EQUITY at ECOTRUST
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WELCOME TO EQUITY AT ECOTRUST.

In this document, we have brought together the history and current progress of our organization’s work to center equity and evolve our organization and our programs to fully represent and serve the people of our region.

Centering equity at Ecotrust has meant entering into a field that is rich, ongoing, and radiates from the wisdom, experience, and knowledge of the Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color that call this bioregion home. We acknowledge the many individuals, organizations, and communities that have shaped the visions, goals, and actions recorded in this document.

We invite our community to join with us in our efforts to put equity at the center at Ecotrust. Staff, partners, and funding sources must advance this work together. Conversely, Ecotrust is accountable for our progress towards our goals, and we invite ongoing feedback from partners and community. Thank you for joining with us.

— EQUITY WORKING GROUP, JULY 2020
At Ecotrust, we see equity as an integral component of our mission, vital to fostering resilient communities, economies, and ecosystems. Deep-rooted, systemic diversity is essential to our ability to survive and thrive. Yet, significant disparities persist in economic opportunity and environmental well-being in our region and beyond.

Addressing these disparities means redressing the historic, systemic oppression against members of society based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation and other identities. It means understanding and actively shifting power, resources, and privilege toward disenfranchised communities. And it means embedding equity, diversity, and inclusion in our culture, operations, programs, and community partnerships.

To understand our role in unconsciously perpetuating inequities through our work and workplace culture, Ecotrust completed an organizational self-assessment on racial equity in 2016, identifying nine key areas for growth across the organization to more fully embed our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In 2017, we launched a Racial Equity Action Plan based on this assessment, and in 2018 we prioritized social and racial equity as one of our organizational imperatives, recognizing that to achieve our vision of a world where people and nature thrive, we cannot leave anyone behind. Equity is an imperative for building a just and inclusive society.

Shifting culture inside and outside our walls is hard, often uncomfortable work, and a lifelong commitment. To do this, we are empowering staff at all levels to adopt an equity lens in all we do—at the hiring, spending, programmatic, and relational levels. We work to create a shared understanding of equity through trainings and professional development opportunities, we hold ourselves accountable to communities of color, and we work to create a culture of inclusion both within Ecotrust and as we engage externally in our work.
Organizational transformation requires vision and commitment, goal-setting and action. All staff at Ecotrust, at every level of the organization, have a role to play in embedding racial equity into Ecotrust’s internal practices, systems and policies, and external programmatic activities. The Equity Working Group (EWG) works across the organization to help drive change and sustain accountability.

Ecotrust formally established the EWG in 2017. The team is selected based on interest, lived experience, and skills in equity, diversity, and inclusion. Because staff who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) bring unique lived experiences and knowledge to the organization, priority is given to BIPOC staff who apply to join the EWG.

The core work of the EWG is designing, managing, and operationalizing our annual Racial Equity Action Plan. In addition, the EWG is tasked with:

- staying up-to-date on best practices within the discipline of equity, diversity, and inclusion;
- collaborating to shift policies and procedures internally at Ecotrust;
- identifying systemic interventions;
- acting as a thought partner to all teams at Ecotrust;
- collaborating with the People and Culture on shifting the internal culture to build cultural competency and an inclusive workplace;
- consulting as a member of all hiring teams;
- building networks externally with mission-aligned, BIPOC-led organizations; and
- communicating consistently about Ecotrust’s equity work both internally and externally.
As part of the 2020 planning process, the EWG collectively agreed that establishing a 0.5 FTE Director of Equity role within Ecotrust would help to further advance efforts to center racial equity. The board subsequently approved that proposal.

The Director of Equity is responsible for managing and operationalizing the Racial Equity Action Plan. This person works with colleagues across the organization, to grow the organization’s capacity to understand and apply a racial equity framework. The Director of Equity builds and maintains strong relationships with all program and functional teams and develops creative and collaborative solutions to bring the organization’s annual Racial Equity Action Plan to life. The Director of Equity is a member of Ecotrust’s Leadership Team and the Executive Director’s Advisory Group.

The Director of Equity was selected through an application process from candidates within Ecotrust. A group of staff (Brent Davies, Jeanne Kubal, Teresa Gaddy, Vickie Owens, and Yolimar Rivera Vázquez) led by Kevin Bumatay joined the hiring committee on a volunteer basis. In February 2020, Jamese Kwele was announced as the Director of Equity.
Ecotrust’s earliest work began in the Kitlope, partnering with the Haisla First Nation to protect one of the last pristine rain forest watersheds in the world. Our continued partnerships with Indigenous leadership and communities shaped an early version of our mission statement, which acknowledged the need for equity and reparations from those historically excluded from economic opportunities. This laid the foundation for our equity work, beginning in 2014, that had an explicit focus on racial justice.

2014


2016

We fund a task group of eight team members to complete an organizational assessment given to us by the Coalition of Communities of Color. Upon completing the self-assessment, we identify nine key areas for growing our commitment to racial equity, and the task group creates a proposal for increasing racial equity at Ecotrust.

2017

Cat Goughnour, an external consultant, provides critical feedback on our Racial Equity Action Plan and helps us develop an equity lens specific to our work and initiatives. The Plan is launched.

2018

Julia Meier, then Director of Coalition of Communities of Color, advises us on the creation of an action framework based on our assessment results, as well as the importance of leadership buy-in for organization-wide change. Based on these results, we collaboratively determine the content of our first ever Racial Equity Action Plan.

The EWG is formalized and continues to meet regularly. All staff participate in a three-day retreat led by Christine Dupres focused on building racial equity competency. Our first Equity at Ecotrust document, containing our equity statement, equity goals, and a brief history of equity at Ecotrust, is created and presented to our board.

An intern creates a procurement report, based on internal and external interviews on how our money is spent, and makes 10 recommendations for more equitable procurement in our work. We also develop a cultural competency matrix to be used in hiring and promotions.

2019

In a learning moment for the organization, the BIPOC Affinity Group and EWG develop our first equity lens and Leadership Team membership diversity plan, but the organization is not ready to implement this work.

We conduct a full audit of our hiring practices. New hired staff and appointed board members begin receiving an equity orientation, developed by the EWG. Staff continue to participate in various affinity equity, diversity, and inclusion trainings throughout the year.

We hold regular, ongoing Courageous Conversations to build cultural competency and create a shared language among staff. Through the initiative of a few BIPOC staff members, the BIPOC Affinity Group forms, providing a space for BIPOC staff members to socialize and collectively strategize on equity goals.

The EWG and the BIPOC Affinity Group, working with leadership and a broad coalition of allies across the organization, successfully secure $270,000 in direct investments in internal organizational racial equity for 2020.

2020

A 0.5 FTE Director of Equity is appointed to work alongside the members of the EWG in shifting policies and procedures internally at Ecotrust, identifying systemic interventions, and building networks externally with mission-aligned BIPOC-led organizations. We continue exploring bold steps to intentionally shift resources, power, and privilege to advance equitable outcomes.
The 2019 Racial Equity Action Plan was created to promote four critical goals:

1) **Center equity in our mission, vision and strategy**
   - Working with leadership and a broad coalition of allies across the organization, the EWG and the 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.

2) **Build cultural agility, empathy, and learning among staff and board**
   - 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 BIPOC.

3) **Advance equity outcomes across the region**
   - 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.

4) **Engage in meaningful and effective community partnerships**
   - 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.

5) **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 plan to diversify 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 elements of the plan 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. The 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 equity, diversity, and inclusion plan, with collaboration from the EWG. In addition, the EWG worked with the Executive Director and the Executive Administrator and Board Liaison to develop a racially diverse board recruitment pipeline. Approximately 10 BIPOC leaders were recommended to Ecotrust’s board pipeline and the board committed to appointing at least two qualified BIPOC members in the first half of 2020. As part of its equity, diversity, and inclusion session with trainers Doug Stamm and Cliff Jones—the first in what will be a yearlong 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 BIPOC. 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, 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 (10-15 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 Héldây 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 the BIPOC Affinity Group, 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 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, 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 Sustainable Urban Systems Conference in Seattle, the Food Sovereignty Summit, and the Latino Health Equity Conference.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION TRAININGS: In 2019, Ecotrust staff attended various equity, diversity, and inclusion 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 and 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; equity, diversity, and inclusion onboarding for staff and board; 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.
In 2020, our organization not only continues its commitment toward racial equity, but will also take bold steps to intentionally shift resources, power, and privilege to advance equitable outcomes. This plan outlines our intention to continue to strengthen and grow our relationships, working with and learning from not only Indigenous communities, but also Black, Latinx, and other communities of color that call this bioregion home. Core to this is ensuring that our current staff, partners, and funding sources are also invited (and pushed) to advance this work.

The 2020 Racial Equity Action Plan contains four critical goals:

**GOAL 1: SUPPORT AND EMPOWER BIPOC STAFF**

**Long-term Vision:** BIPOC staff at Ecotrust have a clear understanding of their career growth pathways. Our organization values its BIPOC staff and provides BIPOC staff opportunities for new, challenging projects; roles in strategic decision making; and professional development opportunities. Pay inequities are addressed, and BIPOC staff receive equal pay for equal work.

Ecotrust is known within and outside the organization as a joyful, supportive place to work for BIPOC staff.

**PRIMARY ACTIVITIES IN 2020:**

1) We are working with an external consultant, Greg Wolley, to complete a Retention and Promotion Equity Audit that will continue to be implemented annually, with results shared among all staff.

2) The People and Culture team is working with the Leadership Team, EWG, and BIPOC Affinity Group to develop guidelines for new promotion and pay increase guidelines that de-center white dominant characteristics and rewards staff for racial equity competency skills.
GOAL 2: BUILD EQUITABLE LEADERSHIP, TEAMS AND DEVELOP BIPOC LEADERSHIP

Long-term Vision: We are an organization that serves as an active, transparent advocate that listens first, shares power, and shifts resources. Each staff member has a toolbox of knowledge, skills, and actions and is able to contribute to a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable organization.

Each team in the organization has shifted its stance, orientation, and strategies toward centering racial equity, with programs increasingly led by and centered on BIPOC communities and recognizing those who are the most impacted offer the most effective solutions. We are a valued partner that exchanges skills, knowledge, and capacity with BIPOC-led efforts throughout the region.

PRIMARY ACTIVITIES IN 2020:

1) As part of an effort to identify and support opportunities for staff to participate in coalitions, particularly Black-led coalitions, throughout the region, five staff received BIPOC relationship-building funding. These staff have adjusted their plans and timeline in light of COVID-19.

2) We have taken a number of actions inspired by uprisings for racial justice, including:
   • Issued a strong public statement of solidarity
   • The Director of Equity, Director of Communications, and Executive Director are enrolled to take a “Building Pro-Black Institutions and Movements” training in September
   • Committed our communications platforms to support Black-led partners and organizations in the region
   • Made an all-of-organization donation to two Black-led partner orgs
   • Enabled staff to use on average an hour a week of paid time to participate in radical justice activities through 2020
   • Offered Juneteenth as an all-staff holiday in celebration of Black culture and resilience
   • Is in the process of organizing two new trainings: disrupting anti-blackness and racial trauma
   • Is in the process of exploring other opportunities among teams
   • Our board has its own equity plan and a formal diversity, equity, and inclusion committee.
   • At least one member of the EWG or a staff person trained in equitable hiring has been a part of the hiring teams and all stages of the hiring process (posting, recruitment, candidate selection, interviews, and onboarding) for at least 11 recent hires.
   • Equity has been at the center of a number of organizational processes, policies, communications, etc., including:
     • a releasing funds from restriction policy;
     • the closing and reopening of the office due to COVID-19;
     • a COVID-19 work from home reimbursement policy;
   • Short-term strategic planning and priorities;
   • Publication of the 2020 Annual Report; and
   • The EWG is working with the CFO and Director of People and Culture to inform new workplace policies and/or procedures related to EDI. Examples include organizational Shared Agreements, rolling out culturally specific all-staff trainings, and operationalizing an anonymous submission system for staff to file racism and discrimination complaints, as well as a policy and process for handling complaints.

3) We are working to ensure BIPOC staff, specifically Black representation, are included in the composition of all committees, working groups, and important gatherings.

4) The People and Culture team is implementing the racial equity competencies matrix. The EWG is working to revise this matrix to include scoring guidelines for interviews and promotions and to revise our general competencies matrix to incorporate racial competencies.

5) We are working to improve internal and external communications, as well as staff engagement, around equity in the organization. To that end, our equity statement, an Equity at Ecotrust program page, and an Equity at Ecotrust PDF have been added to the our website. Staff also receive weekly and monthly updates via email from the EWG.

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10) The EWG is working to improve its operations, such as the management of the equity budget, sharing of notes from meetings, the scheduling of meetings, and meetings with the Executive Director.
We are making an existing equity lens tool more accessible for programs and project managers.

**GOAL 4: BE DATA-DRIVEN AND UTILIZE RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY**

Long-term Vision: We measure and report out key metrics related to equity. We communicate our progress toward goals internally and externally. We have accountability mechanisms that ensure we meet measurable targets in our pursuit to become a more equitable organization.

**PRIMARY ACTIVITIES IN 2020:**

1) We are participating in the Building Movement Project’s Race Equity Assessment pilot and cohort.

2) As part of annual planning in October and alongside the Chief Impact Officer (to be hired), the M&E team will work with program leads and EWG to set benchmarks and track progress in meeting annual programmatic SMARTIE goals that are team-generated.

3) The M&E team is working with the EWG to share human resources data every 12 months. In the upcoming annual planning, we will examine how to more frequently look at and share programmatic metrics.

4) The CFO and Office & Technology Manager are developing an equitable procurement policy. This policy will prioritize women- and BIPOC-owned businesses with a strong record of equitable practices for all contracts and purchases over $5,000 in the 4th quarter of 2020. We plan to use a new accounting system to track demographic information for all vendors starting in 2021.