



# Actions and Dialog to Change Perceptions and Increase Engagement of Underrepresented Minorities in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences: Report to Membership from a Special Session in Portland

Christine M. Moffitt

To cite this article: Christine M. Moffitt (2016) Actions and Dialog to Change Perceptions and Increase Engagement of Underrepresented Minorities in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences: Report to Membership from a Special Session in Portland, *Fisheries*, 41:2, 66-67, DOI: [10.1080/03632415.2016.1133192](https://doi.org/10.1080/03632415.2016.1133192)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03632415.2016.1133192>



Published online: 28 Jan 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# Actions and Dialog to Change Perceptions and Increase Engagement of Underrepresented Minorities in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences: Report to Membership from a Special Session in Portland

**Christine M. Moffitt** | U.S. Geological Survey, Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, University of Idaho, Moscow ID, 83844-1141. E-mail: cmoffitt@uidaho.edu

The economic and political success of natural resource agencies, professional societies, and other institutions is linked to having informed constituent groups and employees that represent the diversity of our population. The 2015 Annual Meeting provided a venue for an intense and short special session designed to bring together a variety of leaders with relevant experience understanding diversity and leading change. In previous annual meetings, special symposia had been conducted regarding the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity, but the goal of this brief 90-minute conversation with diverse participants was to come away with specific actions that could be effective in moving us to a more diverse professional society. Among key action items resulting from discussions was the need for increased and highly visible programs within AFS leadership and meeting organizers to increase the sensitivity and awareness of the importance of diversity. Mamie Parker, a former assistant director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, served as a moderator and kept the conversations moving with her contagious energy.

Background for discussions was contained in the comprehensive Green 2.0 report (Taylor 2014). This report summarized the results of a comprehensive study of 191 conservation and preservation organizations, 74 government environmental agencies, and 28 environmental grant-making foundations. A significant finding of the Green 2.0 report was that the racial diversity in organizations lags behind gender diversity progress. The Green 2.0 report provided documentation that only 12.4% of the paid staff of governmental environmental agencies was from ethnic minorities, and a similar proportion

was recorded for staff of conservation and preservation organizations. The report documented that leadership in environmental organizations and agencies was dominated by white males, and significant progress in gender diversity over the past decades was mostly accomplished with increased proportions of white women. The growth in numbers of women was in lower ranking positions, as current presidents and chairs of the boards of conservation preservation organizations and agencies were more than 70% male. The report also noted that within organizations, few programs and activities were directed to engage with cross racial and diverse communities, and many recruitment programs showed an unconscious bias in where and how recruiting was accomplished. The dominant culture of many organizations was largely ignoring ethnic minorities, the economically disadvantaged, and the LGBTQ community.

The U.S. Census projections show that by 2018, U.S. youth under 18 years of age will no longer be majority white, and these statistics have a strong regional component (Figure 1). Moreover, lack of income equality and low head-of-household net worth in many communities affects the capacity of underrepresented minorities to engage and afford educational opportunities. Conservation organizations, agencies, and professional societies need to recognize and make changes in their structure to remain relevant.

How can we engage in relevant local and regional issues and consider the international setting—all of which have disproportional political and economic conditions? Our panel and audience participants concluded that opportunities for increasing environmental awareness are successful when they



Mamie Parker introduces the symposium panel at the special session in Portland.

Total Population	2043
Under 18	2018
18 - 29	2027
30 - 44	2035
45 - 64	2051
65+	2060

Figure 1: U.S. Census Bureau projections and population demographics show estimates of the year in which the non-Hispanic white proportion of the U.S. population becomes a racial minority.

are partnered with expanding educational opportunities for relevant internships, mentoring, and community action. Panelist Running-Grass, regional environmental justice coordinator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), highlighted some of the workshops available for improving cultural appreciation and community engagement through his experiences advancing environmental justice goals of federal agency collaborators. The USEPA draft-planning document for environmental justice addresses the responsibility to improve quality of life and expand economic opportunity in low-income, minority, and tribal populations (USEPA 2015).

#### BOX 1. Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice.

The Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (EJ IWG) was established in 1994 under Executive Order (EO) 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations". The role of the EJ IWG is to guide, support and enhance federal environmental justice and community-based activities. The EJ IWG is comprised of 17 federal agencies and White House offices.

All panelists indicated our professional society efforts should include partnerships with other organizations, including Hispanic, African-American and Tribal professional societies such as the National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC), the African American Environmentalist Association (AAEA), and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. Panelist and AFS member Zach Penney of the Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission, highlighted his plans to re-ignite the Native

#### BOX 2. The last U.S. Census reported the following proportional racial and ethnic population distribution.

Hispanic (any race) - 16%  
 African Americans - 12.6%  
 Asians - 4.8%  
 Women - 51%

People's Section in AFS. Panelist and marine scientist Kiki Jenkins noted the importance of community engagement in all research programs to make studies relevant through outreach and conversations. Several in the audience mentioned the successful SEEDS program in the Ecological Society of America as a good model to highlight mentoring at annual meetings. All agreed that the AFS Hutton Program has been successful in bringing under-represented high school students into summer experiences, but there is a strong need for continued engagement and mentoring beyond the summer experience. Diversity is a process that needs continuous engagement by all parties.

In summary, we ask AFS leadership and members to place the process of diversity and engagement within sight of all activities. Moreover, we suggest that environmental justice be included in planning projects and collaborations in the future. Highlighting urban and subsistence fisheries and engaging in fish advisories can serve as a good starting place for visible efforts.

#### BOX 3.

Emmeline Moore Prize recipients attending included: Ambrose Jearld Jr., Gwen White, Christine Moffitt, Steve Lochmann, Bradford Brown, and Dionne Hoskins. The session was organized by members of the Hutton Committee, Cindy Williams chair; the Past President's Council; and the Equal Opportunity Section.

#### REFERENCES

- Taylor, D. E. 2014. The state of diversity in environmental organizations. Green 2.0 working group. Available: [diversegreen.org/about-us](http://diversegreen.org/about-us). (December 2015).
- USEPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency). 2015. Action agenda framework fiscal years 2016 - 2018. Draft document. US Environmental Protection Agency Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice, Washington, D.C. **AFS**

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

PARASITES OF BAIT MINNOWS  
 R. V. BANGHAM  
 College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio.

During the past two summers bait dealers in Columbus and other cities report serious losses to the bait minnows held in their tanks. This report is based on a short study conducted for the Ohio Division of Fish and Game during the latter part of August 1928. Some data are included on parasites of bait minnows as a result of my studies on fish parasites with the Co-operative Biological Survey of Lake Erie.

The parasites attacking bait minnows in the dealers' tanks caused considerable economic loss due to the increasing difficulty in obtaining bait minnows at this season, and the recent State regulation limiting the number held at any one time.

The minnows for the Columbus dealers were being obtained from many sources and all seemed to be equally affected after they had been in the tanks at the bait stores from 36 to 48 hours. Some of the minnows came from streams in Knox county, others from small cool streams in Delaware county. In almost every case they were hauled 20-30 miles to the bait stores. The water was kept cool and there was no appearance of any diseased condition when the minnows were brought in, although later examination showed that certain minnows did carry in parasites.

R. V. Bangham (1929) Parasites of Bait Minnows, Transactions of the American Fisheries Society, 59:1, 198