

Pinelands Preservation Alliance

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Vision Statement

April 7, 2021

Pinelands Preservation Alliance recognizes the systemic harms of racism in our society. We believe it is vital to the success of PPA's mission that we build a more just and equitable environmental movement.

First, preserving natural areas and resources for the benefit of people is a core element of PPA's reason for existence. To achieve that mission means to ensure everyone in our society has ready access to the Pinelands, feels safe here, and enjoys the benefits of healthy natural resources. People of color are more likely than white people to suffer contamination of air and water, are disadvantaged by land use laws that institutionalize exclusionary zoning, and have concerns about their safety in natural areas of the Pinelands. To succeed in its mission, therefore, PPA needs to help all people enjoy the benefits of the Pinelands and the environmental protections of the Pinelands Protection Act, Comprehensive Management Plan and other state policies.

Second, the Pinelands and New Jersey's other natural places will only survive in the long run if all segments of society know, love and speak out for preserving these treasures. New Jersey's conservation groups and their supporters are overwhelmingly white, while the society in which we work is increasingly diverse in ethnicity and background. The fact that our organizations are not representative of the diversity of our society means that we cannot fully understand the needs and desires of all the communities we aim to serve, limits our collective political power, deprives environmental groups of ideas and energies that would help them succeed, and inevitably sends a message that conservation is mostly a white endeavor. Without the voices and perspectives of all people, our strategies will be limited, biased and ultimately less effective.

PPA will work to:

1. Forge new and deeper partnerships with organizations and individuals working in and for communities of color in order to listen and learn from them, achieve common policy objectives and create mutually beneficial relationships.
2. Achieve a diverse and inclusive staff, Board, and activist/volunteer community where discussion and decision making incorporate the perspectives of all racial, cultural and economic groups affected by Pinelands policies.
3. Pursue effective policy initiatives in partnership with other organizations that work for environmental justice and represent the concerns and aspirations of communities of color and other historically underrepresented people.
4. Identify and work to reverse the ways in which government powers are used to institutionalize racism and inequity, knowingly or not, via environmental and land use policies.
5. Expand PPA's public communications about the Pinelands today and its history to present a richer picture of the diverse American experiences in this region, including those of the Black, Hispanic, Asian American, Indigenous and immigrant communities, and the impacts these communities have had on Pinelands nature and cultural life.

We aim to achieve real organizational change as soon as possible, while recognizing that this is a continual journey to integrate antiracist actions into PPA's work.

We recognize that achieving these goals will mean expanding PPA's image of itself and the image we present to the public, continuing to extend our work beyond our traditional boundaries, and taking chances on new and innovative projects.

References: There is a large and growing literature on the intersections of racism and the environmental movement. Three sources PPA has found particularly relevant to this Vision Statement are:

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The Victoria Foundation, "Report of Grantee Demographics, Important Issues, Strategic Learning and Stakeholder Insights," July 2020, https://www.victoriafoundation.org/images/PDF/web-CREED_report.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2czM3cPYZ_FRci3UZlcYvURgWqv1h1L7RrFX-QARvlff2nKS8JO9VqUYo

"Growing Our Roots: Anti-Racism in Conservation Work," Sierra Club, <https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2020/08/growing-our-roots-anti-racism-conservation-work>

Taylor, "The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations," Green 2.0, 2014, http://orgs.law.harvard.edu/els/files/2014/02/FullReport_Green2.0_FINALReducedSize.pdf

"Diversity in the Great Outdoors: Is Everyone Welcome in America's Parks and Public Lands?" 2019, <https://www.resourcsmag.org/common-resources/diversity-in-the-great-outdoors-is-everyone-welcome-in-americas-parks-and-public-lands/>

Roland-Shea, J. et al., "The Nature Gap : Confronting Racial and Economic Disparities in the Destruction and Protection of Nature in America," Center for American Progress, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/reports/2020/07/21/487787/the-nature-gap/>