning Group, which came into fruition in 2020. This group is specifically geared toward people who have white privilege and who want to learn to recognize and disrupt their own racism.

BIPOC Affinity Group: The BIPOC Affinity Group is a self-organized collective of Ecotrusters who identify as BIPOC. The Affinity Group meets monthly, with the goal of providing a safe space for BIPOC staff to socialize, strengthen professional and social relationships between members, and to support the EWG in developing equity-related proposals. Similar to the EWG, the BIPOC Affinity Group is frequently counseled for input and decision-making, and a BIPOC Affinity Group representative is a member of the Leadership Team. The importance of these group meetings has been contextualized by [Leaking Talent](#), a report published by Green 2.0 that noted the high level of attrition from BIPOC employees at white-dominant, environmental organizations.

Listening Sessions: Ecotrust hosted sessions from two BIPOC presenters to share about their work at all-staff meetings. Shawn Fleek from OPAL Environmental Justice conducted a presentation and training on Environmental Justice 101 at an all-staff training. Ecotrust staff member Heldáy de la Cruz presented his work on immigration reform through his own organization, Power to the Dreamers, at an all-staff meeting.

Staff and Board Onboarding: In 2019, the EWG, supported by developed an equity orientation for new board and staff onboarding. A core EWG member now leads an equity orientation with every new staff, intern, and board member.

Racial Equity Competency Matrix: The EWG developed a racial equity competency matrix (formerly known as the Cultural Competency Matrix) to be used by all staff in hiring and setting annual goals. The racial equity competency matrix is currently in use for all new hires and promotions. The matrix will be further operationalized in the audit of staff retention and promotion.

Professional Development Goals: Our objective was to ensure all staff include equity activities within professional development goals for 2019 and offer a range of possible options for staff to select from based on the racial equity competency matrix.

Goal 3: Advance equity outcomes across the region.

Equity Lens: We revisited and rebooted an equity lens to be used by program and project managers in all project design to actively reduce racial disparities and advance social equity in our region. Six teams volunteered to use the revised racial equity lens for current or new work.

Metrics: During 2019, the Metrics and Evaluation (M&E) team led a participatory process of defining our Theory of Change. Each working group contained at least two BIPOC staff and each group was provided with Ecotrust's three-question anti-oppression lens to use when assessing proposed outcomes: (1) Who does this outcome serve? (2) For whom does this outcome build power? (3) Who benefits most from this outcome? The results were four core strategy outcome maps that center social and racial equity.

In addition, the M&E team tracked organization-wide indicators, designed to give a snapshot of Ecotrust's performance in 2019. Inclusion data focused on tracking Ecotrust's internal racial equity data for 2019, such as job classifications by race, average tenure by race, and distribution of professional development funds by race.

Team Goals: In 2019 annual plans, most program leads articulated how their respective program benefits communities of color and their strategy to advance equity within their sector. Reports on progress to these goals are included in the 2019 Racial Equity Action Plan Annual Report.

Goal 4: Engage in meaningful and effective community partnerships.

Sponsorships: Ecotrust provided three sponsorships to BIPOC-led organizations in 2019: Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation, Coalition of Communities of Color, and Causa. Staff attended events and fundraisers in support of these organization's missions and work.

Relationship and Partnership Building: Using EWG funds, four Ecotrust staff developed, built, and actively maintained partnerships with culturally specific organizations whose work intersects with ours. In sum, this year-long work resulted in new connections with [Northwest Forest Worker Center](#), Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), Northwest Indian Health Board, Capaces Leadership Institute, One Oregon Coalition, PCUN, Intertribal Agriculture Council,

Zenger Farms, and Pie Ranch. Staff also represented Ecotrust at gatherings of the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) Sustainable Urban Systems Conference in Seattle, the Food Sovereignty Summit, and the Latino Health Equity Conference.

EDI Training: In 2019, Ecotrust staff attended various EDI trainings offsite. Staff participated in and supported Juneteenth, events at the Portland Mercado, immigrant rights protests, and more.

Internal Communications and Engagement: The EWG provided the communications team with training on equitable language and applying an equity lens on all communications (internal and external).

People & Culture Engagement: The EWG engaged with the People & Culture team to develop a number of tools, practices, and policies, including Shared Agreements, equitable hiring and promotion guidelines, retention and promotion audit, training and professional development funding policy, a process for centering equity in planning all-staff meetings, implementation of the racial equity competency matrix, staff and board EDI onboarding, development and implementation, and engagement survey implementation and analysis.

Racial equity work at Ecotrust in 2019 includes significant accomplishments and areas in which we fell short. Our learnings and our evolving understanding about what it means to center racial equity inform the 2020 Racial Equity Action Plan, as well as how we as individuals, teams, and an organization work within and beyond our walls.